EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT
SUMMER 2017 Vol. 25, No. 3

Jehovah's Witnesses Banned in Russia

Emily B. Baran

Contributing Editors

Canon Michael Bourdeaux
Keston Institute, Oxford

Dr. Anita Deyneka
World Without Orphans, Wheaton, Illinois

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Russian Orthodox Church, Kostroma Diocese

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Mrs. Katya Smyslova
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Mr. Lawrence Uzzell
International Religious Freedom Watch, Fishersville, Virginia

Dr. Alexander Zaichenko
Gazeta Protestant, Moscow

The Ban

In April 2017 the Russian Supreme Court formally designated the Jehovah's Witnesses an "extremist" organization. This ruling upheld an earlier determination by the Ministry of Justice. The Supreme Court's decision has immediate consequences for the Witnesses' ability to operate within Russia's borders. It sanctions the "liquidation" of the Witnesses' administrative center outside Saint Petersburg and the confiscation of its property by the government. The Witnesses' 395 registered local branches also will be liquidated.[1] The Witnesses are currently appealing the decision, and will almost certainly submit a further appeal with the European Court of Human Rights.

At the individual level, the Supreme Court decision will have serious repercussions for the roughly 170,000 Witnesses across more than 2,000 congregations in Russia.[2] The ban effectively criminalizes activities that Witnesses consider necessary to maintain their faith, in particular the evangelism of their beliefs to others through door-to-door ministry. From the Russian state's perspective, this would be akin to recruiting new members to join ISIS. The Witnesses will also be unable to print, import, or distribute their religious literature. Their congregations can no longer rent or purchase property, making it impossible to conduct regular services within a Kingdom Hall, the Witnesses' equivalent of a church.

The Backlash

The decision has garnered considerable backlash from foreign and domestic observers and critics of the Putin administration. Longtime human rights activist Liudmila Alekseeva condemned it as "not simply a mistake, but a crime."[3] The Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists released a statement calling on Putin to respect freedom of conscience and not take action against the Witnesses.[4] Aleksandr Semchenko, President of the Union of Evangelical Christian Churches in Russia, echoed these remarks, noting the threat the ban poses to other religious minorities.[5] The United States, the United Kingdom, and other foreign governments and institutions have likewise expressed their deep concerns. Acting State Department spokesman Mark C. Toner commented, "The United States is extremely concerned by the Russian government's actions targeting and repressing members of religious minorities, including Jehovah's Witnesses, under the pretense of combating extremism."[6]

Part of a Trend

More broadly, the ban makes clear that the post-Soviet honeymoon period for freedom of conscience is over in Russia. Arguably, this has already been true for quite some time. The early 1990s saw rapid growth in religious organizations, but also fierce competition for converts among the faith communities. Evangelizing religions came in for particularly heavy scrutiny from the Russian Orthodox Church, which resented the influx of missionaries and western dollars. A new religious law in 1997 instituted greater restrictions on religious communities and diminished the standing of more marginal faiths. The Jehovah's Witnesses felt much of the brunt of this more hostile environment. In the wake of the 1997 law, they faced legal challenges in the courts, and found it increasingly difficult to register their congregations, rent or purchase facilities for worship, and conduct door-to-door evangelism.[7]

"Anti-Extremist" and "Anti-Terrorist" Legislation

Ultimately, however, it was not the 1997 law, but rather, anti-terrorism legislation that resulted in the current ban. The 2002 Russian law, "On Combatting Extremist Activity," passed in the wake of domestic terrorism, gave the state broad powers to criminalize "extremist" organizations. The law includes a set of extremist activities that are vague enough to encompass most religions. Indeed, encouraging religious discord and declaring that one faith is superior to another is now enough to be considered extremist, according to this legislation. The state also created an official list of extremist publications, whose importation and circulation was thereafter legally banned.[8]

In the subsequent decade, "extremism" became the byword for local and regional officials who wanted to bar Witness activity. Since the law's implementation, several Witnesses have faced criminal trials for allegedly advocating extremist beliefs and for distributing extremist literature.[9] In Taganrog, the courts declared the entire organization extremist, and revoked its legal status. Police then infiltrated the congregation and set up hidden cameras in a sting operation to catch them using banned materials. After a lengthy investigation and two rounds of trials, 16 members of the congregation were convicted. While the court handed down prison time and hefty fines, it suspended the sentences. One of the Taganrog men, Nikolai Trotsiuk, had already served time in the Soviet period for refusing to serve in the military.

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He told the *Washington Post* that in Russia, "It was calm until everything turned around, and they started treating us again like they did during the Soviet Union."[10]

Mixed Signals

The federal government's involvement in or approval of such local initiatives was initially ambiguous. In 2015 Geraldine Fagan noted that the impetus for anti-Witness actions was "coming from the ground up."[11] Moreover, the law received some pushback from international religious communities. Most notably, in Tomsk an attempt by the courts to declare a Hare Krishna version of the *Bhagavad Gita* an extremist text earned international outcry, and it was ultimately abandoned. Perhaps sensing the possibility for local overreach, the Russian parliament barred courts from using the law to declare the *Bible, Koran, Tanakh,* or *Kangyur* to be extremist texts in 2015.[12] That same year, the Ministry of Justice overruled a Moscow court decision from 2004 that had revoked the Witnesses' registration in the city, restoring their legal status after a lengthy court battle.[13] At the same time, lower court decisions that labeled various Witness publications "extremist" remained unchallenged. As a result, over 80 publications by the Witnesses ended up on the federal list of extremist materials.[14]

Stronger Measures against Jehovah's Witnesses

In the past year, however, federal support for anti-extremism actions against Witnesses became increasingly clear. The General Prosecutor issued a formal warning to the Witnesses' administrative center to stop further extremist activity, a first step in taking more serious action. Kingdom Halls across Russia were subsequently raided to search for extremist publications. Declaring that the Witnesses had violated the warning to stop circulating banned literature, the Ministry of Justice filed a motion with the Supreme Court to declare the organization "extremist" and liquidate its operations. This culminated in the recent ban at the federal level.

In the weeks following the decision, signs indicated that the ban created a more hostile environment for individual Jehovah's Witnesses. Draft boards have cited the ruling in denying young men access to alternative service, a right granted to Witnesses in recent years.[15] A trial in Sergeev Posad against two Jehovah's Witnesses for extremism that predated the decision, may now be given new life.[16] In one village, police arrested a local Witness for allegedly distributing religious literature.[17] Other Witnesses have reported having their bank accounts frozen, and their Kingdom Halls vandalized. In one disturbing incident, the home of Witnesses was burnt down in an act of arson. Some Witnesses, including the arson victims, have begun to explore the possibility of emigration abroad.[18] It is hard to quantify the exact impact of the ban, since harassment by citizens and local officials existed prior to the ban, but it cannot but embolden those inclined to view Witnesses with suspicion.

Orthodox Alignment with State Measures

In that vein, representatives within the Russian Orthodox Church have adopted a less than sympathetic stance toward the Jehovah's Witnesses' plight. In a television interview, Metropolitan Ilarion described the Witnesses as a "totalitarian sect," and noted that while the church was not involved in the court ruling, he "welcomed" the decision. A Moscow Patriarchate website urged congregants to contact it with any information about Witness activity in their community.[19] These statements should not be taken to reflect the entire Orthodox community, but they do suggest that at least some individuals within the dominant religious tradition have greeted the ban with approval, if not enthusiasm.

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It remains to be seen what this means for religious pluralism in Russia, and whether similar actions will be taken against other religious minorities. Certainly the Supreme Court has set a troubling precedent that leaves other communities vulnerable to liquidation. In the meantime, Witnesses have the daunting task of adjusting to an entirely underground existence. Decades of Soviet persecution may make them well-equipped to navigate these challenges. Moreover, they are less isolated from their fellow believers abroad than they were in decades past, thanks to both technology and more open borders. Even so, the ban will still mean a much more precarious situation for Witnesses in Russia. ♦

Notes

[1] Decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation in case #AKPI17-238 on 20 April 2017. Document provided by the Worldwide Headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses through their Office of Public Information.

[2] *2017 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 2016).

[3] For responses from Alekseeva and others, see the detailed report by Victoria Arnold, "Jehovah's Witnesses Banned, Property Confiscated," *Forum 18 News Service*, 20 April 2017; http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2274.

[4] Union Chairman A. V. Smirnov penned an open letter on 5 April 2017, prior to the final decision. *Portal-Credo.ru*; http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=news&id=125170.

[5] Aleksandr Semchenko was interviewed by Vladimir Oivin about the Witness situation on 6 April 2017. *Portal-Credo.ru*; http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=news&id=125187.

[6] Curt Mills, "State Dept. Condemns Russian Religious Clampdown," *US News & World Report*, 21 April 2017; https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2017-04-21/state-department-condemns-russian-clampdown-on-jehovahs-witnesses.

[7] For a history of Russian and Soviet Witnesses, see Emily B. Baran, *Dissent on the Margins* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

[8] Alexander Verkhovsky, "Russian Approaches to Radicalism and 'Extremism' as Applied to Nationalism and Religion" in *Russia and Islam: State, Society, and Radicalism*, ed. by Roland Dannreuther and Luke March (Routledge, 2010), 33-35.

[9] Felix Corley, "One 'Extremism' Criminal Trial Ends, Others Continue," *Forum 18 News Service*, 5 March 2012; http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1675.

[10] Andrew Roth, "Broad Russian Laws Targeting Religious 'Extremists' Used Against Pacifist Sect," *Washington Post*, 23 November 2015; https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/sixteen-jehovahs- witnesses-may-be-russias-most-pacifist-extremists/2015/11/20/6e046610-8898-11e5-bd91-d385b244482f_story.html?utm_term=.cdb4188df4fe.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] "Misuse of Anti-Extremism in November 2015," *Sova Center*, 17 December 2015; http://www.sova-center.ru/en/misuse/news-releases/2015/12/d33482/.

[13] "Russia Targets Jehovah's Witnesses with Anti-Extremist Legislation, Reports UN Human Rights Committee," *Official Website of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 30 March 2016; https://www.jw.org/en/news/releases/by-region/russia/un-human-rights-reports-jw-targeted/.

[14] This statistic was supplied by the Worldwide Headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses through their Office of Public Information.

[15] "Russian Supreme Court's Decision about 'Extremism' Threatens Right of Conscientious Objection," *Human Rights Without Frontiers*, 5 May 2017; http://hrwf.eu/russia-supreme-courts-decision-about-extremism-threatens-right-of-conscientious-objection/.

[16] Victoria Arnold, "Russia: Further Arrest for Muslim Study Groups," *Forum 18 News Service*, 12 May 2017; http://forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2279.

[17] "V Orlovskoi oblasti Svidetelia legovy obviniaiut v nezakonnom missionerstve," *Sova Center*, 18 May 2017; http://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/harrassment/intervention/2017/05/d37079/.

[18] Jason La Miere, "Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia Have House Burned Down, Worship Halls Liquidated While Preparing Ban Appeal," *Newsweek*, 17 May 2017; http://www.newsweek.com/jehovahs-witnesses-russia-ban-cour-611138.

[19] "Tropami Agitpropa," *Religio Polis*, 5 May 2017; http://religiopolis.org/publications/11463-troppj-voinstvuyushchikh-bezbozhnikov.html.

Emily B. Baran *is Assistant Professor of History, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Her book,* Dissent on the Margins: How Soviet Jehovah's Witnesses Defied Communism and Lived to Preach About It *(Oxford University Press, 2014), is now available in paperback.*

Factors behind the Ukrainian Evangelical Missionary Surge, 1989-1999

John White

As one travels around Yakutia, the largest region of Siberian Russia and about six times the size of Ukraine, one can hear the following joke: "Where do Ukrainians live?" The answer is: "Around Yakutia and a few near Kyiv." In fact, many Ukrainians do live in Siberia thanks to a remarkable surge in evangelical missionary activity out of Ukraine in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Ukrainians on the Move

Between 1989 and 2001 more than 900 evangelical cross-cultural workers from Ukraine served outside their homeland. Their destinations included Central Asia, Yugoslavia, Germany, and China, but the largest number of these missionaries served in Russia. In the last decade of the 20th century, only South Korea, Brazil, and Nigeria surpassed Ukraine among newly emerging missionary-sending nations. The three ministries in Ukraine responsible for the largest missionary contingents serving in the former Soviet Union were Good Samaritan (Pentecostal), Light of the Gospel (Baptist), and Voice of Hope (Pentecostal).

Inadvertent Soviet Factors

The political, economic, and cultural context of the late Soviet period prepared the ground for this Ukrainian missionary surge. The Soviet government unknowingly played its part in paving the way for Christian mission by standardizing the Russian language and requiring it in schools, massively improving literacy, establishing peace in conflicted areas like the Caucasus, reducing the power of the Orthodox Church, and drastically improving the means of transportation around the country. Nearly all Ukrainians could speak Russian fluently (about one-third spoke Russian as their first language), allowing them to travel easily across the former Soviet Union. The generally young Ukrainians who left home were able to adapt easily to small differences in dialect and culture. People's mentalities were similar, even after the Soviet Union officially ended.

When the Soviet Union was still one country, it was fairly easy for Ukrainians to find a new job in another part of the country. Single young men could easily move to the Far North or to the Far East for work to make good money. Ukrainians could easily travel throughout the Soviet Union, not needing to deal with any borders, visas, or citizenship issues, with cheap flights to just about anywhere. During Soviet times, finances were often not an issue since work was guaranteed, salaries were standardized, and costs were stable and low. A flight to the Russian Far East cost about 35 rubles (or about 60 dollars), and a flight to Alma-Ata (present-day Almaty), Kazakhstan,

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cost only about five dollars. During this period it was not difficult for missionaries to find a job in a new location – perhaps not as good as back in Ukraine, but a job by which one could support oneself. Also, some minority groups, like the Nenets, felt a connection with the Soviet evangelical movement, since both were repressed by the government. When Communism ended, these groups' shared experiences helped form a bridge for the Gospel, bringing many of the Nenets to Christianity.

Ukrainian Evangelical Strength

The strength of Evangelical Christianity in Ukraine also played a role in the missionary surge. Ukraine is known as the Bible Belt of the former Soviet Union. Although its population was three times smaller than that of Russia when the Soviet Union broke up in 1991, it still had significantly more evangelicals. Ukraine had the largest numbers of Baptists and Pentecostals, both registered and unregistered. In addition, Ukraine became a center for theological education, evangelical publishing, and Sunday schools– three factors that helped increase the number of potential missionaries. Evangelicals in Ukraine also had more independent-minded churches and leaders in the form of the autonomous church movement, from which most of the leaders of the mission Light of the Gospel came. Many Ukrainians had a tendency to be entrepreneurial, being willing to take independent initiative. Ukrainian pastors and missionaries were also willing to stand up against authorities, a very important question in the late1980s.

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Energetic Youth

Another factor contributing to the Ukrainian missionary surge was the eagerness of evangelical youth to participate and their lack of opportunities for service at home. Both the pull factor (attractive new opportunities for ministry on the mission field) and the push factor (limited ministry opportunities at home) played a role. Many Ukrainians went into missions because they could not get involved in the kind of ministry that they wanted to in their home churches. For example, young people often were not allowed to lead ministries because leadership positions were reserved for those with more experience. Single women were also limited in ministry opportunities in their home churches. Yet, on the mission field, new opportunities were available to all, including single women and young men. The number of young people, especially young men, in churches grew significantly during the final years of communism, particularly in cities, leading them to look for ways to minister beyond church walls. While older church leaders were used to being underground and preaching within the church, younger church leaders were ready to preach beyond the walls of church to non-Christians and to try something new. In addition, young people had less holding them back. They had fewer family responsibilities and often did not own their own homes in Ukraine. Thus it comes as no surprise that Ukrainian missionaries were typically 20 to 35 years of age, with most under 30.

The Sense of Divine Calling

The sense of a divine calling, no matter what the obstacles, also clearly motivated evangelicals in Ukraine. As one participant explained in an interview, "Missionary work in the first years was very primitive—as primitive as you can imagine. The one thing that was true for everyone who went into missions, practically speaking, was that they had a deep personal relationship with God. And for them, to hear God's voice, to discern that God is sending you, for them, that was practically clear. Therefore, if God told you to go, you went, not knowing where and not knowing what you would do." In Acts 1:8, Jesus said that his disciples would be his witnesses "to the end of the earth" (ESV). For many Ukrainian evangelicals, the end of the earth was Siberia and the Far North of Russia, rather than the more populated, nearer places, such as Central Russia. There was a general understanding that Ukraine, especially Western Ukraine, was blessed with far more churches than Russia, especially far more than Siberia. Thus, when the idea of missions was embraced, many missionaries wanted to go plant a church specifically where no church existed.

The "more difficult" places and the places "farther out" also were the places that presented the most risks. The people involved believed in the basic idea or cause of missions, and they were persuaded that its importance far outweighed the dangers involved and the fact that most had no training and no experience. Participants mentioned this reason for becoming missionaries a significant number of times, and multiple times it was listed specifically as an important reason behind the missionary surge. Ukrainian evangelicals believed that their doing missions was God's plan for the world. The fact that Ukrainian evangelicals were willing to sacrifice so much in order to become missionaries shows how important they believed doing missionary work was. They were willing to take big risks because they saw great need to spread the Gospel among people who had never heard it. One interviewee recalled new missionaries coming to replace a pastor who had just been killed. Ukrainian missionaries understood the dangers and went anyway.

Personal Connections

Personal connections played another significant part in the Ukrainian missionary surge. In a snowball effect, Ukrainians in many cases went to the mission field because they knew someone who was already there or was going there—family members or good friends. The fact that many were going to the mission field and reported success there swayed more Ukrainians to go. Inspiration from missionaries, whether through direct recruitment or merely by example, helped the missionary surge gather momentum as chains of missionaries were formed, with one friend telling another and one relative inviting another relative, etc. The power of example allowed the cause of missions and the stories of missionaries to spread in natural and attractive ways, leading more and more young Ukrainians to the mission field. In other cases, there were requests for help from people in Russia. For example, one man

who came to Christ in Yakutia asked Light of the Gospel for help—to send people who could minister, since he was limited in ministry. In response, two young women answered this need, moving to Yakutia as missionaries and helping to establish a new community of believers there.

The Prison Connection

Many Ukrainian evangelicals went to serve as missionaries in places where their relatives had served time, and in some cases, had died in prison. These prisoners of faith, in effect "unofficial missionaries," broke the ground for future missionary work. They shared their faith and planted God's seeds before the Ukrainian evangelical missionary surge of the 1990s even started. During Soviet times a whole network connected prisoners in Russia with their relatives in Ukraine. The *Bulletin of Prisoners' Relatives* was giving information about many places where isolated congregations existed and where people had been in prison. So going back to these places of imprisonment to share the Gospel motivated some former prisoners. Those places of suffering seemed to attract missionaries. As one interviewee shared,

> "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the saints," in other words, the places where our brothers' and fathers' blood was shed. Where did they suffer? They were sent to the Far East; they were sent to Yakutia; they were sent to Komi; they were sent beyond the Urals. Go there, where our fathers suffered. And where blood was shed, there will be an awakening.

Short-Term Missions

In a few cases, Ukrainians who served in the Soviet Army somewhere, after finishing their service, decided to stay and do mission work. Numerous participants cited the importance of short-term missions in their decision to become long-term missionaries. Even those who did not become long-term missionaries were at least exposed to the missionary surge and could help support it better. In fact, the most commonly mentioned connection that influenced Ukrainian evangelicals to go to a particular mission field was having been there on a short-term mission trip. Very often, just going to a place and seeing the needs and opportunities connected Ukrainians to this place in such a way they felt that they just had to go back. As one Ukrainian missionary shared,

> Each time after we showed the [Campus Crusade Jesus] film, we gave a call to repentance. A huge number of people came forward to repent. This was a witness to the fact that this was really God's calling. I planned to be there for only two months, but that thirst that people had for God's Word, it changed my intentions. I decided, okay, I'll go for two years. I returned home, I spoke with my wife. She said, "Yes, I agree." Our fourth child had just been born. And we, in 1991, with our four children, moved to the city. Since that time, two years have already been stretched into 24.

Thus, seeing what was happening on the mission field was enough for many Ukrainians to want to be a part of it. One interviewee referred to the "thirst" in people, that in three to five minutes, you could gather a crowd of people to hear the Gospel. After seeing that, "We understood that we needed to organize something in order to preach the Gospel." That understanding helped start the mission organization Voice of Hope. One participant spoke of what he saw on a short-term mission trip to Yakutsk: "A new movement, new churches. I encountered something that I had never seen before." And he, and many others, wanted to be a part of it. In a number of cases, missionary families did the inviting, often initially for a short period of time or for a short-term mission trip. Another Ukrainian missionary shared how he first went to the mission field:

> My cousin left for the Ural Mountains in Russia in 1990. He had been gone for a month when he returned and told me that there were many people there who had never heard the Gospel. I was the leader of a youth group, and we decided to go. There were about half Slavic people and half Muslim peoples—Bashkirs, Tatars, and others. We went there, a group of eight people—three sisters and five brothers. I organized the group and we went to preach the Gospel there. We went for three weeks. It was amazing how God worked in the hearts of people. And people turned to Jesus Christ. After these people repented, a question touched my heart: Who will stay with these people and go further with them? Who will help them get established in their faith?

New Freedom

As freedom came to evangelical churches in the Soviet Union during perestroika, especially during the 1988 celebration of the thousandth anniversary of the baptism of Kyivan Rus', evangelicals gained access to preach in public places. As the government failed and as social systems began to break down, evangelicals also had more opportunities to play a role in society, replacing much of the social safety net. The charitable ministry of evangelicals was encouraged and even began to be depended upon to care for the needy in society, and especially for alcoholics and drug addicts who needed rehabilitation. Thus, evangelicals gained access to an "institutional niche" that helped give them a platform for increased missionary work. As one Ukrainian missionary put it in an interview, "We can do things now that we could never do before." Ukrainian evangelicals simply took advantage of the new door that had opened before them. In short, again to quote a Ukrainian missionary, "Clearly, the chief catalyst for mission efforts at that time was the sudden burst of freedom."

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Spontaneous Beginnings

The political and economic upheavals in Ukraine throughout the years in question, 1989-1999, dramatically affected the missionary surge at every turn. In sum, it developed from spontaneous to structured and from independent to increasingly tied to Western support. Especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s Ukrainian missionaries set out with enthusiasm and zeal, but with little or no training or planning. They would often go to the mission field

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without any support—just by faith and with perhaps enough money to reach their destination. They realized that they were not necessarily prepared, but they wanted to go anyway. They did not know very much about the mission field—which was probably good for the missionary surge, since too many details and knowledge of problems might have dissuaded some Ukrainians from going. The Ukrainian evangelical missionary surge of the 1990s was basically a movement of amateurs. Many of those who went had gifts and some experience in ministry, and those in the first generation of missionaries who had grown up in Soviet times were often spiritually mature and dedicated. Still, even they did not understand much about mission nor have any experience or training. Very little training had been available in Soviet times and mission was not even a familiar word to most people.

From 1989 to 1993, hundreds of mission organizations were founded in Ukraine. Some were quite small while others became large, successful entities, engaging in evangelistic and cross-cultural ministries.

The Development of Organized Planning

In many cases, Ukrainian evangelical missionaries went to the mission field independently—with little or no mission structure behind them—especially in the early years of the missionary surge. Thus, missionaries actually preceded missionary structures, but once developed, they proved useful in supporting and continuing the Ukrainian missionary surge. To that end, from 1989 to 1993, hundreds of mission organizations were founded in Ukraine. Some were quite small while others became large, successful entities, engaging in evangelistic and cross-cultural ministries. Particularly in the area of cross-cultural missions, Ukrainians were much more active than their neighbors in Russia, having more than twice the number of evangelical missionaries.

Soviet Collapse, Hyperinflation, and Increased Western Support

A major turning point in the Ukrainian missionary surge came in December 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union, which resulted in different currencies in different countries of the former Soviet Union, hyperinflation, and general economic chaos. When this happened, the ability of national believers to support missionaries or even for missionaries to support themselves became much more difficult, and in many cases, the West stepped in to help. Missionary support moved from 100 percent local to more and more Western over the course of the 1990s. Yet, even with these economic difficulties, financial support was not often considered to be an important factor, positive or negative, in the missionary surge, perhaps because evangelicals were used to being poor under communism. After 1991, as finances became more of a problem, more systematic support helped to sustain the missionary surge. Note the experience of Americans helping a Ukrainian missionary family find a place to live in Kazan:

> We met a really lovely Ukrainian couple and their two kids—just drove from Ukraine, want to plant a church among the Tatar people. I said, "Well, where are you living?" And they said, "In our car." I said, "What do you mean?" They said, "Well we've been living for six months in our car." And I said, "Well winter's coming! It's going to be cold! Do you have a church?" They said, "Oh yeah, we've already planted a church, but we don't have a place to live. Maybe we can live in the church, you know, rent out a room somewhere." These Americans actually helped them get an apartment.

From a Western perspective, the needs were not that large, so it was easy to help. As one Ukrainian shared, "If you were given 100 to 150 dollars, that was great. For the West, it wasn't that hard to give—to support someone for 100 dollars [per month]. For us that was a good salary."

Many dozens of mostly small U.S. and European missions had been involved in outreach in the Soviet Union prior to its breakup in 1991, primarily through shortwave radio broadcasting and the printing and clandestine distribution of Bibles and other Christian literature. Especially prominent in this regard were a number of ministries with Slavic émigré leadership and staff: the German Light in the East, Slavic Gospel Association (Peter Deyneka, Sr., and Jr.), Russian Christian Radio (Earl Poysti), The Bible League (Waldemar Kurtz), and Sweden's Slaviska Missionen.

Poysti, Lehtinen, and Reimer

Regarding early support for mission from abroad those interviewed often mentioned émigré radio broadcaster Earl Poysti. His sermons pushed listeners to think about missions, and when freedom came, he did a preaching tour to help promote the work of Light of the Gospel mission. Finnish evangelist Kalevi Lehtinen, who like Poysti could speak in Russian, was constantly doing ministry in the Soviet Union. Russian German Johannes Reimer also helped motivate Ukrainians to become missionaries.

The Lausanne Movement

Another source of vision for Ukrainian missions came from the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, promoted by Billy Graham from the U.S. and John Stott from Great Britain. Lausanne conferences held in Manila in 1989 and in Moscow in 1990 made a significant impact. Participants in Lausanne's Moscow Congress on Evangelization included 900 Soviet citizens and 100 Westerners from various mission organizations. Here representatives from a broad spectrum of evangelical movements were able to learn from one another. Exposure to the outside world, and especially to foreign churches and mission organizations, provided a new vision for the possibility of mission work. This time was both motivating and enabling for indigenous missionaries, many of whom came from Ukraine. The Lausanne conferences especially emboldened Ukrainian Baptists to think about missions, encouraging them through God's Word and the example of missionaries from around the world. Baptist leaders made key contacts, both within the Soviet Union and with foreign mission organizations and missionaries, and were given evangelistic tools for doing missions, including projectors and the Jesus Film.

Western Partnerships

Especially as the economy failed, mission organizations and missionaries looked to the West for support. If we take the years 1992-93, people were impoverished very quickly in the former Soviet Union. Hyperinflation had its effect. At that time, interest from Western organizations in the Soviet Union grew so that the directors of mission organizations and initiators of different kinds of ministries all looked to partner with the West, and they stopped paying as much attention to collecting the "kopecks" from local churches because foreign support was easier to obtain. American and German sponsors particularly gave toward church planting and Christian broadcasting in Ukraine. Numerous churches, missions, seminaries, and publishing houses were established in the 1990s as a result of foreign financial support.

The Provision of Christian Literature

The provision of Christian literature continued as a mainstay of Western assistance. The United Bible Societies, The Bible League, Slavic Gospel Association, Light in the East, Emmanuel Mission, and Open Doors were especially active in this work, among many dozens of additional Western missions. Undoubtedly, Christian literature helped facilitate the effectiveness of the Ukrainian evangelical missionary surge of the 1990s. As an example, the German mission Light in the East sent large amounts of Christian literature to Light of the Gospel mission, which then sent it on to individuals, churches, and other ministries, in addition to using it for its own missionary ministry. Thousands of packages of literature were sent to far-away places like Kamchatka and Sakhalin, providing a very big impulse for the development of missions.

Baptist Centers for Missionary Development

One Baptist mission organization that underwent remarkable growth from small beginnings was Light of the Gospel, based in Rivne, western Ukraine. One Ukrainian interviewee explained how this indigenous ministry, which worked alone in 1989, connected in 1990 with Gospel for Asia, Interact, and then Light in the East. By 1993, a "line" of organizations and people was waiting to talk to representatives of Light of the Gospel. By that year Light of the Gospel had grown significantly, from 13 people in 1989 to 170 staff and missionaries who worked with another 300 volunteers. It had opened some 70 mission stations in Russia, Ukraine, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, and had established four regional branches—in Yakutia (Siberia), Kazan (central Russia), Kharkiv (northeastern Ukraine) and Makiivka (southeastern Ukraine)—and soon would open a fifth in Moscow (Russia). At one point, Light in the East supported 70 to 80 missionaries with Light of the Gospel. The Russian Baptist Union also got involved supporting Ukrainian missionaries in the mid-1990s. It, too, largely depended on foreign support, "farming out funds from Western mission agencies to church planting missionaries."

A significant component of the Ukrainian missionary surge involved training. Light of the Gospel began to work together with radio broadcaster Earl Poysti and through Poysti, Sergei Tupchik was able to visit America. One of Tupchik's stops was at Denver [Conservative Baptist] Seminary, where he shared the needs that Light of the Gospel had for training. Out of that meeting, Light of the Gospel invited Denver Seminary Professor Ray Prigodich to teach a basic course on missions at Vorzel, outside Kyiv, for its missionaries in August 1989, and again in July 1990. After reaching an agreement with Denver Seminary, Light of the Gospel was able to establish a Bible college in Eastern Ukraine in August 1991. Originally called Light of the Gospel Bible College and then Donetsk Bible College, it later took the name Donetsk Christian University (DCU). Hundreds received training in missiology, in addition to other important subjects, thanks to Ray Prigodich and other teachers from Denver Seminary. Thus, DCU was a strong source and conduit of missionaries in the early 1990s and remained so through the rest of the 1990s.

Pentecostal Centers for Missionary Development

Western Ukraine and the Donetsk Oblast were geographical centers for missionary development for Pentecostals as well as Baptists. Between 1993 and 2009, Good Samaritan mission, which had begun underground in 1972 in Rivne, western Ukraine, held 16 three-month missionary schools, each training about 25 missionaries for work within Ukraine and abroad. As of 2010, Good Samaritan had planted 110 new Pentecostal churches by means of its 450 missionaries who had worked or were working on its behalf. Voice of Hope, another indigenous Pentecostal mission founded in 1990 in Volyn Oblast, was a consolidation of various mission groups, plus some individual missionaries. By the middle of 1992, it had sent missionaries to seven regions of Russia: Karelia, the Komi Republic, Tatarstan, Udmurtia, the Caucasus, and Siberia, including Yakutia. As of 2009, Voice of Hope fielded 338 missionaries working in Ukraine, Russia, and Central Europe. Finally, Possibility mission, founded in Donetsk Oblast in 1989, planted over 60 churches in the Russian regions of Udmurtia, Siberia, Sakhalin, and Kalmykia over the course of its history.

In addition to Good Samaritan's missionary schools, Ukrainian Pentecostals founded the Odessa Missionary School in 1990, while U.S.-based Calvary International founded Jelgava Bible School, Jelgava, Latvia. Jelgava played a significant role in training and sending Pentecostal missionaries in the 1990s. Its graduates enjoyed great success as members of some 25 to 30 missionary teams, with Calvary International providing the support, in addition to short-term mission teams which assisted new long-term missionaries.

Additional Western Support

In addition to training, Western Pentecostals (in particular, Sweden's Slaviska Missionen) assisted the Ukrainian missionary surge through casting a vision for work among unreached people groups in the 1980s. Other endeavors that supported the missionary surge were the Superbook television broadcasts and Christian literature follow-up of CBN's Emmanuel

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By 1993, Light of the Gospel had grown significantly, from 13 people in 1989 to 170 staff and missionaries who worked with another 300 volunteers at stations in Russia, Ukraine, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Siberia.

Ukrainian Missionary Surge *(continued from page 7)*

Mission and the publishing and delivery of Bibles by the Assemblies of God, Emmanuel Mission, and many other groups.

The German missionary organization Nehemiah helped Ukrainian Pentecostal missionaries in a number of ways. It provided the Jesus Film, sound equipment, and New Testaments for missionaries and evangelists. It also recruited and supported Ukrainians to go into missions. Waldemar Saradchuk, representing Nehemiah, traveled around Ukraine, recruiting missionaries to go to Russia. He gained the trust of many Pentecostal leaders, who helped assemble teams of Ukrainians that Nehemiah sent out and supported in Smolensk, Moscow, and all the way to Irkutsk in Siberia.

In Summary

The idea of missions was not, for the most part, understood or accepted prior to the missionary surge. So what changed that made it compelling to so many Ukrainians, particularly young Ukrainians? Based on participants' observations, more Bibles and Christian literature became available for believers to read about missions. People received callings from God to go into missions. Freedom of speech and spiritual interest by masses of people encouraged Ukrainians to preach the Gospel openly. Centers for missionary development, primarily in Western Ukraine and the Donetsk Oblast, also influenced the Ukrainian evangelical missionary surge of the 1990s. In addition, Ukrainian evangelicals were finally able to communicate freely with the global evangelical church, which had been doing missions for centuries. Furthermore, missionaries were influenced by communication agents who inspired them and invited them to go to the mission field, as well as by facilitation agents, that is, missionary structures that helped enable missionaries to go. Yet, the missionary surge developed largely at a grassroots level; Western and indigenous communicators and facilitators were helpful, but not decisive.

Judging the Role of Western Support

So, what kind of role did foreign mission organizations play in the Ukrainian evangelical missionary surge of the 1990s? As it turns out, not a very big one. Despite the fact that thousands of foreign missionaries and hundreds of foreign mission organizations descended upon the former Soviet Union, it is remarkable how little the West was involved in the Ukrainian evangelical missionary surge. One participant characterized the role of foreign missionaries in Russia this way: "They were never first; they always worked after the Russian missionary, helping support his [the Russian's] work." In many cases, foreign missions did not work with national believers in the former Soviet Union at all, and thus, were unrelated to the Ukrainian evangelical missionary surge. ♦

Edited excerpts published with permission from John Edward White, "Factors behind the Ukrainian Evangelical Missionary Surge from 1989 to 1999," Ph.D. dissertation, Biola University, 2016.

John White *is a missionary with WorldVenture and teaches at the Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary, Kyiv, Ukraine.*

Educational Institutions Founded by Religious Organizations in Ukraine

Albina Pareniuk with Ray LeClair and Cindy LeClair

Ukraine on 2 June 2015 passed Legislative Bill No. 1447. This law gives religious organizations the right to found educational institutions at every level – quite a progressive development for a post-communist country.

An historic day for Ukraine came on 2 June 2015 as its parliament passed Legislative Bill No. 1447, "On Amendments to Some Laws of Ukraine on the Establishment of Educational Institutions by Religious Organizations" (http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/498-19). This law gives religious organizations the right to found not only theological educational institutions, but also institutions of general education at every level – quite a progressive development for a post-communist country in this region. In many other parts of the world schools founded by religious organizations have a long history and are popular due to their high quality and the moral upbringing they provide, but independent Ukraine has only recently managed to provide a legal basis for establishing such schools through this law. Hopeful signs are in evidence that Ukraine may even provide a means for parents to pay for their children's education in such schools with government funds. Ukraine may be on the cusp of a significant growth of Christian pre-schools, kindergartens, elementary schools, high schools, and perhaps institutes of higher education. Already since the passing of this law, a total of at least 22 new Christian pre-schools and elementary schools have either been registered or are in the process of registration.

The Christian community in Ukraine is grateful to the three members of the Ukrainian Rada (Parliament), who co-authored Bill No. 1447 – people affiliated with different Christian denominations: Victor Yelensky (Orthodox), Lilia Grynevych (Greek Catholic), and Pavlo Ungurian (Protestant). In recommending this bill to Parliament prior to the vote in 2015, Mrs. Grynevych, then Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Science and Education (and currently the Ukrainian Minister of Education), explained the importance of the needed legislation: "Today, any organization or individual has the right to establish a school, while religious organizations do not have this right." This is completely contrary to Ukraine's constitutional law (Amendment 23, Article 3) entitled, "On the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations," which establishes the right of parents to educate their children according to their religious convictions and worldview positions.

During intense debates over the course of many months, the bill's authors repeatedly pointed out the need for legal experts to resolve the contradiction between Article 35 of the Constitution governing the separation of church and school and the aforementioned constitutional right of parents to educate their children according to their own religious convictions and philosophy (Amendment 23, Article 3). In the end, lawmakers agreed that while all schools, both public and private, were to use a state-mandated core curriculum, only public schools were to be subject to the separation of church and school clause. This decision officially opened the door for the inclusion of a religious component to private school education, although the parameters for this remain undefined to this day.

The Roots of Law No. 1447

The law as passed was written as a result of numerous appeals by Christian communities to the people's deputies' inter-party Alliance for Spirituality, Morality, and Health of Ukraine. At least two previous legislative initiatives never made it to the parliament's voting agenda. Both of these bills were ultimately rejected by the Committee on Education of the Ukrainian Rada on grounds that they violated Article 35 of the Constitution on the separation of church and school – an argument that in practice deprived parents of their right to educate their children according to their religious convictions and philosophy.

All three bills grew out of the awareness-raising campaigns conducted after 2000, especially by two organizations - the Greek Catholic Church of Ukraine and the Center for Educational Programs (CEP) of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). Together these organizations at the time represented about 40 registered private schools whose Christian status was not recognized officially. In partnership with the Center for Religious Information and Freedom of the Ukrainian Association of Religious Studies (Kyiv), CEP organized three conferences to spotlight the need for legislation on Christian education and encourage activism in the Christian community. The first conference was held in April, 2002, the second in January, 2006, and the third in February, 2008. The last was attended by Mrs. Grynevych, then head of the Kyiv Administration of Education and Sciences. Representatives from all the major Christian denominations and more than ten civil and governmental agencies of Ukraine participated. Of particular interest to local participants, who had relatively little understanding of the issues of Christian education at the time, were the perspectives of two invited legal experts from Belgium, Dr. Jan De Groof and Dr. Gracienne Lauwers of the European Association for Education Law and Policy, who advise the European Union on freedom of choice in education and matters of private school education. Other speakers at the conference included experts in Christian educational theory and practice - Dr. Ken Smitherman of ACSI (USA) and Dr. John Shortt of the Stapleford Centre (UK). Many leaders of *de facto* Ukrainian Christian schools, registered at the time merely as private schools, also participated.

These early conferences achieved their goals as evidenced by the increasing number of Ukrainian leaders of various religious affiliations who subsequently called for an end to discrimination against religious organizations by allowing them to establish educational institutions that would meet the needs of their constituents. The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO), for example, repeatedly made appeals to allow the establishment of educational institutions by religious organizations. AUCCRO's involvement was an important development, as it is an interfaith association that includes 18 churches and religious organizations and an interdenominational religious organization; it represents Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, as well as other religious bodies. Together they represent 95 percent of the religious network of Ukraine.

Despite very wide support for this bill and the fact that Ukraine implemented so many other reforms since gaining its independence over 25 years ago, it took nine years to resolve the issue of "religious schools" at the legislative level. Finally, on 2 June 2015, the bill, "On the Establishment of Educational Institutions by Religious Organizations" (No. 1447), was approved by 237 of the people's deputies of the Ukrainian Rada. The law officially took effect on 4 August 2015.

Problematic Issues Following the Passing of Law 1447

As the passing of the progressive bill was a very significant step forward for Ukraine, representatives of civil society began to have confidence that this law would bring European-like standards to the sphere of education including freedom of choice, de-monopolization by the state, a healthy competitive environment, and conditions for exercising the right to educate children according to the religious worldviews of their parents. However, this is unlikely to fully take place without official guidelines for the implementation of the law on a practical level. Despite the country's frequent proclamations that it is moving away from its Communist past, a distinct bias remains in favor of secularism in the educational system that inhibits the establishment and effectiveness of private schools organized by Christians. The necessity for Christian educational institutions to have a distinctly Christian character in order to fulfill their mission seems to remain beyond the understanding of many state officials, especially on the regional level. Religious organizations sometimes face difficulties when trying to register their educational institutions and implement their vision of education. Local educational authorities, in particular, need to gain an understanding of the nature and requirements of the Christian educational institution in meeting the needs of the communities of Christian parents they serve.

In response to this situation, various denominations, Christian lawyers and teachers, politicians, and the newly founded (2016)

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Lawmakers agreed that while all schools, both public and private, were to use a state-mandated core curriculum, only public schools were to be subject to the separation of church and school clause.

Religious Organizations' Educational Institutions in Ukraine

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International Alliance for the Development of Christian Education (IADCE, which took up the cause of Christian school education after the unfortunate closure of CEP-ACSI in September 2015), are endeavoring to influence the proper implementation of the 2015 legislation. Their aim is to assist in interpreting the new law and promoting an understanding of the distinctive elements of Christian education. Issues that undoubtedly will need to be addressed in the future include curricular guidelines, evaluation, teacher training and certification, as well as school accreditation.

Most urgently at this stage, however, is the regulation of the basic policy regarding the legal and administrative aspects of religious schools. One of the most important leadership roles in this regard is being played by the Sub-committee on Education of Ukraine's "Reanimation Package of Reforms" (RPR) – a non-sectarian grassroots public movement of volunteer citizens of various philosophical and religious persuasions pressing for needed reforms in all spheres of government. This sub-committee on education has coordinated and refined countless suggestions from its constituents and submitted them to the Ministry of Education and Science for inclusion in the nation's (recently revised) Law on Education that is scheduled to be voted on in Parliament later in 2017. In this way, the sub-committee hopes to improve the system of education as a whole, including those aspects related to educational institutions founded by religious organizations.

One hopeful sign is that Ukraine's Minister for Education, Mrs. Lilia Grynevych, continues to support the concept of education in institutions founded by religious organizations.

As the RPR Sub-committee on Education has pointed out, the following basic problems exist in various localities in varying degrees despite the passing of Law No. 1447:

- Negative stereotypes that characterized the Soviet regime continue regarding attitudes toward religion and the church, with particularly biased attitudes toward certain religious communities.
- Little understanding exists within governmental and educational administrations of the right of religious organizations to found educational institutions with a distinctly religious character. Now that Christians have the right to educate children in private institutions according to their religious worldview and values, provisions will need to be made for certain adaptations of state-mandated school curriculum and school life. At a minimum, for example, allowance needs to be made for teachers to present Christian alternative views regarding elements of the state curriculum that are distinctly secular in character. It will also require adaptations in educational oversight, evaluation, and school administration.
- Because education is not a priority in Ukrainian politics, no fiscal mechanisms are in place to develop a tax structure that takes into consideration the existence and potential growth of private educational institutions.
- With very few exceptions, no financial subsidies from national and local educational budgets are currently provided to Christian schools.
- Christian educational institutions do not have the same access to state-owned educational and sports facilities in their communities, despite the fact that they are required to comply with the same state laws, fulfill the same governmental educational mandates (especially the use of the same core curriculum), and are subject to the same standards of quality in education. This discrepancy occurs even though, as self-financing establishments, Christian educational institutions are relieving local governmental educational budgets of significant financial responsibilities. Christian schools independently finance their own instructional services and administrative infrastructure, as well as the technical equipment and supplies needed for their institutions.
- In the spirit of the Soviet regime, some government administrators still believe that reform of the educational sphere in Ukraine can be undertaken without consideration of the needs of the clients of education – parents (many of whom are religious adherents). In some areas of the country such as western Ukraine, religious believers comprise the majority of the population, yet Ukraine's new policy of educational decentralization has not yet brought the level of reform that in practice allows religious parents to have a bona fide choice in the education of their children. The situation is exacerbated by the lack of official demographic research, so the right of access to quality education of a Christian nature remains unattainable for many Ukrainian parents.

Hopeful Signs

While much remains to be done in order for Christian educational institutions to fully benefit from Law No. 1447, some progress is being made. One hopeful sign is that Ukraine's Minister of Education, Mrs. Lilia Grynevych, continues to support the concept of education in institutions founded by religious organizations. She actively seeks input for improving the system of education from a variety of organizations including the RPR, and is working to promote the inclusion of relevant articles into Ukraine's newly revised Law on Education. If passed by Parliament, the new law will create favorable conditions for the qualitative and quantitative growth of Christian educational institutions in Ukraine. (Note: IADCE is currently aware of the existence of 56 Christian schools and 9 pre-schools in Ukraine, of which 37 are members of the Alliance.) Of special note is the proposal to allow "the money to go with the child," a kind of voucher system that allows government educational funds to pay for the education of a child in alternative schools, including religious schools.

Secondly, the founding of the International Alliance for the Development of Christian Education (www.mapxo.org) by a union of six Ukrainian organizations, occurring the very same year as the passing of Law No. 1447, is likely to prove to be a very timely and fortuitous development for the Christian community. In the spirit of its predecessor, CEP-ACSI, the Alliance focuses primarily on the supplemental training of Christian school teachers of various countries in the region to assist them

in integrating quality academic instruction with worldview positions and values that are consistent with the Christian faith in order to effect a holistic, biblical, formation of the minds and hearts of students. Much work remains to be done to assist teachers in providing an education that is balanced from a Christian perspective in its underlying educational philosophy and goals, course content, teaching practices, and school ethos. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to see that Christians who are working cooperatively in the spheres of education and government are making a tangible difference, especially in Ukraine. ♦

Albina Pareniuk *(Kyiv, Ukraine) is head of the Education Sub-committee of the Ukrainian NGO, "Reanimation Package of Reforms;" president of the foundation and director of the early education centers, "Gift of Learning" and "F-Club;" and a founding board member of IADCE.*

Raymond Le Clair *(Kyiv, Ukraine) is director of the Christian Education Resource Network of Mission Eurasia; chairman of the board of IADCE; and former director of CEP-ACSI.*

Cindy Le Clair *(Kyiv, Ukraine) is associate director of the Christian Education Resource Network of Mission Eurasia serving with IADCE; and former associate director of CEP-ACSI.*

The Orthodox Mission Network

Olga Oleinik

According to Ecclesiastes 1:9, "There is nothing new under the sun." In contrast, in Revelation 1:5 we read, "Behold, I make all things new." So in this brief outline about the activities of the Orthodox Mission Network, the point should not be to strive for newness in itself when we plan or do mission work, but to be prepared should God choose to have His followers undertake a new approach to outreach for His purposes. In the Parable of the Talents the Lord warns us against neglecting our gifts. Therefore, we have a call to always be alert to the changing world around us and to remain alert for new, emerging opportunities for joining in God's work of salvation and revelation of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Albanian Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), in his book, *Mission in Christ's Way* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press and the World Council of Churches), speaks of the past and present mission activity of the Orthodox Church as "a work still limited," because Orthodox mission in non-Orthodox lands and cultures is still a rare phenomenon. If we look at world witness in light of the mission affirmation of the World Council of Churches (WCC),"Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes," we understand that a great preparatory work needs to be done in all WCC member churches and at all levels of ecclesial life, not only mission boards. We also need to remember that today the context changes rapidly, requiring mission work to undertake new approaches. The Lord said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few, so pray." In addition to praying, we also need to learn to rely more on God and what He has to offer and less on financial resources and our plans and programs, especially if we are to serve the most vulnerable and the most marginal of unreached peoples.

Orthodox Mission Network Beginnings

The work of God in this world and in the communities of the faithful never ceases. Therefore, as cultures change the need arises for new ways of fulfilling our evangelistic calling. Under the umbrella of the Orthodox Mission Network (OMN) I will survey several forms of ministry present in various Orthodox Churches worldwide.

In 2010 thousands of Christians around the world remembered the centenary of the 1910 Edinburgh Mission Conference. In addition, in February 2010 Orthodox missiologists and mission workers gathered in Minsk, Belarus, to address various challenges faced in Orthodox ministry today. One of the highlights of this meeting, which took place in a post-Communist country, was the recognition of the need for the church to be free to evangelize—free on the basis of law, but also free from the vestiges of a debilitating totalitarian spirit. The common desire was to organize Orthodox missionary consultations on a regular basis.

In February 2010 Orthodox missiologists and mission workers gathered in Minsk, Belarus, to address various challenges faced in Orthodox ministry today.

OMN Goals

Since 2010 the Orthodox Mission Network has held meetings in Bulgaria, Finland, Romania, Greece, and Albania. These gatherings have identified a set of goals for the common work of the Network: to provide a platform for meetings and the sharing of resources and best mission practices; to organize the monitoring of mission ministries; to encourage mission work; to advocate for world evangelism within the Orthodox Church; to work for more visibility of mission ministries, including mass media; to create programs for missionary reflection and training; and to promote the creation of an Orthodox missionary training center.

Other Orthodox Mission Efforts

The Orthodox Mission Network maintains ties with and encourages collaboration with other Orthodox mission efforts.

- The Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), www.ocmc.org, based in St. Augustine, Florida, U.S., is mandated by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas to undertake mission work worldwide. It recruits, prepares, sends, and supports Orthodox missionaries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Southern and Eastern Europe.

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- "Filantropia" of the Orthodox Church in Finland (http://kirkkotoimii.fi/ortaid/pages/in-english.php) is a merger of several mission and social aid organizations acting together since 2013. It runs mission, education, and aid programs in Africa and Eastern Europe.
- The Russian Orthodox Mission Society of St. Serapion Kozheozersky (www.serapion.org) is working in the mission field in various regions of the world, including Asia and Africa, under the leadership of Dean Georgi Maximov.
- The Russian Orthodox Church and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church support synodal departments devoted to mission.

Orthodox churches now have a networking agency that connects a great variety of Orthodox evangelistic and missionary efforts together for the benefit of Orthodoxy's worldwide witness.

Other Christian Partners

The Network also invites to its meetings observers from other Christian confessions, including the Church Mission Society of the United Kingdom, Faith2Share, the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, and Protestant theological institutions in Budapest, Hungary, and Muenster, Germany. The Orthodox Mission Network also benefits from the participation of spiritual movements and communities which engage in evangelism as part of the life vocation of their members. For example, the Lord's Army, founded in the beginning of the 20th century by Fr. Iosif Trifa, has branches all over Romania that focus on common worship, study, and the living out of the Gospel. A second example is Russia's Transfiguration Union of Brotherhoods founded in the 1970s in Moscow by Fr. Georgi Kotchetkov. This fellowship's primary activity is evangelism among non-Christians and catechism of newly baptized Orthodox who had no previous connection with the Church. These brotherhoods currently work in Russia, Belarus, and Moldova.

OMN Promotion of Training

Last but not least, the Orthodox Mission Network works with missiologists, teachers, and students of theological schools in Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Greece, and Germany to strengthen their focus on missions. This connection is important because it gives the Network access to contemporary missiological research and stimulates exchanges between mission practitioners and researchers. One of the goals of the Orthodox Mission Network is to help organize training opportunities that bring missionaries with experience together with those just beginning missionary service (http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/2970230.html). The Orthodox Mission Network organized its first international training for missionaries in Albania in 2014. Another such training event is in the planning stages for Kenya.

In Closing

In closing, it is important to stress that Orthodox churches now have a networking agency that connects a great variety of Orthodox evangelistic and missionary efforts together for the benefit of Orthodoxy's worldwide witness. The Orthodox Mission Network's goal is to find ways to work together to contribute to the mission ministry of the Orthodox Church worldwide. The Network's hope and prayer is that God will bless and assist its efforts to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. ♦

Olga Oleinik, *Minsk, Belarus, is the facilitator for the Orthodox Mission Network and was East European consultant for the Church Mission Society, Great Britain, from 2007 to 2016.*

Maximus the Confessor's Answer to Balkan—and Broader—Disarray

Kostake Milkov

Over the past nearly three decades since 1989 the Balkans have undergone events of monumental magnitude: the demise of Soviet and Communist domination of not only the Balkans, but of all of Central and Eastern Europe, along with the breaking up of the Soviet Union into 15 independent republics, and movement toward market economies. This transition was most violent in the Balkans with the deadly overthrow of Ceausescu's regime in Romania, the disintegration of Yugoslavia into civil war, and the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. The most frequently used term for this series of events is *transition.*

No aspect of Balkan society remains unaffected by this transition. The sudden crumbling of the old system—almost overnight—revealed to us that we had neither the infrastructure nor the methodology necessary to incorporate the values of western democracies into our own societies. We tormented ourselves with elections that resembled tribal wars; we introduced new approaches to education without taking the time and effort to properly measure the results; but above all, we took religion and culture for granted.

Globalization versus Tribalization

In reality, Balkan religion and culture have been torn in two different directions. Those favoring a Western orientation insist on the advantages of pluralism and tolerance. Religious and cultural conservatives, in contrast, are adamant in their attachment to tradition, the glorious tradition of one's faith, language, literature, and song—in other words, one's "pure," undefiled culture. An uncompromising mentality in both camps brooks no meeting of minds, but rather hardened dichotomies: ours versus theirs, winners versus losers, persecutors versus persecuted, and truth tellers versus falsifiers. We are witnessing two simultaneous and contradictory movements: globalization and tribalization.

Multiculturalism versus Tradition

Many support multiculturalism as a counter to unfettered majority rule that marginalizes minorities. Others deem this trend as a threat to longstanding religious and cultural traditions to the extent that no group can claim primacy for its cultural "truthfulness." Hence, on one side, is the watchword *tolerance*, accompanied by the mantra of human rights and the defense of minority rights. On the other side, those who swear by their tradition, language, and faith consider the imposition of multiculturalism and tolerance as a violation of their rights.

Characteristic of both camps is the tendency to interpret their differences as irreconcilable. Consequently, any sort of resolution, unless it involves the unconditional surrender of those holding the opposing view, is considered absolutely impossible. Contenders in this culture war, instead of thinking of the common good of all of society's participants, argue that opposing positions are mutually exclusive. The result is that supporters of tolerance apply the principle to all others except those supporting the principle of traditional values, while traditionalists, for their part, regard all threats to traditional values, real and imagined, as intolerable.

Proponents of so-called multicultural tolerance insist on less and less space for the influence of faith in society. They hope to reduce religion to the private life of the individual, while opening as wide as possible a space for a culture of unrestricted individualism and free expression for painters, writers, musicians, etc. Traditionalists, for their part, press for state support for the majority faith as a source of social stability and the development of healthy future generations. The turmoil generated by these two conflicting worldviews pervades the Balkans, especially Macedonia.

How is this schizophrenic condition of the Balkans to be interpreted? How does one negotiate the region's almost unanimous consensus that its future lies with a united Europe, while simultaneously defending a sectarian insistence upon privilege for one's own tradition, especially regarding the role of faith and culture?

The Eastern Orthodox Legacy

An appreciation of the difficulties faced in the Balkans today depends in good measure upon an understanding of the region's Eastern Orthodox legacy. Eastern Orthodox in the Balkans claim a rich Christian heritage that, they contend, has been unbroken ever since the time of the New Testament. Balkan Orthodox maintain that theirs is the only true church and that the other Christian confessions, Roman Catholicism included, have fallen from communion with Christ. Ecumenical dialogue in which Orthodox churches have participated has not really changed this view, especially at the grassroots level.

It is not surprising, then, that one of the greatest challenges that Balkan Orthodox face is nationalism. As a rule, Orthodox believers consider their nationality and their faith as one and the same. Therefore, if one is Macedonian, Serbian, Bulgarian, or Greek, then one is an Orthodox Christian. Orthodox leaders are well aware of this popular attitude, and they employ it to enhance people's loyalty to the Orthodox Church as a component of their national identity. In the eyes of most Orthodox clergy, their church, which helped people remain Christian during Ottoman rule, has the very same role today in protecting its believers against other religious influences, especially from any Western form of Christianity. Presently Orthodox consider evangelical Protestantism as the greatest threat. In the Balkans evangelical denominations date back more than a century, and although insignificant in numbers, they can be deemed traditional. The significant increase in the number of Balkan Orthodox converts to Protestantism following the fall of Communism in 1989 has put Orthodoxy on the defensive.

Symphonia versus Separation of Church and State

One has to keep in mind that the Orthodox legacy in the Balkans is closely tied to the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire's understanding of legitimate rule: it was to be a *symphonia* of dual secular and ecclesiastic authority. The two-headed eagle on the Byzantine coat-of-arms was the visual representation of the dictum that the emperor and the patriarch were to rule together. The patriarch was to ensure that the Empire kept the true faith, and the Emperor was to defend the true faith. This legacy leads Balkan Orthodox clergy to defend the vision of the one true church leading the people in the true faith, with secular governments responsible for the protection of the Orthodox faith.

Although all the Balkan states are parliamentary democracies, with constitutional separation of church and state, tacit religious discrimination against non-Orthodox is nevertheless the case. Many Orthodox deem state privilege important because the general commitment of the population to Orthodoxy is quite nominal. Among the younger generation in particular, secularism, globalization, materialism, atheism, and vestiges of folk religion all combine to undermine serious Orthodox observance.

Countering these trends, a revival of Orthodox monastic spirituality and missionary work is instilling greater devotion among nominal Orthodox believers. Zealous priests lead most of these efforts, priests who oppose the presence and witness of non-Orthodox Christians, especially evangelicals. On the other hand, a few Orthodox clergy and theologians do not disapprove of evangelicals, rather seeing them as allies in reclaiming indifferent nations for Christ. While such cases are very rare, they still could be—and to a certain extent already are—a stepping stone toward genuine Orthodox-evangelical dialogue, better mutual understanding, and appreciation, rather than mere tolerance.

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Supporters of tolerance apply the principle to all others except those supporting the principle of traditional values, while traditionalists regard all threats to traditional values as intolerable.

Balkan Evangelicals

One of the great lessons Balkan evangelical Christians can learn is that a good share of the Orthodox legacy is their common Christian heritage: Christ as both wholly divine and wholly human, the Trinity, the substitutionary death of Christ, the commitment to biblical ethics and the preservation of traditional family values, are all very prominent in both Orthodoxy and evangelicalism. I do not advocate that evangelicals either stop their evangelistic work in traditionally Orthodox lands or simply direct evangelical efforts toward assisting nominal Orthodox re-appropriating their faith. Rather, I wish to stress the common ground Orthodox and evangelical followers of Christ share. If Balkan evangelical Christians study the influence of Orthodoxy upon their respective countries, they will uncover a rich Christian legacy that can serve them well in evangelism. Such openness to the value of the Orthodox tradition in the Balkans requires a vulnerability that is possible only with spiritual maturity far beyond mere declarative adherence to the right set of beliefs. Such openness to another Christian confession requires tireless demonstrations of Christlikeness through personal example, and only when needed, in words.

Today we live in a world that is trending toward greater parochialism, defensiveness, isolation, clannishness, and closed-mindedness.

A Lesson from Maximus the Confessor

In closing, let today's Christians, Eastern Orthodox and evangelical, be inspired by a good word from a sixth-century monk and theologian, Maximus the Confessor. Maximus' commentary on the Lord's Prayer, *Expositio orationis dominicae*, his most succinct spiritual exegesis of Scripture, gives in a relatively short text the essence of his views on self-sacrifice and renunciation, otherwise widely dispersed through his writings. Maximus here contends that the self-emptying of Christ for the sake of the world ought to be the model for all believers, again, for the sake of the world. Maximus makes this clear at the onset of his exposition on the Lord's Prayer: "For the words of the prayer make request for whatever the Word of God himself wrought through the flesh in his self-abasement."[1] In other words, everyone who says the words of Christ in the prayer is also asking to participate in Christ's self-abasement. For Maximus the principal link between humankind and God is the Incarnation in which the Almighty empties Himself in order to truly participate in human nature; in turn, so that man can truly participate in the divine nature.

In interpreting the Bible, Maximus never loses sight of the biblical portrayal of the cosmic battle that impacts earthly affairs. For him the Kingdom of God that Jesus inaugurated is in contrast to earthly governments (Matthew 20:28). Furthermore, Christians should forgive all those who have sinned against them. As well, they should identify with all victims of power, just as Jesus Himself identified with humanity by taking on Himself human flesh.

Maximus adds another incentive to his plea against hatred and the estrangement that follows: In forgiving those who have grieved us, we acknowledge them as fellow human beings.[2] Maximus' anthropological egalitarianism is based on the idea that all human beings in their basic natural state are of equal status before God because they are created after His image. All human persons carry the divine image in themselves, and should act towards each other as God in Christ acts towards us, practicing forgiveness. It is because of the image of God implanted in His human creation that human forgiveness is possible.[3] As Maximus writes, "When the Lord says 'Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you,'… He does not command the impossible, but clearly what is possible…. The Lord Himself…has shown it to us by His very works." This means that God expects human beings to do what is clearly within their capacity when aided by divine grace. In *Expositio orationis dominicae*, Maximus argues that only as we forgive others are we in a position to pray for the forgiveness of our own sins.[4]

Maximus reminds his readers that they are to conquer the world in the same manner that Christ conquered it. The wording in *Liber asceticus 15* is strong confirmation of Maximus' ideal of love as the renunciation of all satanic scheming and reasoning. Victory is to be won through love that is "giving up." The focal point of the apostle's ministry of reconciliation is that "by giving way, they conquered those who thought to conquer."[5]

For Maximus, divine selflessness and love are not just figures of speech, or a literary device to move believers to a better appreciation of benevolence. Rather, Maximus literally means what he says. The exhortation "to be concerned for others more than for ourselves" finds an echo in Maximus' *Epistle 44*. Maximus states that by the Incarnation, God has fulfilled the law of love that He has established. For Maximus this is a sign that the unthinkable has happened: God, the absolute being, the self-sufficient Creator to whom all creatures owe their existence, is willing to value humanity, and in it the whole world, as something worthy of sacrifice. The believer's love is proven true only if it pierces through the boundaries of self-love in sacrifice for the sake of the *other*.[6]

Maximus' Prescription for Overcoming Animosities

Today we live in a world that is trending toward greater parochialism, defensiveness, isolation, clannishness, and closed-mindedness. Increasingly we observe nations determined to exclude the other, the stranger, in an over-protective bid to preserve a certain perceived "way of life." Fueling these trends are fear of terrorism, ongoing conflict in the Middle East, and a vast refugee crisis. Results have included rising racial and religious animosity, as demonstrated by emboldened right-wing movements and parties across Europe, Britain's departure from the European Union (Brexit), and anti-foreigner rhetoric in 2016 U.S. elections.

In our present predicament we would be well-served to listen to the wisdom of the past in order to understand the present and provide hope for the world of tomorrow. One small but significant step to that good goal would be to heed the message of unconditional love and selflessness of Maximus the Confessor. ♦

Notes

[1] Maximus the Confessor, *Expositio orationis dominicae; Corpus Christianorum: Series Graeca*, Vol. 23, ed. by P. Van Deun (Leuven, Belgium: Turnhout, 1991), pp. 65-67.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

[3] Maximus the Confessor, *Liber asceticus; Corpus Christianorum: Series Graeca*, Vol. 40, ed. by P. Van Deun (Leuven, Belgium: Turnhout, 2000), p. 19; Luke 6: 27-28.

[4] Maximus the Confessor, *Expositio*, p. 69.

[5] Maximus the Confessor, *Liber asceticus*, p. 35.

[6] Maximus the Confessor, *Epistolae xlv; Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Graeca*, Vol. 91, ed. by J.P. Migne (Paris: 1857-1866), p. 91.

Edited excerpts published with permission from Kostake Milkov, "Renunciation in the Thought of Maximus the Confessor," Ph.D. dissertation, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University, 2010.

Kostake Milkov *holds a master's and doctor of philosophy degree in patristic theology from Oxford University. He is an ordained minister in the Evangelical Church in Macedonia and director of the Balkan Institute for Faith and Culture.*

Moldova Trafficking Prevention *(continued from page 16)*

Combatting Trafficking

Evangelical churches were slow to respond to trafficking as they themselves dealt with challenges of transitioning from state persecution to the realities of newly acquired freedom. Having realized that my native country is among the top suppliers of women for trafficking, I was determined to help women at risk once we returned to Moldova in 2004. I started gathering teenage girls in my home, where I talked to them about the dangers of human trafficking. I also did all I could to help women who had been trafficked and had managed to escape their captors. As I was able, I provided them with financial aid and groceries. Some women came back with children born from clients. These poor women were shamed and rejected by their families and had to start their lives all over again.

Prevention through Job Training

With high unemployment figures for Moldova, I thought that teaching a profession to women at risk could give them a source of income, even if a modest one. This is how the idea of starting a small tailoring shop emerged. By using my own sewing machine, I began to teach young women sewing and alterations – a useful skill that is in demand in Moldova. With help from Christians in North America, I was able to provide each young woman who completed the program of instruction with an electric sewing machine and a supply of fabric.

In the last five to seven years news about the gravity of the problem of modern-day slavery began to circulate more widely in Moldova due to information campaigns funded by the United Nations and European humanitarian organizations. Some evangelicals began to see that they could no longer ignore the issue of trafficking.

In cooperation with Moldovan evangelical congregations, in the last seven years, my husband and I have been able to start four small tailoring schools in the country, which accept 10 to 12 students annually. One of the schools is located in the town of Chadyr-Lunga in southern Moldova where we help support a shelter for trafficked and abused women. A married couple from the local Baptist church is supervising the training site and is ready to respond to emergencies.

In Beltsy, the second largest city in Moldova, teenage girls at risk expressed interest in learning cooking and catering, so in 2016, we started a cooking school, for which American Christians donated equipment and supplies. Local Christian women are in charge of the training.

Since 2010, because of circumstances related to my son's medical condition, I reside in Canada. However, during my regular trips to Moldova, I spend considerable time in tailoring schools, offering training to those who want to learn a trade and eventually support themselves. My husband and I make considerable effort to spread awareness of human trafficking through printed and electronic materials, and we participate in forums in which this problem is addressed.

In cooperation with Moldovan evangelical congregations, in the last seven years my husband and I have been able to start four small tailoring schools.

Saving One

According to the International Labor Organization, human trafficking earns annual profits of roughly $150 billion ("Human Trafficking by the Numbers," 7 January 2017; http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/resource/human-trafficking-numbers). In Moldova, traffickers prey on political and economic chaos, human poverty, and the vulnerability of women. My efforts in combatting trafficking may seem like a drop in the bucket, yet I am encouraged that I am able to touch one life at a time. "Whoever saves a life is considered as if he saved the entire world" (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5). ♦

Natalia Turlac *resides in Toronto, Canada. She is involved in anti-trafficking ministry in Moldova through Turlac Mission (www.worldwideword.org/turlac.html).*

Moldova: Prevention of Trafficking Through Job Training

Natalia Turlac

It was so painful to realize that my own diminutive, Natasha, was the label given to trafficked women.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moldova became a target of dozens of human traffickers. The poorest among former Soviet republics, the country saw thousands of women trafficked for prostitution, slave labor, and organ harvesting since 1991. According to Melanie Orhant of the Population Reference Bureau, "The former Soviet Union has become the largest new source of forced prostitution with 100,000 trafficked each year from the new independent states" ("Trafficking in Persons: Myths, Methods, and Human Rights," December 2011; http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2001/TraffickinginPersonsMythsMethodsandHumanRights.aspx).

Independence and Unemployment

Born and raised in Moldova, I could not have imagined that the newly independent nation would face such challenges. In 1991, Moldovans under the age of 30 were happy that they could now speak their own language freely and finally could reconnect with their culture after decades of Soviet domination. However, few expected the level of hardships that followed the proclamation of independence.

With economic crisis at the door and an unemployment rate over 50 percent, more than a quarter of Moldova's population of four million sought better economic opportunities elsewhere. This is when traffickers from Italy, Turkey, former Yugoslavia, Cyprus, and the United Arab Emirates turned their attention to Moldova. With little or no income, girls and young women in search of work were ready to accept any offers of employment.

Fake Promises and Domestic Violence

Traffickers would often meet women in nice cafes and restaurants in Chisinau, Moldova's capital. They were usually well-dressed and posed as businessmen, offering unsuspecting women supposed employment as restaurant waitresses, hotel receptionists, and casino dancers. Most required women to bring with them to the "interview" professional photos of themselves in swimsuits. The best-looking women received "jobs." With little or no exposure to life outside the country, Moldovan women did not sense any danger. Neither did they suspect anything when traffickers asked them to sign papers in a foreign language that they did not understand.

According to Kelsey Ferrell, the reality of domestic violence in Moldova has been a significant motivating factor behind the decision of many to accept offers for work abroad in order to escape abuse. An estimated 90 percent of victims of sexual slavery from Moldova experienced domestic violence before they were trafficked (Kelsey H. Ferrell, "History of Sex Trafficking in Moldova," 9 February 2016; http://www.endslaverynow.org/blog/articles/history-of-sex-trafficking-in-moldova).

Moldovan Trafficking

Exploited Moldovan women were typically trafficked to another European country, to Turkey, or to Cyprus where their passports were taken from them. Traffickers told them that they now needed to pay back money for their plane fare and forced them into prostitution.

By 2000 the problem of trafficking in women was well known to many Moldovans, yet, shocking to me, society at large refused to discuss the problem publicly. According to Kelsey Ferrell, "The state did little to protect its citizens. Corruption dominated society, and officials were easily paid off to look the other way, or even supported trafficking activities. Orphanages became recruitment factories where girls in the most vulnerable positions in society were handed over to traffickers as they aged out of the system" (*Ibid.*).

The Natashas

Frankly speaking, growing up in Moldova I did not realize how serious the situation of trafficking in women was becoming. However, when in 2003 I came to the U.S. with my husband, who was doing his doctoral studies, I began reading about this terrible problem. *The Natashas: The New Global Sex Trade* written by Victor Malarek (2004) opened my eyes to the size of modern-day trafficking, including from Moldova. It was so painful to realize that my own diminutive, Natasha, was the label given to trafficked women.

(continued on page 15)

The quarterly ***East-West Church & Ministry Report*** examines all aspects of church life and mission outreach in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe as a service to both church and academia. Letters to the editor are welcomed. Annual subscription rates are $49.95 (individuals, U.S. and Canada); $59.95 (individuals, international); $53.95 (libraries, U.S. and Canada); $63.95 (libraries, international); and $22.95 (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 at no 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 the ***East-West Church & Ministry Report***. Indexed by *American Bibliography of Slavic and East* European Studies (ABSEES), *OCLC Public Affairs Information Service* (formerly *PAIS), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)*, and *Christian Periodicals Index*.

ASBURY UNIVERSITY
Established 1890

East-West Church & Ministry Report
Asbury University
One Macklem Drive
Wilmore, KY 40390
Tel: 859-858-2427
E-mail: emark936@gmail.com
Website: www.eastwestreport.org
Mark R. Elliott, Editor
Ray Prigodich, Book Review Editor

©2017 ISSN 1069-5664