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Latest Legal Developments Affecting Religion in Russia

Lauren B. Homer

Anticipating a new Russian law on religion, church and state specialists call for a legal structure that, while increasing legal order, will maintain religious freedom for all confessions.

The International Conference on Legislation of Freedom of Conscience and Problems of Legal Regulation of Religious Organizations, held in Moscow 12-13 January 1995, provided a forum for religious workers to express their perspectives to legislators on the drafting of new laws on religion in Russia. Sponsored by Moscow's Christian Legal Center and the Institute on Law and Religion, with assistance from Russian and Western religious organizations, the conference attracted over 100 participants from the Duma, Yeltsin's offices, various state ministries, independent research institutes, religious organizations of all faiths, and Russian and Western legal experts. Representatives of Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, and Jewish faiths attended.

At the conference, the parliamentarian most identified with proposed 1993 restrictions on foreign religious organizations, Fr. Vyacheslav S. Polosin, stated that the Orthodox Church should join with and learn from its brethren outside Russia in order to fight the common enemy—a corrupt and unbelieving generation. Polosin maintained that competition from foreign groups will help Orthodoxy move from a pre-1917 Byzantine model of ministry toward more contemporary approaches to evangelism.

Fr. Vsevolod Chaplain, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department of External Relations, stated that the Orthodox Church had determined that it was better to "be in agreement with" other Christian denominations than to seek to exclude them from Russia. He cited problems of mutual concern stemming from Russian society's move toward secularism, immorality, and non-Christian cults and the fact that 80-90 percent of the population consists of unbelievers. Though not representative of all leaders within the Moscow Patriarchate, Fr. Chaplain's comments reveal at least the potential opportunity for healing of rifts between Eastern and Western churches.

The conference took place in the context of ongoing debate in the Duma and among religious leaders on the need for a new law to replace the current 1990 law. Some support significant changes while others argue in favor of the current law. The latter fear radical and unpredictable revision when the matter goes to the floor of the Duma for debate. Though draft laws were to be kept confidential, parliamentarians have leaked various proposals. In particular, a November 1994 draft circulated widely in Russia and among Western legal experts. An overview and critique of its proposed changes follows.

General Provisions

The 1994 draft retains many strong provisions protecting freedom of conscience, equality of believers and religious organizations, and separation of church and state. It retains the right of any group of ten or more citizens to establish a religious organization (Arts. 3-5, 7, 10-13), and to operate with or without registration (Art. 11.2). Rights provided in the 1990 law that have been deleted in the 1994 draft include the right to change religious beliefs, to leave one religious group and join another, and to possess religious literature and sacramental objects. It also deletes prohibitions against the creation of state executive bodies to regulate religious activities.

Definition and Rights of Religious Organizations

Under the 1994 draft only denominations or churches would qualify as religious organizations. Parachurch and charitable organizations would have to register as subsidiaries of religious organizations, as public associations, or as charities under laws not yet enacted. This change would require reregistration for many groups and would also discourage interdenominational activities. Religious organizations would have the exclusive right to publish religious (liturgical and theological) literature and to manufacture

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religious articles (Art. 19.2). Only registered religious organizations could establish educational institutions to teach religion (Arts. 8, 21), sponsor foreign religious organizations, involve such organizations and foreign religious workers in their activities (Art. 15), and issue visa invitations to foreign professional religious workers (Arts. 15, 22).

Activities of "Nontraditional" Religions

The activities of destructive and "totalitarian" religious cults, such as the White Brotherhood, and of groups masquerading as religions in order to obtain tax exemptions, are addressed by Article 4 of the 1994 draft. It specifically prohibits

religious organizations that insult other religions or violate public order. Most Russians at the January 1995 conference felt that trying to use general legislation to address these problems would not work and that the provisions would result in arbitrary application to unpopular groups. Conference participants discussed the need for adequate administrative or judicial review of decisions to ban organizations, and for new procedures to deal with abuses of tax-exempt status.

Religious Instruction in Schools and Orphanages

The 1994 draft deletes the current rights of children in preschools, orphanages, and boarding schools to participate in religious services and restricts religious education to the nonpublic

Religion and the Law in Ukraine

Lauren B. Homer

In January 1994 Ukraine added restrictive amendments to its 1991 Law on Religious Organizations. A June 1994 directive of the Ministry of Education also curtailed activities of foreign organizations in Ukrainian schools. The January 1994 amendments disallowed religious organizations whose "rites and ministry are accompanied by infringements on the lives, health, freedom, and dignity of citizens" or which systematically violate laws on prohibiting public religious events. These changes followed the widely publicized call for collective suicide by leaders of the White Brotherhood, among other events. Also, restrictions on foreign religious workers in Ukraine now state that they may "engage in preaching religious doctrines, performing religious rites, and other canon activities solely in the religious organization at whose invitation they have arrived, and by official agreement with the state organs that have registered the statutes (regulations) of the relevant religious organization." In short, specific government approval is required before a foreigner may enter Ukraine to engage in religious activities, which has created a bureaucratic bottleneck and has raised the possibility of the exclusion of unpopular groups.

Following a brief "working group" study of public school presentations of various religious organizations, the Ministry of Education, on 24 June 1994, issued Order No. 198, which specifically bars the Unification Church, the International School Project, Accelerated Christian Education, the CoMission, and other mission groups from Ukrainian schools and bans Western religious materials and teaching methods. The Ministry of Education transferred

ACE schools to the state system of education. Authorities alleged that the new measures brought Ukraine into compliance with its own Law on Freedom of Conscience and the UN Declarations on the Rights of the Child.

Another significant development was the abolition of Ukraine's Council on Religious Affairs during the summer of 1994. Its staff was fired and a new Ministry on Nationalities assumed its regulatory authority. Some speculate that this was a step in the direction of establishment of the Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, as a state church.

A September 1994 international conference on church-state relations sponsored by the Ukrainian Legal Foundation produced a number of recommendations. A wide array of Ukrainian parliamentarians, administrators, religious groups, and international experts attended. Recommendations included moving responsibility for registration of religious organizations to the presumably more neutral Ministry of Justice, and taking other measures to ensure that religious groups obtain their rights under the law. Many groups have found it impossible to register, including even the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Conference participants expressed the need to work cooperatively on common problems and not to look to the state for support. In the absence of a new system for registration of organizations and visa approvals, foreign religious workers have found it increasingly difficult to work in Ukraine. Additional Ukrainian restrictions on the registration of foreign religious groups as civic associations may be forthcoming. ♦

sphere. Public schools would only make their premises available for use by registered religious organizations "on the request and in accordance with the religious choice of parents ... [and with the] consent of children" (Art. 8.4). Only registered religious organizations could operate educational institutions and would have the exclusive right to establish institutions for professional religious training (Arts. 8, 21). Currently, independent and interdenominational religious schools and seminaries may function.

The Military

The 1994 draft deletes the 1990 law's conveyance of a right for military personnel to participate in religious services. It speaks of a right to substitute civil for military service, but otherwise avoids the contentious issue of conscientious objection (Art. 6).

Rights of Noncitizens and Foreign Religious Organizations

Under the 1994 draft only citizens have the right to establish religious organizations (Arts. 10-13). "Foreign nationals and stateless persons" may exercise the right to freedom of conscience and religion only "according to their legal status of residence" in Russia (Art. 9). In contrast, under the 1990 law and Article 28 of the Constitution, noncitizens have the same rights as citizens to freedom of conscience and to form religious organizations.

According to the 1994 draft, foreign "professional religious workers" may visit Russia only upon invitation of registered religious organizations and in accordance with governmental procedures not described in the law (Art. 22). Furthermore, representatives of foreign religious organizations and foreign religious workers may be involved in "any public religious activity ... only at the invitation and under the authority of" a registered Russian religious organization (Art. 15.3). This provision likely would curtail street evangelism and independent media broadcasts by unregistered visitors. This same Article 15 would permit registration of foreign religious organizations only under the auspices of a registered Russian religious organization. Representatives would have to be accredited by the government, in a manner not stated in the draft law. Accreditation would be denied for organizations violating Articles 4 (prohibited religious activities) or 10 (requirement of legal "recognition" by a foreign country).

Foreign organizations may also form as "divisions" of existing Russian religious organizations, provided that they have at least 10 Russian founders. The term "foreign religious organization" would be limited to groups seeking to operate in Russia through a foreign legal

THE LAW AND RELIGION: OTHER VIEWS

Objections From Yeltsin's Office

"The head of President Yeltsin's State and Law Department, R. Orekhov, sees the November 1994 draft 'digressing from the constitutional principle of equality before the Law of all social associations, including religious organizations (Art. 13.4 of the Constitution); restricting the right of people who are not citizens of the Russian Federation to confess...any religion,...and making representatives of foreign Religious Organizations directly dependent on Russian religious organizations' attitude toward them.

"The necessity to provide equality for ALL RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS before the Law has already been voiced by the President of the Russian Federation who twice refused to sign the Law...' On Introducing amendments and addendum to the Law 'On Freedom of Religions'...[which was] contradictory to the Constitution of the Russian Federation and generally accepted international legal standards....

"The Bill needs serious correction, including a conceptual one. It must contain a clearer formulation of the principle of equality of Religious Organizations before the Law, which has an exceptional importance under circumstances of nonconfessionalism of the population of the Russian Federation. As well, provision for real guarantees ensuring the principle must be included....

"Article 15 violates the principle of equality of Religious Organizations, enhances State support...of traditional confessions,... violates the constitutional principle of equality of all social associations, including religious ones (Art. 13.4 of the Constitution), restrains the rights of people who are not citizens of the Russian Federation to confess, individually or together with others, any religion...[and puts] foreign Religious Organizations and foreigners who intend to carry out a public religious activity in direct dependence on Russian Religious Organizations' attitude toward them."

Source: Letter of R. Orekhov to A.E. Sebentsov, First Deputy of the Head of the Government Staff of the Russian Federation, 19 January 1995. Translation by Russian Ministries, Moscow. ♦

Yeltsin's office sees the November 1994 draft "digressing from the constitutional principle of equality before the Law of religious organizations."

structure and would not apply to indigenous religious organizations registered by the Ministry of Justice which have religious centers abroad, such as Catholic or Protestant churches.

Alexander Kudriavtsev, head of the Department for Registration of Religious Organizations, commented that many foreign groups operating in Russia "forget that they have to obey the law." He noted that while a directory produced by the Christian Resource Center listed approximately 400 Western Christian organizations operating in Russia, only 32 foreign organizations are registered with the Ministry of

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Justice. [Editors' note: *The East-West Christian Organizations Directory* is available from the EWC&M Report office.] The new law would make registration mandatory, which is not required at present.

What Next?

In light of criticisms of the 1994 draft and other more pressing legislative matters, Duma members and their legal advisors concede that it will take considerable time to prepare a new draft. Even before the Russian government passes such a law, religious workers need to be prepared for incremental changes by decree and administrative

actions. The Consultative Committee to the Parliament was reinstated on 20 January 1995, under the leadership of Valery A. Alekseev, chief assistant to the chairman of the Duma. This committee will provide commentary to the Ministry of Justice on the beliefs of and the desirability of registration for foreign and "nontraditional" religious organizations. ♦

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According to the 1994 draft, foreign "professional religious workers" may visit Russia only upon invitation of registered religious organizations.

THE LAW AND RELIGION: OTHER VIEWS

An Eyewitness to the Parliamentary Debate

George Law

I was at the Parliament Center on Boulevard Tsvetnoi today [14 February 1995]. I witnessed the Duma hearings on the new proposed law for Freedom of Religion. The Duma is accepting some of the changes recommended by Yeltsin's office, but not all of them. Article 15 is being debated. Perhaps a softer version will be the result. This was a formal hearing for experts on law and religion to make public statements related to the Law. Gleb Yakunin gave what perhaps was the most stirring 10-minute speech I have ever heard from any Russian politician. He was jeered by Patriarch supporters at certain points. In fact, the chairman threatened to call in the militia to evict those who were disrupting the proceedings. At the end, Yakunin got about a minute of applause and a few standing ovations. The next few weeks will be very intriguing as the Orthodox Church is seemingly losing the momentum. The Duma deputies that spoke seemed to be very moderate and equated strict limitations on foreign religious workers as a return to totalitarian control. The speakers were equally distributed pro and anti foreign missionaries. However, the majority of the 400 present seemed to be very favorable to the statements made by Yakunin.

George Law is general manager for the Moscow office of Russian Ministries. ♦

Will Decree Spark Battle of Religions?

The position of religious minorities in Russia has always been a tenuous one. But, in the last five years, those minorities—from Baptists to Buddhists—have enjoyed unprecedented freedom, a freedom some believe is threatened by new legislation on religion that may soon be considered by the State Duma.

Legal experts and religious leaders worry that it might open an unwanted and destructive debate in the Duma on religious freedom. "I think this law may be subject to a great political battle," said Gleb Yakunin, a Duma deputy and Russian Orthodox priest, at a two-day Moscow conference on the draft law. "By the third reading it may be so saturated with populist sentiments that it would not be recognizable.... There is no guarantee that a faction would not introduce an amendment, which is easy to do, that would grossly violate world human rights standards."

The driving force behind the new legislation appears to be the Orthodox Church, which supports increased controls on missionaries and cults.

Excerpt reprinted with permission from Moscow Times, 14 January 1995. ♦

Does Affluence Undermine Influence?

Roger Chapman

Eyebrows were raised when it was reported that the Moscow director of the United States Agency for International Development refurbished a seven-room apartment at an estimated cost of at least \$200,000.¹ In a country where many people would rejoice at any prospect of living in a simple two-room apartment of their very own, this expensive renovation sticks out like a diplomatic sore thumb. That it was the home of an official representing an aid organization makes the thumb all the more ugly and swollen.

The underlying warning for missionaries to Russia is that affluence may hinder influence. What may be a normal standard of living to an American may seem outrageous to a Russian. The fact that for some 70 years Soviet propaganda castigated materialism as bourgeois, and the fact that most Russians have an instinctive awareness that Christianity identifies more with the poor than with the rich, should serve as a warning to would-be missionaries.

Missiologist Jonathan Bonk has identified four justifications given by missionaries for living in comparative affluence: 1) economic, 2) domestic, 3) social, and 4) strategic.² In a Russian context such arguments would sound something like this:

- 1) Since Russia is such a difficult society to live in, missionaries need to spend what is necessary to maintain good mental and physical health. It is good economics for mission boards to see that their missionaries stay on the field.
- 2) Since Russia's already low standard of living continues to plummet, it should not be the guideline for missionary families, because their domestic well-being is at stake. Certainly, missionary children should not be subjected to an income level that would put them at risk.
- 3) Since Russia is trying to adopt a free-market economy, missionaries should not be ashamed of the benefits of capitalism. Western Christianity represents spiritual values that are intertwined with social and economic values.
- 4) Since Russia presents enormous opportunities, missionaries should take advantage of modern technology for the swifter spread of the gospel. Such tools depend upon affluence.

While the above arguments may have a general ring of truth, they should not discount the value of discretion. Missionary families can take vitamins, utilize better than average medical services, and drink more costly purified water without buying groceries from expensive import stores such as Babylon or Stockmann's, and without living in four-room flats remodeled and equipped to Western standards. Ironically, as

some missionaries try to make their lives more comfortable, they only end up in frustrating situations. For example, when landlords take note of expensive furnishings and extensive remodeling, they often conclude that foreign tenants are quite rich and capable of paying more than they originally thought.

The crux of the matter is that lifestyle must be taken into consideration if the gospel is ever to fit the context. Western Christians are not being all things to all people if they live in relative luxury while those they hope to reach are steeped in poverty. The heart of contextualization is identification.³ When Russians see affluence they more often than not imagine the source to be the mafia, the present symbol of national evil.

In St. Petersburg I once helped unload a container of humanitarian aid that was sent from a church in America. Included in the cargo were mattresses and box springs for missionaries. The bemused reactions of the Russian men assisting in the unloading suggested, "Americans think they are too good to sleep on our Russian beds." My defense at the time was, "These are not my beds." But I suspect that all foreign missionaries that day were guilty by association.

Commenting on the USAID director's flat, a journalist for *Izvestia* noted, "There are a lot of discussions in the press about how much money these organizations spend on themselves.... They do useful things here but they have a bad reputation when it comes to how they spend their money—\$200,000 is much too high a sum for a *remont* (repair)."⁴ Undoubtedly, at least some Russians must think similarly, that foreign evangelicals do some useful things, but they have to be pampered. We can be certain that no missionary is spending \$200,000 to refurbish an apartment in Russia, but even considerably lesser amounts may seem just as outrageous to Russians whom missionaries hope to serve. ♦

Endnotes

1. Daisy Sindelar, "The \$200,000 Flat That USAID Built," *Moscow News*, 17 November 1994, 1, 2.
2. Jonathan A. Bonk, *Missions and Money* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 31-40. Also, see related articles by the same author: "The Role of Affluence in the Christian Missionary Enterprise from the West," *Missiology* 14 (October 1986), 437-61; "Affluence: The Achilles' Heel of Missions," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 21 (October 1985), 382-89.
3. Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 171.
4. Sindelar, 2.

Roger Chapman, a Church of Christ missionary, lives with his family in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Lifestyle must be taken into consideration if the gospel is ever to fit the context.

Open Letters from National Christians

To Christians of the World

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We are very thankful for your prayer and financial support, for the help Western, and especially American, believers, Christian missions, and missionaries rendered to our long-suffering Motherland through this time of hardship. With all our hearts we are seeking to help you be most effective in our country. We also want you to understand the real situation in our country and churches.

At present our country is going through an extremely difficult period. The political situation is unstable. Because of the lack of a wise ruler, the country became the object of plunder. Corruption has spread to all areas of our life, including governmental agencies. This has led to chaos and inflation in the country's economy.

Spiritually the nation is also living through a crisis. Like all our society, the church is in need of a spiritual revival. The Russian Orthodox Church is collaborating with the government. Various sects and occult religions are most active. There is no unity among Christians. The people are losing interest in spiritual matters. At the same time national and religious hatred is building up.

In spite of the fact that we received from foreign Christians most of the Bibles and other Christian literature we have in Russia, as well

as the majority of humanitarian aid, the Russian Orthodox Church and various nationalistic organizations are actively opposing Western, and especially American, Christian missions. A great number of leaflets, brochures, and booklets accuse Western Christians of seeking to enslave the minds and hearts of Russian people and aim at spiritual usurpation of Russia.

That is why we address all Western Christian missions and missionaries willing to work in Russia:

- be ready to see less spiritual hunger in Russia than existed four or five years ago;
- be aware that now anything coming from the West, from America in particular, is not welcome and may cause antagonism and often open hostility;
- be aware that the Orthodox Church not only objects to Western Christians coming here, but is actively turning Russian believers against them;
- be aware that organized crime controls all areas of the country's economy and politics, including government organs;
- be ready for total economic chaos, to be deceived, robbed, or even killed.

A great number of leaflets, brochures, and booklets accuse Western Christians of seeking to enslave the minds and hearts of Russian people and aim at spiritual usurpation of Russia.

To All Western Missionary Organizations Interested in Spreading the Gospel in the Former Soviet Union

Dear brothers and sisters,

In addressing you, we are moved by different feelings and by many, often contradictory, discussions on how to preach the Gospel in our countries.

First, we want to thank you from our heart for your love to our peoples which helped us in preaching the Gospel during decades when Christ's Church in our country had been an object of persecution....We thank you that despite all restrictions you remained faithful to the words of the Apostles, "One should follow the Lord more than people," and risked your freedom to bring us the Lord's Word and other Christian literature which helped us survive in the years of Babylonian slavery....

Given the above, one can understand the enthusiasm with which Western believers reacted to new opportunities of preaching the Gospel

in our country after so-called perestroika had started....[But] we would like to share with you some of the difficulties we have to fight.

First, many western missions rushed to the "open door" with great enthusiasm. In Moscow alone over one hundred western organizations were registered. And each one wants to accomplish its program by using the existing church infrastructure which is still weak....

Second, indigenous missionary organizations cannot compete with strong western missions and the best people prefer to work for western organizations and, naturally, for better payment. As a result, indigenous missions lose their translators, editors, preachers, missionaries. Finally, instead of assistance and support from western missionaries, local missions have to defend their own vision of missionary service.

Third, at a time when national consciousness...is being transformed into open nationalism,

Realize that Russia is in agony trying to find its own way.

We appreciate the experience of other countries, but...Western patterns cannot be directly implemented in Russia without proper adaptation.

The existing traditional church, the Protestant one in particular, is not meeting the needs of today. It's the salt that has lost its savor, it's the "old wineskin," the lamp placed under the bushel. We really need the rich spiritual experience of Western churches, but we need the best part of it adapted to the specific conditions of Russia—everything that applies to us.

Today we critically need Western missions' and missionaries' support, but Russia needs Western Christians who are strong in the Spirit and capable to serve in spite of economic and political hardships. We need people who are immediately ready to serve rather than those who spend 3-5 years studying the Russian language and culture. We can provide translation for immediate and effective service.

In the first place, we need specialists who not only know how to do things, but also have their own rich, practical experience in planting, developing, and strengthening churches. Second, we need youth and music leaders who are able to raise the ministry for our young Christians to a higher level. Third, we need people who not only come to teach for short terms, but who are ready to serve in Russian churches for five years or more.

The Orthodox Church receives from the

government all kinds of privileges to use mass media for its propaganda, to buy land and build churches and seminary facilities, while the Protestants face nothing but limitations.

Protestant churches pay primary attention to salvation and to winning souls for Christ rather than building churches and training Christian workers. The President's decree banning the use of public buildings and schools for worship services and religious activity is already in force. Very soon the majority of Protestant churches, having no facilities of their own, may find themselves in the street.

No one can be sure that tomorrow our government, pressed by the Orthodox Church or due to a political situation, will not persecute Western religious organizations and missionaries for spreading their beliefs and make them leave this country. As a result, most Protestant churches that are run by Western missionaries will be deprived of their leaders.

The priorities of today are to train Russian leaders for the churches and to make "new wineskins," churches promoting spiritual revival of the Russian people and drawing those who are searching for God. We encourage you to pray and support the Russian brethren.

God bless you,

Peter N. Sautov
Director, Center for Evangelism
Pastor, Evangelical Christian Baptist Church
in Novogireevo, Moscow ♦

it is very harmful to evangelize without thinking about national culture, religion, and local traditions....Evangelization campaigns formed under the influence of western show produce feelings of protest against protestantism....

Fourth, many missionary initiatives from the West are denominational. As a result very unusual communities and churches appear in our country. We can understand the zeal of those missionaries sent by these missions and churches to establish their own communities. We cannot argue with this, but when in order to have their own church, members of indigenous churches are offered money, and good money, to force them to come to a new church, then this not only goes beyond all norms of cooperation but is totally incompatible with our understanding of missionary service. We are thankful to the Lord that this last case is unique....

Fifth, some missions organize evangelization campaigns in our countries on an interdenominational basis. We lack the experience of tolerant cooperation...and these joint services imposed by the West for the best of purposes meet unprepared soil, produce tension, and worsen existing

disagreements. When preparing any kind of campaign, the real religious situation should be taken into consideration....

Let us support each other in prayer and in deed, as it used to be in the worst times, at this very crucial time for our countries the time of building the Lord's Kingdom and jointly resist the Gospel's enemies.

With love and respect,

Missionary Coordinating Council,
Almaty, Kazakhstan, 23 March 1993

Otonas Balchunas, Shaulai, Lithuania
Anatoly Bogatov, Saransk, Mordovia
Andrei Bondarenko, Elgava, Latvia
Semen Borodin, Krasnodar, Russia
Vassily Davidyuk, Kiev, Ukraine
Henri Fot, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
Piotr Lunichkin, Vladikavkaz, Ossetia
Pavel Pogodin, Nalchik, Kavkaz
Victor Shiva, Almaty, Kazakhstan
Franz Tissen, Saran, Kazakhstan ♦

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EVANGELICAL MISSIONS IN ALBANIA:

Is It a Case of Culture War?

Linford Stutzman

As the ideological influence of Marxism has disintegrated in most regions of Eastern Europe, evangelical missions from the West, particularly from North America, have proliferated. A global "culture war" is in progress in Eastern Europe, and evangelicals from the West are one of the contenders in it.¹

Italian communist Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony provides a theoretical approach for the analysis of the ideological and competitive dimensions of contemporary evangelical mission within Eastern Europe, specifically in Albania. Gramsci's theory is a dynamic approach to religion. It illuminates the manner in which social groups use the power of ideas to initiate societal change according to their specific vision of the future. This theory will be used to answer the question: does North American evangelical ministry in Eastern Europe promote American ideals such as democracy, voluntarism, individual rights, and free enterprise under the cloak of Christian mission?²

In order to test the assumptions and my own hypothesis about evangelical missions using Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, I conducted research in summer 1994 among member organizations of the Albanian Encouragement Project (AEP), an evangelical umbrella organization with administrative offices in the capital city, Tirane. AEP currently includes some 65 organizations with over 300 long-term missionaries working in Albania, almost all from North America and Western Europe. In addition, approximately 100 other evangelical missionaries from the West who are not members of AEP are currently active in Albania. In Albania I conducted extensive interviews with 35 key AEP missionaries and with representatives and leaders of the Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim communities. In addition, I presented and tested, using a questionnaire, the conclusions of this research with 38 representatives of the AEP member organizations at their annual meeting in Switzerland in October 1994.

The general attractiveness of Western culture on a popular level, especially North American culture, makes evangelical missionary presence hegemonic, for it unavoidably represents and embodies a culture that currently holds a powerful attraction in Albania. However, this causes a dilemma, for evangelicals perceive many features of North American culture, such as hedonism, individualism, and materialism, to be antithetical to the gospel they attempt to communicate. Thus, North American evangelical missionaries are at once reluctant and powerful representatives

of North American culture. My research showed remarkable consensus among missionaries: they see their cultural hegemony that originates from the magnetic appeal of North American culture as being both an asset and a liability in their efforts at communicating the gospel effectively.

Yet, while North American evangelicals are inevitable representatives of North American culture, they are not deliberate, conscious promoters of it. The overwhelming evidence from my field research is that North American evangelical missionaries are generally more critical of American culture including the American evangelical church, and more optimistic about Albanian culture than any other North Americans in Albania I interviewed.

I would like to cite several ways that I observed evangelical missionaries in Albania exercising unintentional cultural hegemony.

Missionary self-respect and confidence

Missionaries in Albania almost unanimously feel relevant, effective, and privileged. This self-respect and confidence of a particular group of North Americans is powerful, even magnetic, within a chaotic, changing, and humiliated society. Missionaries feel more confident about their ability to have a positive impact on Albanian culture than within their own.

Respect of Albanian culture and optimism for Albania's future

Evangelical missionaries I interviewed were overwhelmingly positive about Albanian culture. This contagious and powerful optimism seems to be based on convictions about both the gospel (it will triumph) and culture (Albanian culture can, like American culture, be positively affected by gospel values). Western missionaries who show respect for a demeaned people in whom they see great potential naturally command attention and appreciation.

Embodiment of hope and vision

Evangelical missionaries, as a group, serve a prophetic role in Albania. The prophet, or the organic intellectual in Gramsci's scheme, is one who is in touch with the longings and aspirations of the common people and who can articulate and demonstrate a corresponding vision of the future. Evangelical missionaries, as prophets, embody change and hope. They stand in solidarity with the common people,

North American evangelical missionaries are generally more critical of American culture including the American evangelical church, and more optimistic about Albanian culture than any other North Americans in Albania I interviewed.

communicating their positive views about, and faith in, the potential of ordinary Albanians, by inviting them to join in their faith communities and to assume responsibilities within them.

The final feature of unintentional hegemony is the pragmatic organizational network of AEP. The communication and networking infrastructure, originally developed out of necessity within the context of Albanian infrastructural collapse, today would appear to eclipse anything done by any other organization in the country. What makes AEP unique is that it is a network of diverse organizations with a common general goal, rather than a monolithic, centralized bureaucracy. This is both perceived to be, and actually is, a powerful entity within Albania. It allows local adaptations in every region and rapid responses to changes occurring within Albanian society. It gives the possibility of an amazing voluntary solidarity within general social fragmentation. In a society whose infrastructure is in shambles, where there is a distrust of neighbors and bureaucracies, voluntary organizational networking and technological interdependence is in itself hegemonic.

The missionaries with whom I spoke believe that they can maximize "appropriate hegemony" in ways that will help to set the direction for the emerging evangelical Albanian church, ensuring that the gospel shapes the cultural reformation of Albania, moving the nation in the direction of freedom and democracy. Four main areas of deliberate hegemony were identified and affirmed by the majority of AEP representatives.

1. Promotion of religious freedom

Religious freedom, defined as the separation of church and state, is seen by North American evangelical missionaries as a gospel-derived principle that has been incorporated into American public values for the good of all. In the absence of a religious monopoly evangelicals believe they have a fair chance to win the hearts and minds of growing numbers of Albanians. They are convinced that only in the context of unfair competition, that is, if religious "monopolies" are allowed to be reestablished in Albania, would evangelicals fail to compete successfully.

The opposition of Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim religious communities of Albania is predictable, for they recognize their own relative disadvantage if they are forced to compete in a religious "free market." While some leaders of the historic religions of Albania understand and appreciate in principle the basic incompatibility of modernity with religious establishment, their own strategy for realizing cultural hegemony is to secure government restrictions on religions other than their own.

2. Unity within organizational diversity

Evangelical missionary cooperation across denominational and organizational lines involves sophisticated communications systems both within Albania and overseas—information-gathering and sharing, coordination of joint service projects, and planning of events.

AEP member organizations are becoming aware that if they begin to work independently, their impact within Albania will become fragmented and defuse, opening the opportunity for the reestablishment of religious monopolies by the historic groups that have at their disposal tremendous organizational power and external financial resources. AEP member organizations have recently made clear commitments to build and strengthen their network of communication, information-sharing, and cooperation during the next few years. This unique strength of evangelicals will likely remain a powerful and attractive feature of the evangelical missionary community within a modernizing society that is recovering from repressive ideological control and that views with suspicion any alternative that threatens to monopolize society through a centrally organized ideology.

3. Empowerment of the growing Albanian evangelical church

The value of the inherent dignity and potential of the individual on which Western democracy is based is seen by evangelicals to be compatible with the understanding that humans are created in the image of God. Western evangelical missionaries are uniquely equipped, both culturally and theologically, to empower Albanians by integrating them into their churches, by sharing their knowledge, optimism, and vision about Albania with new members, and by equipping ordinary Albanians to serve and lead new congregations. Emerging local churches, composed of individuals empowered by hope, encouraged and educated to lead, with a new way of conceptualizing the world, may become a significant new force within Albanian society. This kind of empowerment is seen by North American evangelicals as appropriate cultural hegemony that has the potential to make a positive impact on all of Albanian society.

4. Promotion of a vision of a "good society"

The majority of those I interviewed saw their activities in Albania as contributing to a cultural reformation that would help establish a "good society" in which freedom, democracy, and justice would be enjoyed by all. Most evangelical missionaries were outspoken in their opposition to uncritical promotion of North American

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Is It a Case of Culture War? *Continued from page 9*

culture as a model for Albanian society. Instead, they affirmed the ability of Albanians, with the growing influence of Albanian evangelical Christians, to build their own version of a free and just society.

Conclusions

The evidence gathered from the research data does not support my original hypothesis nearly as strongly as I had expected. In fact, the results necessitate a revision. My conclusions can be summarized as follows. Evangelical missionaries from North America have a vision for Albania that includes religious freedom, democracy, an effective and equitable economic system, and a moral foundation on which these can rest. Evangelical missionaries are convinced that the Christian faith of Albania's emerging evangelical church is the key to healthy development for the country as a whole. Their vision, then, not only goes beyond denominational agenda, but includes Albanians of all faith traditions, or of no religious beliefs at all.

North American evangelical mission activity in Albania, instead of being an enterprise driven by nationalistic impulses, is driven by a vision that transcends national boundaries and interests,

Linford Stutzman is director of Eastern Mennonite Seminary's John Coffman Center for Evangelism and Church Planting, Harrisonburg, VA. The present text is an edited excerpt of a longer article forthcoming in the Journal of Ecumenical Studies. Used with permission.

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

In "Islam in the Soviet Era," *EWCM Report 2* (Fall 1994), 10-11, Don Fairbairn writes, "the subjection of Islamic societies to both 'Christian' and Marxist rulers in the last four centuries may lead many Eurasian Muslims to identify the two," and to distrust Westerners and their ideologies. Having lived and worked in one of the Muslim countries of the former USSR for a year, I disagree.

Muslims welcomed us with open arms and readily accepted us into their homes and into their daily lives. We went to work with them in education and business as Christians letting them know our reason for coming was because of Jesus' command to love our neighbor as ourselves. We were respected as believers in God, unlike communist, atheist "Kafirs" (unbelievers).

a vision at odds with features of every culture, including many aspects of North American society.³ This vision motivates evangelicals to wage an international culture war as an extension of the "culture war" being waged with decreasing success within America against the dominant "post-Christian" culture. This global culture war is essentially the same in Eastern Europe as in America, with one main difference: Eastern Europe, where the cultural hegemony of Marxism has collapsed or is greatly weakened, is perceived to have within it areas of opportunity, not only to wage cultural wars, but to win them, something that no longer seems possible to do in the West.

Notes

1. For discussion of this concept, see James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).
2. Dana L. Robert in "From Missions to Mission to Beyond Missions: The Historiography of American Protestant Foreign Missions Since World War II" in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 18 (October 1994), 146-62, documents historians' consistently negative interpretations of evangelical missionary enterprise.
3. It may be argued that the difference between promoting a North Americanized gospel and promoting North American culture is minimal and that evangelical missionaries who admit to engaging in the former while denouncing the latter are only deceiving themselves. The point is, North American evangelical missionaries with whom I spoke do not perceive themselves to be promoters of American culture. This is in contrast to some mission endeavors around the world in the past, and with the activities of some other kinds of North American groups (military, business, and governmental) in Albania at present. ♦

We also went in speaking their language, not Russian, which I believe helped us earn their trust.

I agree with Mr. Fairbairn that we need to be careful not to offer Central Asian Muslims Western Christianity. A church of Central Asian Muslim converts will be much different from a Western or Orthodox church. Central Asians are the most educated of all Muslims as the author rightly pointed out. The Bible, or sometimes portions of it, has been translated into Central Asian languages. Now they need to see the gospel worked out in the daily lives of committed Christians.

Chris Chen



The Mixed Blessing of Western Assistance

Mark Elliott

This past June on a visit to St. Petersburg Christian University, which in fact is a seminary, I observed staff sifting through literally tons of books donated from the West, ferreting out the occasional title relevant for a theological library. On the one hand, the task required time-consuming sorting through mountains of boxes for the relatively rare gems in the rough. On the other hand, the shipping had been donated, several thousand useful titles were being gleaned from the heap, and seminarians would make use of a fair portion of the rest that the school would pass over. And so it is with Western assistance to theological education in the East, writ large: a mixed blessing.

How Western help is managed—or mismanaged—will make a major difference in the ability—or inability—of new schools to strengthen the church in the East and to assist the church as it seeks to witness to an enormous number of nonbelievers in its midst.

"We do not want ready-made Western Christianity to be dumped on us," a Russian theological educator reported in 1992. "We would love to have the tools, and then we will work it out for ourselves." While such sentiments abound among post-Soviet bloc seminary administrators, paradoxically, Ralph Alexander of Biblical Education by Extension rightly characterizes the present fixation of these same leaders on *Western* accreditation as an "obsession."

Western standards may be desirable in terms of required instructional facilities, faculty with earned doctorates, libraries of sufficient size and quality, and a broad curriculum. But for the foreseeable future such criteria are prohibitively expensive and would unquestionably doom theological education in former East-bloc countries to abject economic dependence upon the West, and with it, *de facto* foreign control.

The Danger of Theological Brain Drain

The lure of the West already is spelling more and more post-Soviet seminarians opting for golden opportunities abroad. Borrowing from an American folk song, we might ask, "Will they ever return?" Past performance suggests another brain drain could be in the making. According to Jack Graves of Overseas Council for Theological Education, 75 percent of Colombian theological students who have studied abroad never have gone home, the same for 85 percent of seminarians from the Caribbean, and 90 percent of seminarians from India. Is there any reason to believe it will be otherwise with former East-bloc seminarians?

Wilson Chow, president of Hong Kong's China Graduate School of Theology, just returned from former Yugoslavia, already reports a "brain drain of the theologically trained because of internal ethnic conflicts, the unstable political situation, [and] the attraction from seminaries in the West." The present priority of North America's Association of Theological Schools upon globalization provides a perfect example of a Western academic standard being unhealthy, even counterproductive, for theological education elsewhere. In the name of diversity and globalization, too many Western seminaries are luring to their campuses rare, theologically trained seminary educators from abroad, often draining the life blood of struggling institutions. How ironic that Western seminaries could be so insensitive to the damage they may inflict upon schools outside the North Atlantic community—all in the name of a better understanding of the rest of the world!

More Reasons To Be Wary

Even if every theological student in the West did return home, unhealthy side effects still might cause the church in the East to question the advisability of study abroad. As Ralph Alexander points out, when seminarians study in another country, "training is removed from the normal ministry context." In addition, seminarians' introduction to Western living standards and Western cultural values make going home a difficult adjustment. The negative influences of narcissistic materialism and individualism are self-evident. But even defensible Western mores, such as the high premium placed on efficiency, productivity, and punctuality, pose problems for graduates attempting to reenter societies that frequently value the building of relationships more highly than the completion of tasks by a set date. Also, modern higher criticism of the Scriptures, a staple of Western theological education—even in evangelical institutions reacting to it—will not be a welcome import in the eyes of a great many church leaders east of the old Iron Curtain.

A final reason indiscriminate emulation of Western theological education would be unwise is that the West itself is increasingly unsure of the validity of its own approach, which one detractor has described as the "trained incapacity to deal with the real problems of actual living persons in their daily lives."

How Western help is managed—or mismanaged—will make a major difference in the ability—or inability—of new schools to strengthen the church in the East.

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The Mixed Blessing of Western Assistance
Continued from page 11

From a distance few can detect the disarray to be found in many Western churches and seminaries, especially through the rich camouflage of institutional endowments, bricks and mortar, and the flood of Christian books, videos, conferences, and the like. On the other hand, the global commitment and material prosperity of many Western evangelical churches, missions, and seminaries have translated into an extraordinary, perhaps unprecedented, outpouring of assistance for fledgling seminaries and Bible institutes all across East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. In most institutions Western assistance is welcome. The question is what kind of assistance is beneficial and who should make that decision.

Western Help That Will Work

If the case has been made that the Western connection to Christian leadership development in the East is a mixed blessing, what recommendations might contribute to more enlightened Western assistance?

1. Theological educators in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union should be encouraged to develop culture-specific criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of leadership-training programs. They should be creative and judicious in adapting, rather than submitting to the wholesale adoption of, Western accrediting standards.
2. Theological educators should stress close institutional, faculty, and student interaction with the local church. Churches do not exist in order to support seminaries. But seminaries should exist in order to support churches.
3. Theological educators should stress the importance of theological training in-country, for all the previously discussed cultural, theological, and economic reasons. To that end they should:
 - a. encourage study abroad only for especially talented, mature, and dedicated pastors targeted for teaching positions;
 - b. utilize extension programs and competency tests and encourage completion of M.A.

programs, rather than longer M.Div. or doctoral programs, to shorten the length of Western instruction;

- c. encourage Western and indigenous churches, missions, and seminaries to work together in a few in-country advanced-degree programs;
 - d. encourage Western partners to invest more resources in Western faculty teaching in the East, especially those with relevant language skills, and less in video talking heads and student scholarships for study in the West.
 - e. Also, before opting for West European or North American theological education, students from East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union should consider alternatives in non-Western nations that would entail much less culture shock and theological dissonance, at a fraction of the cost. For example, the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies, Bangalore, India, would welcome students from East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union in its fully accredited programs for pastoral training or advanced degrees for future theological educators (Box 7747, Kothanur, Bangalore 560077 India tel: 0091-80-8465235 fax: 0091-80-5565547).
4. Regarding curriculum, evangelical seminaries in former communist countries would do well to introduce:
 - a. courses on Eastern Orthodoxy and Catholicism which delineate common ground and irreconcilable differences; and
 - b. courses on biblical principles of conflict management. Unseemly strife abounds and demands serious attention within and between congregations, within and between denominations, within and between Christian confessions, and between Christians and persons of other faiths and no faith. Western Christian arbitration and conflict resolution services could be consulted for advice in developing instruction in this vital area.
 5. Above all, evangelicals, East and West, must foster and practice greater cooperation, especially in so expensive and labor-intensive an endeavor as theological education. ♦

Mark Elliott, director of Wheaton College's Institute for East-West Christian Studies, is coeditor of the EWC&M Report. The present text is an edited excerpt of a longer, documented article forthcoming in Asbury Theological Journal. Used with permission.

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

The MacArthur Foundation announces a **Fund for Foreign Travel**, designed to facilitate travel abroad for individuals from the former Soviet Union with no alternative funding source to participate in workshops and conferences abroad.

MacArthur Foundation
5520 N. Magnolia Ave.
Chicago, IL 60640-1307
tel: 312-728-6996, fax: 312-728-6866

For intensive courses in **Slavic, East European, and Central Asian languages** offered at 17 schools in the United States and 18 programs taught in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, see "Summer Language Programs," American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies *NewsNet* 35 (Jan. 95), 17-30. The cost for this issue is \$5.00. Annual, nonmember subscriptions cost \$20. Contact:

AAASS, Jordan Quad/Acacia
125 Panama St.
Stanford, CA 94305-4130
tel: 415-723-9668, fax: 415-725-7737
e-mail: ab.cde@forsythe.stanford.edu

Central Asia Study Center

In 1991 evangelical agencies focusing on Central Asian Muslims launched a specialized training program in a Muslim city overseas. It has stressed on-location, hands-on preparation. Participants are involved in language study, learn unique dimensions of Central Asian Islam, and grapple firsthand with ministry in a controlled setting. Sponsoring agencies are Operation Mobilization, Cooperative Services International/CAFE, Frontiers-Canada, People International, WEC, Youth With A Mission, Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Mission, Bethany Fellowship Mission, and the Samuel Zwemer Institute which manages the Center.

The program is designed for people planning to invest more than one year in ministry in Central Asia. Three 10-week sessions are conducted each year. To date, CASC has served more than 120 missionaries. 1995 sessions are scheduled to begin in March, August, and November. Contact:

Dr. Robert Douglas, Executive Director, Mission 21 LCS
Box 675
Lincoln, IL 62656
tel: 217-732-7788, ext. 2274, fax: 217-732-5914

or

C/O Open Doors
Field Operations
Box 318
3850 AH Ermelo, Holland
tel: 31-3410-19502, fax: 31-3410-25554

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NEWS NOTES

CoMission Barred from Russian Schools

"From the available information it appears that the Protocol of Intention by and between The Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation and the Executive Committee of the Christian Social Project The CoMission, USA, has in fact been suspended for now and the foreseeable future. As a result, all activities in the schools [will] immediately cease. This does not preclude contact with, or ministry to, Russian educators. Meanwhile...the CoMission is alive and well, pursuing community outreach, Neighborhood Christian Education Centers, and home Bible study strategies led by nationals."

Source: *Statement of CoMission Chairman, Dr. Bruce Wilkinson, 24 February 1995*

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The purpose of the new **Society for Russian Religious Philosophy** is to promote the study of religious philosophy as developed by Russian thinkers in their native land and in exile. "No particular confession or philosophical system is privileged in the work of the Society." Annual dues of \$20 cover membership and a newsletter. Contact:

Mr. Mikhail Sergeev,
Coordinator of Research
St. Joseph's University
Dept. of Theology
5600 City Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19131-1395
tel: 215-222-5690
610-660-1850
fax: 610-660-2160.

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Compromise Law on Foreign Adoptions

The Russian Duma passed legislation on 10 February 1995 prohibiting commercial agencies from dealing in adoptions and increasing the categories of children eligible for adoption by foreigners. The law is a compromise worked out after President Yeltsin vetoed legislation in December that in effect precluded adoptions by foreigners. The new legislation makes any child, for whom no Russian family can be found, eligible for foreign adoption. At present, only children with medical problems, those with alcoholic or mentally ill parents, or non-Russian children who are older are eligible. Source: OMRI 1 (13 February 1995).

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Dr. Charles W. Spicer, Jr., president of **Overseas Council for Theological Education and Missions**, will resign his position to become vice chairman of the U.S. board of OC, effective July 1995. Dr. John C. Bennett, the current executive vice president, will become president. Dr. Bennett obtained his Ph.D. in non-Western Christianity from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, and has served with Overseas Council since 1990.

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RESOURCES

Albanian Evangelical Literature

For the fifth year, Insight, the research branch of Ancient World Outreach (AWO), has published an 18-page *Master List of Albanian Bibles, Bible Portions, and Evangelical Literature* listing the products of 60 publishers. The 298 entries are arranged in 24 categories covering all types of evangelical literature in Albanian from tracts to Bible reference books. AWO's Insight sponsors a library and reading room in Thessaloniki, Greece, and publishes *Albanian Insight*. Copies of the 1994 *Master List* are available for \$10 from:

AWO

Box 10980

GR-54110 Thessaloniki,
Greece

tel/fax: 30-392-27148

or via the AWO box in the AEP office, Tirana. Source: *Albanian Insight* 4 (July 1994), 6.

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On 17 August 1993 the Russian Republic Supreme Soviet, for the second time, passed restrictive amendments to the October 1990 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion. President Yeltsin, who had vetoed earlier (14 July) restrictive amendments, did not sign the August legislation prior to his dissolution of the Supreme Soviet on 21 September 1993, but held it for consideration by the new Parliament elected in December 1993. Current deliberations parallel the concerns raised in a detailed 66-page history and critique of the August 1993 legislation: "The Future of Religious Liberty in Russia; Report of the DeBurght Conference on Pending Russian Legislation Restricting Religious Liberty," *Emory International Law*

Review 8 (Spring 1994). The cost is \$20 (U.S.); \$22 (non-U.S.), which includes postage/handling, from: William S. Hein & Co. 1285 Main St. Buffalo, NY 14209 tel: 800-828-7571 fax: 716-883-8100.

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Children of Perestroika

This troubling video portrays the psychological and economic trauma of Soviet/post-Soviet perestroika from the perspective of the children and teens of one Siberian city. Here is a telling introduction to the deepening difficulties of daily life in the former Soviet Union and a valuable resource for orientation. University rental: \$75 one-day, plus \$5.95 shipping/handling; purchase price: \$149, plus 6% shipping/handling (U.S. and Canada only). Contact:

Films for the Humanities
and Sciences

Box 2053

Princeton, NJ 08543-2053

tel: 800-257-5126

fax: 609-275-3767.

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Recent Studies Available from SEN Research Center (formerly Mission Forum):

Orphanages and Adoption/Fostering in Slovakia (\$15/£10/ÖS180, December 1994, 50 pp.) Provides a close look at Slovakia's orphanages and related legal issues of foster care and adoption.

Integrity in Business (\$15/£10/ÖS180, Fall 1994, 40 pp.) The growing ranks of entrepreneurs, managers, and business owners in rapidly changing postcommunist societies face serious assaults on moral integrity in the seemingly "value-free" area of business. The study is based on survey research among business people in Slovakia and Poland.

Shadows of the Past (\$15/£10/ÖS180, September 1994, 48 pp.) Illuminates the impact of forty years of communism on the way people think. Based on the experiences of people living in East Central Europe, as well as indigenous and foreign literature. Treats public life, business, the church, society, art, and culture.

A Guide to Electronic Mail Services (\$15/£10/ÖS180, August 1994, 53 pp.) Provides addresses, prices, and information for local as well as international services. See comments in *EWC&M Report* 2 (Summer 1994), 14.

Hungarian Christian Publishers (\$15/£10/ÖS180, August 1994, 20 pp.) Entries for each Christian publisher in Hungary include short description, address, phone and fax, and sample book or tape titles.

The Romanian Orphanages (\$15/£10/ÖS180, December 1993, 18 pp.) A review of the situation in Romanian orphanages and an evaluation of the effectiveness of outside assistance. Excerpt published in *EWC&M Report* 2 (Summer 1994), 10-11.

Bureaucracy "How to live with the system and sometimes beat it" (\$5/£3.50/ÖS60, Summer 1993, 7 pp.) Survival in Central and Eastern Europe requires coping with bureaucracy. This semi-humorous examination of "the system" also suggests strategies for wading through the jungle of official obstructions to common sense. Excerpt published in *EWC&M Report* 2 (Winter 1994), 1.

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Cassettes of *Dialogue* radio programs produced by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, in association with Radio Smithsonian, may be purchased for \$10 each from the Woodrow Wilson Center 370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW Suite 704 Washington, DC 20024-2518 tel: 202-287-3000 ext. 325 fax: 202-287-3772.

Recent broadcasts have included Scott Shane, "Dismantling Utopia" (#277); Gyorgy Bence, "Communism's Fall: Why Were We Surprised?" (#215); Vladimir Tismaneanu, "The Myths of Eastern Europe" (#231); Michael Khodarkovsky, "The Frontier of Russia's Wild, Wild South" (#194).

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Correction

EWC&M Report extends apologies to readers for an editorial error on the masthead of Vol. 3, No. 4. It should read Fall 1994, as per successive pages, instead of Winter 1994.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

6-9 April 1995

Principles and Practices of Saturation Church Planting, Prague, Czech Republic
Contact: Don Crane
Kurimska 15
62100 Brno
Czech Republic
Tel/fax: 42-5-41225172
E-mail: 100102.167@compuserve.com

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13-23 April 1995

Seminar on Orthodox Theology and Spirituality, Celigny, Switzerland
Contact: Ecumenical Institute
Chateau de Bossey (Vaud)
CH-1298 Celigny
Switzerland
Tel: 022-776-25-31
Fax: 022-776-01-69

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16-20 May 1995

Not of This World: An Ecumenical Conference for Traditional Christians, Aiken, SC. Plenary speakers: Archbishop of Albania Anastasios, Harold O.J. Brown, Peter Kreeft, Richard Neuhaus, J.I. Packer, and Kallistos Ware. Registration fee: \$125.
Contact: Rose Hill House of Studies

Box 3126
Aiken, SC 29802
Tel: 803-641-1614
Fax: 803-641-0240

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June 1995

Operation Mobilization (OM) Ship Logos II in Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia
Contact: OM Ships
Postfach 1565
74819 Mosbach, Germany
Tel: 49-6261-800756
Fax: 49-6261-800746

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1-3 June 1995

Magazine Graphics Workshop, Oradea, Romania
Contact: Eastern European Magazine Training Institute
Postfach 33
2502 Leesdorf-Baden
Austria
Tel: 43-2236-53750
Fax: 43-2236-52390

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5-13 June 1995

Romanian Magazine Training Institute-Part II, Oradea, Romania
Contact: Eastern European Magazine Training Institute
See above.

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11 June-4 August 1995

School of Intercultural Studies (cross-cultural ministry, urban studies, and church planting), Moscow, Russia
Contact: United World Missions
Box 250
Union Mills, NC 28167
Tel: 800-887-1786;
704-287-8996
Fax: 704-287-0580
E-mail: 71035.704@compuserve.com

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13-16 June 1995

New Europe Forum (Consultation on European Union), Brussels, Belgium
Contact: Stuart McAllister
European Evangelical Alliance
Postfach 23
1037 Vienna, Austria
Tel: 43-1-713-3412
Fax: 43-1-713-8382

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23-25 June 1995

Russian Religious Philosophy: Is It Relevant Today?, Moscow, Russia
Western participant costs: \$100. Registration requested by April 15.
Contact: Clinton Gardner, President
The Transnational Vladimir Solovoyov Society
The Norwich Center
Box 710
Norwich, VT 05055
Tel/fax: 802-649-1000

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7-24 August 1995

Summer Missionary Institute, Odessa, Ukraine
Contact: Charles Warner, Director
Barnabas International
Box 11211
Rockford, IL 61126-1211
Tel: 815-395-1335
Fax: 815-395-1385, or
Box 3/4
Odessa 66
270066 Ukraine
Tel: 7-0482-549161
Fax: 7-0482-520044 or
323459
E-mail: 71764.551@compuserve.com

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7-9 September 1995

Integration of Psychology and Christianity, Moscow, Russia
Contact: Dr. Janice Strength
Moscow Christian School of Psychology
Box 4345
Fullerton, CA 92601
Tel: 909-597-6228
Fax: 909-597-2194
E-mail: jmstrength@netcom.com
or Dr. Alexander Makhnach
Center for Psychology and Psychotherapy: A Christian Perspective
c/o Institute of Psychology
13 Yaroslavaya
Moscow, Russia
Fax: 011-7095-283-5150
E-mail: wmah@ipras.msk.su

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26-29 October 1995

American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies Convention, Sheraton Washington Hotel, Washington, DC
Contact: AAASS
Jordon Quad/Acacia
125 Panama St.
Stanford, CA 94305-4130
Tel: 415-723-9668
Fax: 415-725-7737
E-mail: ab.cde@forsythe.stanford.edu

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6-10 November 1995

Principles and Practices of Saturation Church Planting, Budapest, Hungary
Contact: The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting
Budafoki ut 34/B 111/3
1111 Budapest
Hungary
Tel/fax: 361-165-6406
E-mail: 100263.426@compuserve.com

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1-6 September 1996

Christianity of Central-Eastern Europe: Between European East and West, Lublin, Poland
Contact: Institute of East Central Europe
Czartoryski Palace
Plac Litewski 2
20-080 Lublin, Poland
Tel/fax: 48-81-229-07

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13-17 November 1996

American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies Convention, Park Plaza Hotel, Boston, MA
Contact: AAASS
Jordon Quad/Acacia
125 Panama St.
Stanford, CA 94305-4130
Tel: 415-723-9668
Fax: 415-725-7737
E-mail: ab.cde@forsythe.stanford.edu

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Putting First Things Last

Being the first missionary to do something on the field must be a great sell. Otherwise, why would there be so many firsts?

A few years ago, I heard claims from several groups who had traveled to the same rural location independent of each other. Each group claimed to be the first Western Christian group to visit the village. Perhaps this is what they had been told by residents, but it couldn't have been true for all of them, and it may not have been true for any of them. I've been noticing all kinds of "first" claims—the first Christian broadcast or station or book or missionary or church to go to a particular audience.

Being first sounds good, but that's about it. How do people really know that something they are doing has never been done before? I sometimes wonder if, when enthusiastic nationals tell enthusiastic Westerners that something they are doing is a first, do they really mean that it is the first time that such an event has taken place in their life experience? Or maybe they mean that this is a time period of firsts in post-Soviet religious life, so everything that happens is sort of a first. But being "sort of" first doesn't make sense, and doesn't have much appeal to our egos, not to mention supporting friends and churches.

Yet we long to measure ministry in some way. We don't want to say that we are the best. That would be boasting, and a more obviously difficult assertion to prove than being first. So the next trick is to clarify the "first" event. For example, let's say a Protestant claims to be the first Christian missionary in a region. It may seem true and it may even be what people have said. But just to be safe, to avoid presuming that an earlier Orthodox or Catholic presence "doesn't count," qualify the claim

by saying the first Protestant missionary. Other safer superlatives would be "the first missionary in this century," or "the first modern missionary," or—the safest and vaguest claim of all—"the first ministry of its kind in country x or y or city z."

We would all do well to remember that being first says nothing about quality or effectiveness. Does being first really validate work? Why not focus communications on matters of the heart and specific people being helped? This approach may lead you to a place where with a certain amount of confidence you can share legitimate personal firsts—the first time a person ever received a gift with no strings attached, the first time a specific person ever read a Gospel, or the first time a person ever considered that Christianity might be true.

People love stories. I have a suspicion that's one of the reasons why Jesus told so many of them. The writers of the New Testament could have filled their books with firsts—first appearance of angels to shepherds, first water-to-wine miracle, first boy's lunch that feeds thousands, first stoning of Christian missionary, first persecutor converted to Christ. For some reason, that wasn't their focus. And when it comes to defining and communicating our work, it shouldn't be ours.

I realize there are times when reporting a "first" is valid, but how do we verify such a claim against a thousand years of history? When something truly miraculous and historic takes place, even when it is a legitimate "first," no one has to point it out. For its recipients, God's saving grace and mercy is always fresh, firsthand, and, to be sure, a first. The miracle is that it happens at all and that it happens all the time in little and big ways.

As I witness the twists and turns of both history and Christianity in lands formerly dominated by Soviet Communism, I conclude that God's children are often vessels that don't even know what they're holding or for what purpose they contain it. I sometimes think God keeps such knowledge from us to keep us from getting big heads. Alas, our heads get big anyway. We mistakenly conclude that all we perceive as truth in the world will ultimately be revealed as truth. When the glass goes from dark to light, there will be surprises for all of us. When we find ourselves in that light, we may be embarrassed to discover that our claims of being first are not only false, but that the energy we put into making such claims only served to keep us from what God really intended us to be—His servants, more concerned with people in need than our need to be first. ♦

Wil Triggs,
Editor

Being first says nothing about quality or effectiveness.

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