



EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT

SPRING 1998

VOL. 6, NO. 2

Evangelical Denominations in Post-Communist Romania

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The Romanian Revolution in December 1989 brought about a series of major changes in Evangelical denominations. By Evangelicals, we mean, in this context, the Baptist, Pentecostal, and Brethren denominations. We exclude Seventh-day Adventists for theological reasons, even though official Romanian documents would classify them as Evangelicals or "neoProtestants." A description of the situation since December 1989 for each of the denominations mentioned above is followed by general conclusions concerning Evangelicals as a group.

Baptists

The Baptists are the oldest Evangelical denomination in Romania. The first Romanian Baptist communities were formed in Transylvania, the result of missionary work based mainly in Hungary. At the end of 1989 the Baptist denomination had approximately 100,000 baptized members and an additional 200,000 adherents. Three hundred pastors, some with no formal theological training, served 1,400 local churches. Six months later, by the middle of 1990, the number of churches had increased by more than 50 percent, without significant growth in membership. The explanation is that under the old regime many groups of believers did not receive the right to be constituted as a legal local church and were worshiping with groups of believers in other places. In many cities church buildings were crowded, so as soon as the external conditions allowed, believers formed new churches. In other places, dogmatic, practical, or personal differences among believers resulted in the unnecessary fragmentation of existing communities.

This was not possible before the Revolution because of the strict control exercised by the communist authorities through the local inspector for religious activities. He was required to report regularly on the number of Protestant congregations and growth was considered unacceptable. Therefore, when the formation of a new congregation could not be prevented, the new church received authorization at the expense of a smaller

community, thus keeping the total number of authorizations unchanged.

Addressing the Pastoral Shortage

Immediately after 1989, contrary to expectations, the Baptist denomination experienced no major changes in leadership. First, elected leaders had been in their positions for too short a time to have lost their credibility through obvious compromise with the former authorities (a long-standing practice during the communist era in all East-bloc religious denominations). Second, the more radical Baptist leaders, based mainly in Oradea and Bucharest, believed that an institutional change at the top was not the priority of the moment. They left it for later, when the denominational structures would be free from the scars of difficult years under communism. For them, the most important problem to be solved was the shortage of qualified pastors. A number of solutions to this problem have been proposed.

Via Ordination of Lay Pastors?

Ordained lay pastors without formal theological training were the main and almost only possible option under the communist regime. Unfortunately, with just a few significant exceptions, the leaders promoted were incompetent theologically and without an obvious calling for full-time ministry. They were somewhat easy to ordain and set in place, but difficult, if not impossible, to remove if they proved unfit for the job. This was, in my opinion, a failed experiment in most cases.

Via Strengthened Seminaries?

Today seminaries, with the possibility of larger enrollments, should provide the needed theological training for future pastors, but this cannot be taken for granted. The Baptist Seminary in Bucharest (at best, a college-level school before 1989) has been confronted with a critical lack of qualified teachers. One possible solution to this new problem has been

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to import theology teachers from the West. However, this can have important disadvantages, which I will deal with later. The Baptist Institute in Oradea established in 1990 was then just a hopeful promise. In time it became established as a serious theological school. Later, many other Bible schools emerged throughout the country, usually with Western help. Unfortunately, most of these schools do not have serious academic standards and have very little chance to become officially accredited.

Via Study Abroad?

Another approach is to send promising young people to study theology in the West, particularly to the United States and the United Kingdom. This, in time, could solve the problem of a lack of teachers, but it has its own risks. Some students, attracted by the affluence of the West, never come back. To a certain extent this is understandable, given Romania's social and economic instability. Others have been influenced by liberal theology or have been sidetracked by irrelevant Western theological debates.

Pentecostals

Pentecostals (Assemblies of God and Church of God) have approximately 300,000 baptized members and 200,000 additional adherents in 2,000 churches served by 300 pastors, most without formal theological training. The events in December 1989 triggered a revolution in official Pentecostal leadership. Younger leaders who have the trust of believers finally replaced the president of the Pentecostal Union, Pavel Boghian, distinguished by his obedient attitude toward communist authorities.

One of the most difficult problems confronting Pentecostals is the need for adequate theological training for pastors. The Pentecostal Seminary in Bucharest, opened in the late seventies, can hardly meet the need for leaders in one of the most dynamic denominations in Romania. What we have already said about the Baptists in this respect generally holds true for Pentecostals as well. However, Pentecostal believers are more hesitant to accept pastors who are theologically trained and paid by the congregation. The first graduates from the seminary were received with great difficulty, especially by the older generation of Pentecostals. A side effect of the lower level of theological training, which is characteristic of most Pentecostal leaders, is the theological fragmentation of the denomination. In general, as always, the younger generation is more open to change, and there is much reason for hope.

A specific aspect of the Romanian Pentecostal environment is the presence in its midst of a group called the "universals" (illegal under the old regime), who emphasized charismatic manifestations to a larger extent than classic Pentecostals.

They strongly resisted any official church authority structures. Sometimes they refused army service, leading to lengthy imprisonment.

Pentecostals are recruiting the majority of their members from the countryside and from workers who have recently moved to the cities. As a consequence, they prefer worship that is similar to folk music. However, the younger generation seems to be more open to modern music, especially that of Western origin.

Neither the law nor officially recognized denominations favor new charismatic and other independent Evangelical churches founded since 1989. Nevertheless, these churches, with their more relaxed attitude toward the Evangelical tradition, are challenging established denominations. They often respond to the specific needs of postmodern people in a better manner than more traditional churches. At the same time, they increase the fragmentation of the church.

Brethren

Brethren assemblies (Brethren prefer this term over churches) include approximately 50,000 baptized members and about 100,000 additional adherents, served by about 100 workers. (The title *pastor* is not used.) They are especially concentrated in Moldavia, in the center of the southern province of Wallachia, and in southern Transylvania, where Germans used to live. Before the 1989 Revolution the denomination contained two branches. About 70 percent of Romanian Brethren are closely related to the so-called "large brothers" in the West, the outgrowth of work begun in the early 1920s by missionaries coming from Switzerland, Norway, Germany, and England. The second branch of Brethren formed about the same time, following a revival in the Orthodox Church led by Fr. Tudor Popescu, hence, the designation Tudorists. Fr. Popescu converted to Evangelical faith under the influence of literature produced by British Plymouth Brethren. (Tudorists are sometimes called Darbyists after the Plymouth Brethren founder, Charles Darby.) His new preaching distressed the Orthodox hierarchy and some of his fellow priests who accused him—probably rightly so—of Protestant faith and practical deviance from Orthodoxy. He ultimately was excommunicated and formed his own denomination. These Brethren, like the so-called "narrow brothers" in the West, adhere to a strict lifestyle and are exclusive in their attitude towards other denominations, including other Romanian Evangelicals. Unlike Baptists and Pentecostals, they practice infant baptism. Communists forced the merger of the two Brethren churches, but after 1989 they separated. Tudorists, officially known as the Evangelical Church in Romania, number approximately 40,000 members and adherents and are located mainly near Bucharest and to the north.

Most Brethren come from the working class. Village assemblies, though numerous, have to deal with an aging membership, as young people move to

the cities. Also, Brethren are confronted with a certain loss of vision and decline in spiritual life, compared with a few decades ago. Before the communists came to power in the mid-1940s, Romanian Brethren, who had no theologically educated or paid pastors, trained their leaders through a system of regular regional conferences. They were led by people with greater ministry experience and occasionally some with training acquired in theological schools of other denominations or abroad. The communists restricted these conferences, creating a crisis in pastoral training and unwanted theological diversity within assemblies. The resulting fragmentation and disunity led younger and more open-minded leaders to found their first denominational Bible school in Bucharest. One very important difficulty in establishing Brethren theological education is the lack of any indigenous faculty with formal theological training. A number of Brethren are now studying abroad, and it is possible that in time they

will be able to teach in the new Brethren Bible school. Until then, reestablishing regional training conferences could offer a viable, temporary solution.

After eliminating leadership compromised by cooperation with the communists, Brethren have been faced with tension between older, traditionalist leaders and more radical and dynamic younger leaders. The future impact of the denomination in the country depends to a large extent upon the outcome of this confrontation. ♦

Editor's note: *The conclusion of this article will appear in the next issue of the EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT.*

Source: *Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from a revised English translation of the author's original article published in Korunk (no. 10, October 1990), a Hungarian-language cultural magazine published in Cluj, Romania.*

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Websites Well Worth the Time

On the Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe

Sharyl Corrado and Mark Elliott, Compilers

Sites marked by * are highly recommended.

Religion Sites

Association for Spiritual Renewal*

<http://www.asr.ru/>

In English and Russian

Includes research on religion in various regions of the former Soviet Union, an on-line bookstore with over 500 titles, and an on-line Russian magazine. At present, detailed statistics on religious organizations and churches of various denominations are available for the city of Kyiv and regions of Donetsk, Kirovgrad, and Zaporozhye, Ukraine, as well as for Krasnodar, Murmansk, Komi, and Bryansk regions in Russia.

Center of Religious Literature and Russian Exile Literature

<http://www.libfl.ras.ru/eng/relig.html>
(In English)

<http://www.libfl.ras.ru/rus/relig.html>
(In Russian, KOI-8)

Opened in 1990, the Center contains Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant materials, literature on other world religions and new religious movements, and a monthly bulletin, *New Religious Books in Russia*. The Center accepts international e-mail purchase orders for items in the bulletin.

Christian Europe Online*

<http://huizen.nhkanaal.nl/~chr/links/europe/europe.htm>

In English

Nondenominational, Netherlands-based web site that provides links to Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic resources throughout Europe, including most countries of East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Christian Philosophy and Theology of the Middle Ages

<http://tela.dux.ru/antology/index.html>

In Russian, KOI-8

A project of the Russian Christian Humanitarian University in St. Petersburg, this anthology provides the original Latin texts and Russian translations of the most important Western philosophers and theologians of the Middle Ages, a search engine for Latin and Russian terminology, biographical and bibliographical information arranged by author, and commentaries.

Czech Christian Links

<http://nlkdec.nlk.anet.cz/cgi-bin/toASCII/dave/salvator/czechlinks.html>

In Czech with links to Czech and English
This private page provides links to Czech

theological educational institutions as well as to predominantly Catholic magazines and religious news.

FEBC Russian New Testament

<http://www.febc.org/cis/bible/bible.html>

In Russian, KOI-8

Far East Broadcasting Company makes available the Synodal translation of most books of the New Testament. It is in the process of adding the published commentary of respected prerevolutionary Orthodox scholar Alexander P. Lopukhin alongside the biblical text. Other study aids are under development.

Gandzasar Theological Center Publishing

<http://www.arminco.com/gandzasar/press.html>
In English

The organization Gandzasar, founded in 1991 with the blessing of His Holiness the Catholicos of All Armenians, promotes understanding of the Armenian Apostolic Church through publishing. It publishes and distributes books, a theological journal, patristic literature, and numerous booklets, pamphlets, calendars, maps, and cards in the Armenian language at subsidized rates. Materials are made available free of charge to those who cannot afford them.

Websites (continued from page 3)

Hungarian Bible Links

http://195.56.42.99/www2/biblia/mb_index.htm

In Hungarian

Hit Gyülekezete (The Church of Faith), the largest charismatic denomination in Hungary, provides links to several editions of the Bible in Hungarian, including a new 1997 translation published by Szent Pál Akadémia (Saint Paul Academy), concordances for both the original and the new translations, and audio recordings of several books of the Bible.

Hyper-Bible

<http://www.xc.org/hyprbibl/>

Text in Russian, 1251 Windows, instructions in English

This hypertexted Russian Bible is based on the Synodal translation, with more than 100 archaic words replaced with contemporary Russian, providing a more readable text without losing the literary style. Hypertexted appendices include the Nicene Creed, a harmony of the four Gospels, links to the miracles and parables of Jesus Christ, and a daily Bible-reading plan. This Bible can be downloaded and used off-line. NavSearch, a browser add-on with a search engine can be downloaded separately (instructions included) to provide a concordance.

International Academy for Freedom of Religion and Belief

<http://www.religfreedom.org/>
(home page)

In English with links to texts in English, Russian, and other languages

The Academy, founded in Windsor, England, in July 1985, seeks "to uphold and promote the principles of religious liberty" and to provide the means and opportunities for interfaith and governmental dialogue. It assists in the adoption, dissemination, and implementation of international standards for the protection of freedom of religion and belief.

<http://www.religfreedom.org/documents/legislation/russia/index.html>

Includes press releases, statements, analyses, and English translations of the 1990 and 1997 Russian religion laws.

<http://www.religfreedom.org/documents/legislation/index.html>

Includes documents related to religious freedom in various countries, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Lithuania.

IRR/TV Russian Bible

<http://www.serve.com/irr-tv/Russian/Bible/>
In Russian, KOI-8

International Russian Radio/TV offers the Synodal translation of the Bible. Display is slower than with the FEBC New Testament because each chapter is a separate link.

Magyarországi Evangélikus Egyház

<http://www.evangel.alarmix.net/index.html>

In Hungarian and English

This home page of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary includes a directory of churches and church institutions, an electronic library (containing, among other publications, its weekly newsletter), and links to various related pages.

Magyar Református Egyházak Tanácskozó Zsinata

<http://www.mretzs.hu>

In Hungarian with links to Hungarian and English

This home page of the Hungarian Reformed Church includes its constitution, mission statement, prayer needs, upcoming events, and liturgies, as well as a large number of links to related sites, including educational institutions and the church's press service.

No Frontiers: Christian Literature to the World

<http://www.nofrontiers.com/index.htm>
In English

No Frontiers stocks Bibles, New Testaments, children's books, and other Christian literature in over 100 languages, including the major languages of the former Soviet Union and East Central Europe. An on-line catalog facilitates purchase orders.

Official Web Site of the Holy See*

<http://www.vatican.va>

In English, Italian, Latin, and other languages, including some Polish and Czech

Provides letters, newspapers, press releases, liturgies, and other general information on the Pope's travels and on historical and contemporary Catholicism worldwide. Included is the daily Holy See Press Office Bulletin, which publishes official news regarding the activities of the Pope and various Vatican departments in Italian and in the original language of each document. Speeches, messages, and various documents are published in their entirety.

The Orthodox Christian Page

<http://www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/>
In English

Created by Efthimios Mavrogeorgiadis in 1995, this web site provides links to Orthodox literature and catechism (including an article by Fr. Michael Azkoul entitled "Differences Between the Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism"), icons, liturgies, prayers, and other resources.

Orthodox WorldLinks*

<http://www.theologic.com/links.html>
In English

Provides access to 131 web sites related to Eastern Orthodoxy. Includes prayers and literature; bookstores, publishers, and vendors; organizations and foundations; Orthodox research resources; iconography, art, and architecture; news resources and mailing lists; patriarchates, archdioceses, dioceses, and monasteries; and educational institutions. Compiled by TheoLogic Systems, Bethel Park, PA.

Polish Christian Bookstore

(Księgarnia im. Pawła Władkowica)

<http://www.PolishChristian.org>

In English and Polish

This on-line catalog of Polish-language Christian literature, containing 350 titles, allows on-line purchasing of books as diverse as a Greek/Polish New Testament, *My Utmost for His Highest*, C.S. Lewis's *Narnia* series, and numerous other titles. Ten percent is Polish in origin.

Radiotserkov News (Far East Broadcasting Company)

<http://www.febc.org/cis/news/news.htm>
In Russian, 1251 Windows

A free service of FEBC, *Radiotserkov* [Radiochurch] News is updated regularly, providing current information on religious freedom issues, as well as the activities of various churches and missions in Russia, both national and international. English translations of articles of international interest can often be found on Paul Steeves' Religion in Russia web site. This appears to be the only in-country Protestant Russian news service. It provides news from throughout Russia, in contrast to the many services which focus on Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Religion in Russia (Paul Steeves)*

<http://www.stetson.edu/~psteves/re/news/>
In English with links to Russian texts

Since April 1996, Dr. Paul Steeves, Department of History, Stetson University, has regularly screened Russian newspapers for religious news, translated relevant

articles, and made his translations available free of charge on the Internet. Sources include *Argumenty i fakty*, *Ekspres khronika*, *Ogonek*, *Russkaya mysl'*, *Pravoslavnyi Sankt Peterburg*, *Keston News Service*, *Moscow News*, and *St. Petersburg Times*. Well-indexed, Religion in Russia is by far the best web site for current information on religion in Russia.

Romanian Protestant Christian Page*
<http://private.fuller.edu/~ematei/>

In English with links to Romanian
Created by a Romanian student at Fuller Theological Seminary with the support of Romanian Protestant Christians. Includes coverage of churches (Baptist and Pentecostal to date), Protestant higher education, a directory of Romanian theological students and scholars, Protestant perspectives on Eastern Orthodoxy, directories of indigenous and foreign Christian organizations working in Romania, and a large collection of articles and book reviews by Romanian theologians related to Romanian Christianity.

Russian Christian Home Page*

http://www.bethel.edu/seminary_academics/international/russian/russian3.htm

In English and Russian, with links to English and Russian-language resources
Provides links to categories such as Russian Bibles on the web, Russian-language Christian literature (including the church fathers, Alexander Men, and C.S. Lewis), a directory of Russian Christian organizations on the web, and resource materials on both Christianity and Russia.

Russian Concordance

http://www.comptek.ru/arcadia/yand_rbible.html

In Russian, 1251 Windows
As a demonstration of its Russian-language full-text retrieval system Yandex.Site, CompTek International provides a search engine which finds verses throughout the Bible (Synodal Translation) containing any form of a word entered.

Russian Orthodox Church Home Page*

<http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/en.htm>

In English and Russian
Includes major pronouncements of the patriarch and the Holy Synod, as well as extensive statistical and historical data and current events. A page providing links to Orthodox internet resources is under construction.

Taizé

<http://www.taize.fr>

In English, Polish, Hungarian, and seven other languages
In addition to a gift of one million New Testaments to the USSR in 1988, Taizé has maintained long-standing quiet ties to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants alike regularly visit Taizé in France.

General Sites

The Alinga Group Links to Russia

http://www.alinga.com/html/default_links.html

In English
Seeks to share knowledge and experience with those wanting to understand Russia. Named after a river in the Russian Far East, it includes links to universities, cities, news, travel, history and culture, and other information sources.

Amnesty International

<http://www.amnesty.org>

In English
Amnesty International seeks to protect human rights without reference to state ideology or the beliefs of victims. It collects and analyzes information from a wide variety of sources, including hundreds of newspapers and journals, government bulletins, transcripts of radio broadcasts, and reports from lawyers and humanitarian organizations. Its on-line library contains thousands of documents and reports regarding human rights violations around the world, including most countries of the former Soviet Union and East Central Europe.

Bucknell University Russian materials*

<http://www.bucknell.edu/departments/russian/material.html>

In English with links to Russian and English
Provides links to a variety of materials pertaining to Russia, including such diverse subjects as environmental issues, embassies, cooking, Russian language study, feminism, folklore, and philosophy.

Dazhdbog's Grandchildren

<http://sunsite.oit.unc.edu/sergei/Grandsons.html>

In English with Russian and English links
Created by a graduate student in physics at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Dazhdbog's Grandchildren contains various links to Russian news, literature, music, and other topics of interest. As well as serious news, this site is useful for

material on Russian popular culture, including music, humor, and links to Russian cities.

Electronic Newspapers, Magazines, and Mailing Lists

<http://www.cs.toronto.edu/~mes/russia/period/e-media.html>

In English with English and Russian links
Provides links to various Russian on-line news services, including National News Service (with a photo archive containing portraits of policy makers), *Argumenty i fakty*, *Literaturnaya gazeta*, *Ogonek*, *Russkaya mysl'*, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, and *Russia Today*.

English-Russian-English Dictionary

<http://public.elvis.ru/~denis/dict.cgi>

This active server page accepts both Russian and English words and within a few seconds provides dictionary entries including multiple meanings and usage.

Friends and Partners*

<http://solar.rtd.utk.edu/friends/home.html#opt-tables-mac-english->

In English and Russian
Jointly developed by citizens of the U.S. and Russia to better promote mutual understanding, this web site serves to create and link together information on history, art, music, literature, and religion; educational, scientific, and natural resources; and opportunities for non-Russians and Russians to communicate, travel, and work together.

Johnson's Russia List

To subscribe, e-mail
davidjohnson@erols.com

In English
Roughly 1,000 scholars, journalists, policy makers, and Russophiles from Washington to Hong Kong receive David Johnson's daily or weekly e-mail compilation of news and analysis about contemporary Russia. Voluminous and controversial, "whatever their opinion of his views, scholars agree that the list is changing the nature of academic and political scrutiny of Russia." (Sarah Koenig, *New York Times*, 17 March 1997).

Okno Consulting Home Page*

<http://www.msen.com/~okno/index.html>

In English with links to multiple languages
Okno Consulting, Ann Arbor, MI, advises Western businesses working in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. Of special interest is an annotated list of links to other relevant web sites, including home pages and statistical data for the countries of East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Websites (continued from page 5)

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*

<http://www.rferl.org/index.html>

In English, with live audio broadcasts in Armenian, Azerbaijani, Belarusian, Bosnian, Croatian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Russian, Serbian, Tajik, Tatar-Bashkir, Turkmen, and Uzbek

As well as multilanguage live broadcasts, RFE/RL publishes up-to-date regional news, articles, and special reports on all regions of the former Soviet Union and East Central Europe. Links are also provided to Caucasus and Bosnia coverage, as well as news in Russian (KOI-8).

Russian and East-European Studies Internet Resources*

<http://www.pitt.edu/~cjp/rees.html>

In English with links to sites in a variety of languages

The REESWeb is a comprehensive index of electronic resources on the Balkans, the Baltic States, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, sponsored by the Center for Russian and East European Studies of the University of Pittsburgh. Disciplines indexed include language, government, business, media, technology, and public affairs. ♦

Editor's Note: See also Bob Dasal, "The Computer Is Vital Tool for Missionary Organization Working in Russia," *Christian Computing Magazine* 8 (February 1996). Available at: <http://www.gospelcom.net/ccmag/articles/msty0296.html>. For subscriptions, contact: Christian Computing Magazine, Box 198, Raymore, MO 64083; tel: 800-456-1868 or 816-331-3881; fax: 816-331-5510; bdasal@ccmag.com.

The Czech Spiritual Landscape in the Post-Communist Era

Jim and Laurie Barnes

All of Eastern and Central Europe received much attention in the late 1980s as political change came swiftly. The fall of communism in Czechoslovakia in 1989, which ended religious restrictions, prompted an immediate influx of Western missionaries who desired to take advantage of the new conditions. Now, nearly a decade later, what is the spiritual landscape?

Certainly, the need for the gospel is great, but the "rush for souls" in the early 1990s included many spiritual counterfeits with which true Christianity has had to compete. According to Christian Fellowship Prague senior pastor, Dan Drápal, "It was much more open in the first years after the revolution, but it's tough because freedom is freedom for everybody."¹

Severe Secularization

The Czech Republic has been heavily secularized for many years. Forced Catholicization under centuries of Hapsburg rule, followed by fifty years under nazism and communism, robbed many Czechs of any vital Christian experience. A mindset of unbelief best describes the legacy of Marxist indoctrination. Because communists believed that the sufficiency of man was to be demonstrated through science and culture, God and the church were unimportant. A 1991 survey of European values showed that the Czech Republic is one of the least religious states in Europe.² Today, 80 percent of Czechs are atheists or agnostics. Commenting on the decline of belief and church attendance in Europe, Martin Jan Stransky, publisher of the monthly magazine *The New Presence*, noted,

Today's Czech Republic is no exception where the roots of its atheism go back to founding

father Tomáš Garrige Masaryk's thesis on "Religion Without Dogma, Priests or Miracles" supporting a new, modern and humane religion. These same roots extend to the Austro-Hapsburg influences favoring secularization and end with the anti-Vatican attitude of the Hussite rebellion and reformation.³

Liberal Czech theologians who accept Post-modernism as the proper belief system now cultivate another genre of unbelief.

Catholics

Nevertheless, Roman Catholicism remains the largest religious body in the Czech Republic. Although it outnumbers the next five religious groups combined by a ratio of 8:1, its influence is far less than in earlier times. Approximately 500,000 (5 percent of the population) attend mass each week. Tomáš Halík, philosophy professor and chaplain at Prague's Charles University, noted that Catholicism had a brief opportunity to regain influence immediately following the 1989 Velvet Revolution, but failed "because the Church itself was unable to hold its ranks together and its words were not followed by sufficiently tangible and credible actions."⁴ On the other hand, the Catholic renewal movement is active and young people frequently attend Halík's masses. He challenges them to work together and to dialog with humanists who similarly opposed communism.⁵

Protestants

Other religious groups have somewhat less influence. The modern Czechoslovak Hussite Church dates from 1920. While its members oppose Catholic Church practices, it is not connected with

the teachings of Jan Hus (1372–1415). The Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren appeared when Czechoslovakia became independent in 1918. It emerged from a consolidation of Calvinists and most Lutheran groups. Both churches have embraced theological liberalism and have memberships of less than 200,000 each, a small fraction of their pre-World War II levels. Lutherans who did not join the Czech Brethren number about 50,000 and Eastern Orthodox, about 20,000.

Evangelical Christians constitute one-half of one percent of Czechs, about 50,000 people. The largest of the evangelical groups is the Brethren Church with 8,000 members. According to the denomination's president, Pavel Cerny, the Brethren Church has 46 churches and 100 mission fellowships with a goal to plant a church in every community without an evangelical congregation. Seventh-day Adventists are similar in size and have a very active radio and social ministry. Various other religious bodies, including Judaism, Moravian Brethren, Baptists, Methodists, and the Apostolic Church (Pentecostal), have memberships estimated at 2,000 to 3,000 each. Christian Fellowship Prague, an indigenous Czech church, added 15 percent to its numbers per year during the early 1990s, but its growth rate has leveled off since then. At present this group has 62 churches in the country with a membership of approximately 2,200. Other religious bodies such as the Church of Christ and Grace Brethren are establishing, or have established, churches, but their numbers are small.

Leadership Training and Other Needs

An essential step to growth is leadership training and the cultivation, discipleship, enrichment, and continued education of Christian workers. Leadership development was formerly the exclusive domain of the communist government and to even use the spoken or written term *leadership* was dangerous. The church focused on survival. It has taken six of the first eight years of freedom for pastors in training to confidently say, "We think we will be able to lead." Fear of failure, a feeling that "others can do it better," a critical spirit, and an inclination to be divisive, all stifled the church's willingness to take responsibility.

Understanding and rejecting this "theology of failure" are keys to change, along with an environment which encourages a supportive, rather than a critical spirit. Unity is understood to be crucial to church growth and divisive issues have to be addressed directly with biblical teaching, modeling, and practical application. Czech Christians also need more inductive Bible study methods, in contrast to the deductive approach common in Eastern and Central Europe. Teaching inductive Bible study along with solid hermeneutics is foundational to growth and discipleship.

Another key need is instruction about the family. The absence of biblical teaching about relationships, a climate of social and economic

hopelessness, sexual immorality, and alcoholism combine to undermine family stability. Because of the country's high divorce rate, the need and the desire for teaching on single parenting is great. Christian retreats, workshops, and seminars can address a myriad of marital and family problems. The development of lay and professional counselors is a critical need, especially in view of the limited number of Christian therapists and marriage and family counselors.

What is being done to meet the need for training and education? Evangelical (Reformed) Theological Seminary in Prague is developing a new campus as part of its current degree-granting program. The International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS) relocated to Prague from Rüschnikon, Switzerland, in 1995. It shifted its focus starting with the summer of 1998 to specialized theological studies at the master's and doctoral level, in partnership with several European universities. At the same time, IBTS will continue its commitment to continuing education and nontraditional training through conferences and workshops. Programs such as those offered by Christian Leadership International (formerly Biblical Education by Extension) and Training Christians for Ministry in Europe (formerly Taking Christ to the Millions) continue to provide excellent and consistent biblical teaching. Small training programs, extension classes, and individual workshops and seminars offered by various churches and ministries such as the Institute for Christian Resources are essential in order to help fill the gap in Christian education. More Christian literature in the Czech language remains a critical need. Indigenous evangelical publishers, including Návrat Domů and Nová Naděje, continue to address the shortage.

Evangelistic outreach to minorities and refugees has not received adequate attention. Unfortunately, Czech society tends to view Gypsies with a certain level of disdain, with open discrimination and individual acts of violence against them on the rise. In 1997 substantial numbers attempted to seek asylum in other countries in search of a better life, but few succeeded. The superstitious nature of Gypsies' religious practices and their close-knit communities have made evangelistic efforts difficult.

Equally isolated is the rather closed Vietnamese community which, since the 1989 Revolution, has been stranded by the cancellation of labor agreements between communist governments. Some efforts also have been made to reach out to Bosnians, Ukrainians, and others living in refugee camps through the distribution of Bibles and personal items, but there are many unmet needs.

The Missionary Presence

Currently, at least 125 single missionaries and missionary families are serving in the Czech Republic, about half in Prague, and one-third in Brno. Independent parachurch organizations, denominational mission boards, and individuals are active in a variety of ministries which can be

An essential step to growth is leadership training... formerly the exclusive domain of the communist government.

divided into seven broad categories: church planting and direct evangelism; English language and other teaching; university and sports ministries; communications and radio ministry; leadership development; library and Christian literature distribution; and ministry to families, including marriage and youth camps.⁶ All of these efforts supplement what indigenous churches are doing, including the efforts of the Christian Missionary Society (KMS). Indeed, Czech churches have a passion and determination to become "sending" churches.

Western ministries are finding work in the Czech Republic more challenging today. During this season of adjustment and refocus some organizations are downsizing and some are pulling out completely. Factors include discouragement and health problems related to the environment. Also, restrictions now being considered by the Czech government could make it more difficult for foreigners to obtain long-term residency permits.

Jim and Laurie Barnes are missionaries with Institute for Christian Resources, serving in the Czech Republic.

Fundamental change in a post-communist society takes time, at least a generation. Understanding felt needs and working in partnership with the indigenous churches continue to be essential. The challenge is great, the opportunities are enormous, and time may be limited. We must seek God's purposes and not our own; we must desire to be God's instruments, pliable in His hands; and we must serve with a focused perseverance. ♦

- 1 Randy Tift, "Czech Pastor Seeks Healing of Europe," *Charisma* 19 (April 1994), 60.
- 2 Jan Stojaspal, "Pope May Find Young Czechs a Tough Sell," *Prague Post* 23 (April 1997), 1.
- 3 Martin Jan Stransky, "Giving Back a Cathedral," *The New Presence*, February 1997, 1.
- 4 Tomáš Halík, "Post Communism and Its Discontents," *First Things*, No. 59 (January 1996), 39.
- 5 Tomáš Halík, "Catholicism in a Pluralist Society," *The New Presence*, May 1997, 29.
- 6 A current list of missions and missionaries operating in the Czech Republic is available for \$4 from Greater Europe Mission, Kuřimská 15, 621 00 Brno, Czech Republic; e-mail: GloriaGinn@compuserve.com.

WESTERN MISSIONARIES: CON AND PRO

Will We Survive Western Missionaries?

Reflections of a Czech Pastor

Dan Drápal

Editor's Note: The first half of this article was published in the EAST-WEST CHURCH AND MINISTRY REPORT 5 (Fall 1997), 7-8.

Coming to Teach

People who came to work here could be divided roughly into two groups. The first consists of people who really came to help. They are humble, and before they start working here, they try to contact local Christians and they *ask* about their opinion. It does not necessarily mean they adopt it. I know it is not only possible, but it is probable that the Lord will bring someone who will be able to help us in areas where we are lacking. It is not only possible, it is even probable that someone coming from a distance can see our shortcomings better than we ourselves. It is not a matter of adopting our views but a matter of attitude.

The second group consists of people who have come to do their own thing. But beware: these people do not have it written on their foreheads that they are coming with this attitude. Many of them look humble and they say things like "we know we can learn from you," "we really came to help you," and "we know you have suffered a lot for the Lord." Yes, but do they really mean it? After a few years of experience, I am not misled by these phrases. I know it might be true, but it also might be only a cliché or a smokescreen.

Western Missionaries Spreading the Gospel in Russia

Valentina A. Karchazhkina

It would be difficult to exaggerate the contribution of the majority of Western missionaries in the work of spreading the Gospel in our country. Without their unselfish labor in Russia and in the rest of the former Soviet Union, millions of people would have been deprived of the opportunity to hear about the redeeming sacrifice of Christ. The multitude of evangelistic campaigns conducted by Billy Graham, the Navigators, New Life [Campus Crusade], International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, Biblical Education by Extension [now Church Leadership International], East-West Ministries, and others were all directed at spreading the word to the people of Russia. I myself accepted Jesus Christ at an evangelistic meeting at Moscow State University in May 1991. Since then, I have taken part in spreading the good news in institutes of higher learning here in the capital.

Evangelistic methods change as conditions change. Nowadays, one of the most successful forms of spreading the good news is academic conferences held for various disciplines where Christians bear witness to Christ. Small-group Bible studies have appeared wherever evangelistic campaigns have been held and follow-up with new believers has been conducted patiently, persistently, and on a regular basis. We are also indebted to Western missionaries for the method of organizing these small groups.

Thanks be to God for the zeal of Western missionaries for the

Though we had quite a lot of people coming to do their own thing (though always proclaiming they are coming to do the work of Christ), it will be perhaps good to reflect more on those who proclaim, and who themselves believe, that they came not only to teach, but also to learn. How can we recognize that this attitude is genuine? How can they recognize it?

Well, if you come to *learn*, first you must observe if there is anything to learn. At the first encounter, neither side knows the quality and depth of the Christian walk of the other—unless there is a special supernatural revelation. Because I am aware of this, I never made the decision not to meet with foreigners again—though at times I was so frustrated by meetings with self-righteous and naive brothers and sisters that I was not far from this fatal decision. “Our life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col 3:3). Neither our visitors nor we can be judged easily by outward appearance only. You have to spend some time with the other party, not only talking to them. Only after spending some time together can you know if you have anything to learn or if you have anything to teach.

From what was said above it is clear that “fact-finding missions” lasting one or two days are of no great value. Of course, you can learn if people share your doctrinal views. And if they don’t, you might conclude that they need your help. But you might not be aware of the fact that though they have never heard of some of your fancy doctrines, they are sincere Christians with a pure heart who are after integrity. Are the relationships in your home church at least as good as in the church you are visiting? You should sincerely ask yourself this question before trying to teach anything.

It would be good to be aware of one problem. If your standard of living is higher, you might subconsciously conclude that your spiritual life is better, too. You might be condescending and paternalistic without being aware of it. Since the Czech Republic belongs neither to the richest nations nor the poorest nations, we can make experience both ways. I realized that I can easily become condescending when meeting Christians from Ukraine or Albania, especially when I see they make mistakes or hold erroneous views which we dealt with a long time ago. But do they have something positive which I do not even see?

Buying a Church?

I was interviewed by a man from a big congregation in Canada. After I described the life of our church he asked me about our needs. I told him that we needed a building and that I needed a car. He said, “Well, we might build you a building; we already built a building for a congregation in Trinidad. And we would buy you a car, but you would have to change your name. You would have to call yourself ‘...church of Canada.’ (I omit the first name.) You know, we need it for our tax-deductions.” I believe we have to be ready to *lose* our name for Jesus. We were never instructed to *sell* our name.

It seems to me that much of Christian life in the West reflects the free-market economy. The free-market economy is good for the economics of the country. Only the fittest companies survive. Bad products do not find buyers and their production must be stopped. Everything is geared to increase productivity and efficiency. Quick solutions and instant products sell well. After spending the longer part of my life under communist rule, I myself know only too well that socialism stifles an economy, whereas a free-market economy enhances the standard of living. However, applying the same in the spiritual realm might not be the best

(continued on page 10)

preparation of national workers. Special schools were created for the training of these workers, and existing schools, institutes, and seminaries have also been helped by missionaries. Without donations from foreign missionaries and the churches that sent them, the enormous amounts of money and effort invested in the spiritual development of my country would have been impossible. The generous help, initially in providing Bibles and afterwards in the organization of Christian publishers, has also helped disseminate the Gospel.

I especially wish to call attention to the compassion which Western missionaries have shown in rendering aid to orphanages, to the homeless and incarcerated, and to the poor. In their work for the spiritual development of our society, Western missionaries have made many other contributions: the organization of prayer meetings; the use of various kinds of prayer at conferences; and the “prayer chain” method. Many countries have also supported us in prayer.

The work of spiritual mentoring is especially urgent in the post-Soviet period. No Christian literature alone can guide the living spiritual growth of new believers. No one, save a spiritual mentor, can teach them to pray regularly and to walk with God. All of this is especially important for the spiritual nourishment of young Christians. Nowadays, I am in charge of educating the leaders of women’s ministries at newly formed churches. Especially helpful in this work has been *Rol’ zhenshchiny v tserkvi*, a translation of Susan Hunt’s *Leadership for Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991). Other valuable books translated, or being translated, include Susan Hunt, *Spiritual Mothering: The Titus 2 Model for Women* (Wheaton, IL: Franklin, TN: Crossway Books, Legacy Communications, 1993); Susan Hunt, *By Design: God’s Distinctive Calling for Women* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998); Evelyn Christenson, *What Happens When Women Pray* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1975); and Vickie Kraft, *Women Mentoring Women: Ways to Start, Maintain, and Expand a Biblical Women’s Ministry* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992). The use of books by foreign authors will undoubtedly lead to the appearance of more Christian authors in Russia. However, at the present time we need to adapt existing foreign publications to our specific national culture.

I would also like to note several shortcomings in the work of foreign missionaries. In the first place, there is frequently an antagonistic relationship among mission groups. This lessens the effectiveness of evangelism. In the second place, the lack of any central clearinghouse prevents people from receiving necessary notice of published material and hinders negotiations for publication rights.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the many authors and missionaries who have helped me and my fellow Russians to come to know and follow Christ. ♦

Editor’s Note: To purchase a copy of Susan Hunt’s book on leadership in Russian, please write to: V.A. Karchazhkina, Box 17, Moscow 107113, Russia.

Valentina Aleksandrovna Karchazhkina, born in Rostov-on-Don, graduated from the Moscow Foreign Language Institute in 1965. She holds a candidate (doctorate) degree and is a docent in philology. In 1991 she received Jesus Christ at an evangelistic meeting at Moscow State University and was subsequently trained in discipleship by East-West Ministries. Dr. Karchazhkina works in the Word of Christ Church and at East-West Ministries, where she coordinates the preparation of leaders for women’s ministry.

thing. Similarly, I believe that it can be concluded that democracy is the best way of government in the world. Nevertheless, it does not mean that the church is, or should be, a democracy.

In a free-market economy you must advertise your product. And advertising is usually connected with the obvious or hidden belittling of other similar products. It is quite often connected with exaggerations and boasting. And that is precisely what we can see with many "ministries," especially, though not exclusively, in the area of healing. We can hear or read many uncorroborated claims

I mustered the courage to speak about problems... which are sometimes swept under the carpet. If we are after integrity and really deep relationships, we should speak about these matters. The best help consists in deep, long-term relationships.

and many empty promises of what mighty things God will do through this or that ministry. What a contradiction to the New Testament pattern! There Jesus ordered people not to speak about what He did, and in spite of that news about him spread like fire. In our days, in spite of so much self-promotion on the part of some of the "Christian ministers," the world is unimpressed. Why? In the spiritual realm, exaggeration is counter-productive. Self-promotion is abhorrent to God.

Yet we can read so often: "This conference is going to be different than any other you have attended. It will be of special significance for you." One U.S.-based group working now in the Czech Republic likes to announce that its activity (e.g., a drama performance) will be the "peak event of Christian life in the country this year" or something similar. The world is disgusted by these extravagant and empty claims. I have to confess that in this case I side with the world. Self-promotion, boasting, self-exaltation! Is this the spirit of Jesus?

For a time, I was afraid that this superficial form of Christianity, backed by a lot of money, would sweep us

away. And it still can happen. But I am more at ease than three or four years ago. I see that these churches have a double effect: They take away some sheep from the existing churches, and in a way they function like a revolving door. They can make themselves visible and audible because of strong advertising which they can afford, backed by wealthy groups abroad, and by their show that they gain some "converts." But the turnover is great.

Across Denominational Lines

Only a week after the "Velvet Revolution" we started an organization called "Christian Missionary Society." This organization now plays a vital role in the Czech Republic. The word "Missionary" does not imply that its main task is "missions."

Dan Drápal is pastor of the Prague Christian Fellowship (Křesťanské Společenství, Praha) in the Czech Republic. His article is excerpted from a 36-page booklet of the same title, reprinted with permission.

In 1989, we tried to make this organization open to everybody, from the Roman Catholics on the one side to the Pentecostals and Charismatics on the other. And Roman Catholics would find it difficult to accept it if there would be anything "evangelical" in the name. In addition to that, the Catholics did not use the term "evangelism" or similar terms; instead of "evangelism" they spoke of "apostolate." Missions was something on which all could unite. Initially the Roman Catholics participated in C.M.S. Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic representative soon resigned after pressure from the Catholic hierarchy, and extreme charismatics (especially the Faith Movement people) did not want to participate either. In spite of this, C.M.S. grew in significance and now it provides a platform for many groups in the country. It publishes a monthly, *Life of Faith*, which is the only Christian periodical in the country which is not subsidized from abroad and can "feed" itself.

The aim of C.M.S. is to facilitate meetings of pastors across denominational lines and to coordinate our activities. One of the important achievements was the translation and publishing of the New Testament. (We have already started work on the Old Testament.) Our first missionary couple has been sent out through C.M.S. This was accomplished because of our united effort. It was above the means of individual, isolated congregations.

In spite of the worthwhile projects mentioned, I see the greatest significance of C.M.S. not in projects, but in facilitating fellowship between pastors and churches. In many areas of the country you find smaller groups of pastors from different denominations who meet with some regularity for prayer and who concentrate their efforts on prayer initiatives and evangelism. It is more difficult (though it is, of course, still possible) now to fall into the trap of regarding yourself as the best, as the most important, as the most "progressive," or as the most fruitful Christian in the neighborhood. We can also avoid to a large extent the overlapping of worthwhile activities.

Thanks to Western Friends

I believe in the unity of the body of Christ. I believe that we need each other. I have written some critical remarks, but I want to stress that I owe much to our brothers and sisters abroad. I was taught by foreigners. I owe much to the Navigators, to Grace Korean Church from Norwalk, CA, to Wolfhard Margies and Pavel Neustupny, to Derek and Ruth Prince, to John MacFarlane, to John Howarton, Don Prokop, Sarah Cross, Liz Spruell, Jim Goll, and Rick Olmstead, to mention at least some among many others. Our church is thankful for the ministry of Larry Winnes and David Snell, who are both supported by individual sponsors. We could not pay them.

Critical Friendship

But I mustered the courage to speak about problems which are real and which are sometimes swept under the carpet. If we are after integrity and really deep relationships, we should speak about these matters. In no case do I want to sound like we are self-sufficient. We still have no building—and we need one. But I am convinced that the best help consists in deep, long-term relationships. For me to sit down with Rick Olmstead or Jim Goll probably means even more than to hear them preach. Critical friendship is possibly of the greatest value for us. I prefer being told what I am doing wrong more than being praised for past achievements. ♦

Christian Psychology in Russia

Dennis Bowen

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russian Christians have had the freedom to explore the implications of Christianity in every sector of society, including the integration of psychology and faith. During the communist era authorities considered psychotherapy suspect. Its practitioners for decades were deemed guilty of anti-Soviet activity. Today, mental health professionals have welcomed the influx of a variety of innovations related to psychological theory, including interest in psychoanalysis, client-centered therapy, systems therapy, humanistic therapies, as well as New Age theories. A large segment of the psychological community in Russia welcomes Christian psychology and psychotherapy as a legitimate approach to the discipline.

As the integration of psychology and Christianity has become a topic of interest in the church and in the psychological community, a simultaneous dialogue has begun that transcends the integration question. Whenever and wherever the integration dialogue is discussed, it also has provided a forum for a robust and very healthy exchange between Orthodox believers (generally Russians) and Protestant believers (Russians and Westerners). A number of groups and activities have encouraged both of these dialogues.

Moscow Christian School of Psychology, a graduate program of psychology operating in Moscow, offers a three-year curriculum focusing on the treatment of children, adolescents, and families. Students complete classes in both theoretical and practical aspects of clinical psychology. They also receive practicum training and extensive supervision, neither of which has been widely utilized in Russian clinical psychology training. The director of the school is Dr. Alexander Makhnach, a Russian Orthodox believer who is a psychologist and a fellow of the Institute of Psychology in Moscow. Assisting this school from the beginning has been Dr. Janice Strength, an evangelical Christian on the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary. Following several years of seminars and workshops the first class in this diploma program started in January of 1995. Students are taught by Russian professors and by American faculty consisting of both psychology and seminary faculty, who travel to Moscow to teach one- or two-week intensive courses.

The combination of both Russian and American Christian faculty has created an atmosphere in which students are continually exposed not only to central issues concerning the integration of psychology and Christianity, but also to issues of interface between Eastern and Western Christianity. The first class was composed of primarily Russian

Orthodox students, the majority of whom stated their desire to grow in their faith.

The school graduated its first class in the spring of 1997. The graduating students took the initiative to form their own group practice together. They rent and share office space at the Institute of Psychology. This effort represents a beginning step in offering Christian-oriented psychological services in Moscow.

To date, three international conferences on the integration of psychology and Christianity have been held in Russia. The first, in 1994, was held in St. Petersburg and was described as a "seminar" on integration. Approximately 10 Russians and 15 Americans attended. Some discussion-oriented sessions were held, but the format was primarily lecture.

The Moscow School of Christian Psychology sponsored and organized the second conference held in Moscow in September 1995. It drew nearly 100 Russian, European, and American participants from psychology, the social sciences, and the church. Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic speakers read papers and participated in lively discussions. Evenings featured workshops and live demonstrations of therapeutic techniques.

Imaton, a Russian firm which publishes psychological tests and literature and promotes utilization of professional psychology in Russia, organized the third of these conferences, held in St. Petersburg in May 1997. These three meetings provided a forum for the beginnings of a free and open dialogue on integration issues specific to the Russian context and on issues concerning Orthodox-Protestant-Catholic relations.

An ongoing dialogue on the integration of psychology and Christianity began in Moscow in mid-1995. Dr. Nikolai Petrov, a psychiatrist

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and evangelical Christian, formed an association of Russian believers interested in the relationship of psychology and faith. This Christian Association of Psychotherapists and Counselors has met monthly since its founding. Each meeting features a report or a lecture, followed by an open discussion of the topic. This association meeting has consistently attracted a large variety of individuals from all faiths. The therapists attending have expressed the desire to grapple with serious issues and many have

voiced their desire to see formal training in Christian psychology become widely available.

Several substance-abuse treatment centers in Moscow have done significant work in making integration a practical concern. These programs have been greatly influenced by the 12-step model and by a number of publications on the 12-step principles and their applications to treatment of drug and alcohol abusers and addicts. Dr. Evgeny Protsenko, a psychologist and Orthodox believer, operates an outpatient day treatment program. With no funding source, this 12-step program struggles along using inadequate facilities, but has seen tremendous success in moving substance-abuse clients toward abstinence and spiritual reformation based on biblical principles.

Christian mental health professionals from all confessions have begun to develop a contextualized Christian psychology for Russia. This process is clearly in its beginning stages, and we can only pray that it can continue. Christian psychology in Russia presents a great opportunity to offer not only psychological solutions to a hurting nation, but to offer renewal of the whole person through the grace of God. ♦

Scholars Boris Khersonski and Sergei Sannikov founded the **College of Christian Psychology Sotsium** in Odessa, Ukraine, in partnership with Mennonites from Canada. *Sotsium* is designed to meet the needs of a post-Soviet society faced with serious cuts in services. It is an additional (*dopolnitelni*) two-year program for students already attending university. Approximately 60 students have graduated from the program, and roughly 60 additional students have enrolled as auditors.

While studying at *Sotsium* students are exposed to Christian principles, ethics, and practical applications. The school sponsors an Alcoholics Anonymous program, Narcotics Anonymous, a 12-step program, a suicide hotline, and youth clubs. It also works with orphans, runaways, and the elderly. Some graduates have entered the social work profession, but extremely low pay has led others to seek work in fields with higher salaries.

For more information, contact:

Sotsium

Rosumsovskaya 1/3

270021 Odessa, Ukraine

Tel: 380-482-32-77-18, fax: 380-482-52-61-34

E-mail: support@kids.odessa.ua or 73261.3153@compuserve.com

Dr. Dennis Bowen earned a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the Illinois School of Professional Psychology in 1992. He is a missionary with the Evangelical Free Church Mission and lives in Moscow.

NEWS NOTES

Leaders from Eastern Orthodox and Evangelical churches gathered from around the world for the second international "Orthodox-Evangelical Consultation,"

Hamburg, Germany, 30 March – 4 April 1998. It was a follow-up to a previous meeting sponsored by the World Council of Churches in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1995. The consultation, which had an informal character marked more by relationship building than in-depth theological dialogue, examined the increasing tensions between Orthodox and Evangelicals since the fall of communism. Participants did not intend to make formal recommendations to their respective communities, but only to share experiences and engage in open and frank discussions. Disagreements remain, but hopes were heightened for a more unified witness throughout the world. Bradley Nassif, representing North America and the Society for the Study of Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism (SSEO), noted that solutions to confessional and legal problems in Eastern Europe ultimately will have to be settled by the churches of the region. However, Dr. Nassif hopes to contribute to better relations through SSEO's continuing annual meetings and through several of his own recent publications:

- "New Dimensions in Eastern Orthodox Theology" in *New Dimensions in Evangelical Thought*, ed. by David Dockery (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998);
- "An Eastern Orthodox Response to J. I. Packer" in *Reclaiming the Great Tradition: Evangelicals, Catholics, and Orthodox in Dialogue*, ed. by James Cutsinger (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997); and

- "Evangelical Missions in Eastern Orthodox Lands," *Trinity World Forum* (Winter, 1996), with "Response" by Mark Elliott. Dr. Nassif hopes that these efforts "will serve as a model for transforming tensions into positive resources for reconstruction and renewal."

Countries represented included Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, Germany, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, Britain, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and India. Participants included Evangelicals Theodor Angelov, Sergei Sannikov, Elaine Storkey, Vinay Samuel, John Briggs, Albrecht Hauser, Gennadi Sergienko, and George Sabra; and Orthodox Fr. George Tsisis, Fr. Ioan Sauca, Hiermonk Philip Veniamin, Fr. Nareg Alemezian, Fr. Luke Veronis, Professor Petros Vassiliadis, and Professor Ivan Dimitrov. For proceedings published by the World Council of Churches, contact Dr. George Lemopoulos, Executive Secretary, 150 Route De Ferney, Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland; tel/fax: 022-791-03-61; e-mail: lmw@wcc-coe.org.



The objective of the **Crisis Children Coalition—Russia Project** is to promote ministries working with Russian street children, orphans, and other children in crisis. At a 28 March 1998 strategy meeting in Dallas, TX, representatives of seven organizations set the following priorities: prevention of conditions putting children in crisis; intervention for defenseless children in the early stages of crisis; rescue of exploited children; and restoration of children experiencing long-term trauma. For more information contact Allen Faubion, 407 Candlelight Ave., Duncanville, TX 75137; tel. 972-283-6771; fax 972-283-7949; e-mail: Afaubion@compuserve.com. ♦

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

15 June — August 7 1998
Russian Language Summer Institute, Columbia International University, Columbia, SC
 Contact: Rochelle Zurburg, Seminary Graduate Admissions
 Columbia International University
 Box 3122
 Columbia, SC 29230-3122
 Tel: 800-777-2227, ext. 3335 (U.S.)
 803-754-4100, ext. 3335 (outside U.S.)
 Fax: 803-786-4209,
 Attn: Seminary Graduate Admissions
 E-mail: yescbs@ciu.edu

17-20 June 1998
International Symposium on English Translations of Byzantine Liturgical Texts, St. Basil's College, Stamford, CT
 Contact: Rev. Prof. Peter Galadza
 Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies
 St. Paul University
 223 Main St.
 Ottawa, ON Canada K1S 1C4
 Tel: 613-236-7393, ext. 2419
 Fax: 613-782-3026
 E-mail: pgaladza@spu.stpaul.uottawa.ca

23 June—23 July 1998
 (5 weeks, 2 nights per week)
Introduction to the Eastern Orthodox Church, Fuller Seminary, Southern California Extension
 Contact: Dr. Bradley Nassif
 Fuller Seminary, Southern California Extension
 2062 Business Center Dr.
 Irvine, CA 92612
 Tel: 800-541-6570 or 714-975-0777
 Fax: 714-975-0787
 E-mail: nassif@fuller.edu

30 June — 3 July 1998
Evolving Conceptions of a Role for Lay Believers in the Christian East and West, University of Leeds, England
 Contact: Dr. Jonathan Sutton
 Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies
 University of Leeds
 Leeds LS2 9JTC
 England
 Tel: 113-233-3293
 Fax: 113-233-3287
 e-mail: trsjfs@arts-01.novell.leeds.ac.uk

7-8 July 1998
"When Faith Communities Collide: The Proselytism Debate Revisited," Elkhart, IN
 Contact: Dr. Walter Sawatsky
 Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary
 3003 Benham Ave.
 Elkhart, IN 46517
 Tel: 219-296-6239
 Fax: 219-295-0092
 E-mail: rliechty@ambs.edu

17 July 1998
 The remains of Nicholas II and his family are to be buried in the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul, St. Petersburg, Russia, on the 80th anniversary of their assassination.

18 July—15 August 1998
Summer Intensive Program, cosponsored by the Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies and Lviv Theological Academy, Studite Monastery, Lviv, Ukraine
 Contact: Lydia Migus
 Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies
 St. Paul University
 223 Main St.
 Ottawa, ON Canada K1S 1C4
 Tel: 613-236-1393, ext. 2332
 Fax: 613-782-3026
 E-mail: lmigus@spu.stpaul.uottawa.ca

7-8 September 1998
"Creative Work: Illumined by God," Eighth Alexander Men Memorial Conference, Moscow
 Contact: Marina Geniseva
 Library of Foreign Literature,
 1 Nikolo-Yamskaya ul.,
 Moscow, Russia
 Tel: 011-7-095-915-79-86
 Fax: 011-7-095-915-3676
 E-mail: geniseva@openmail.irexru

11-13 September 1998
"Hope for the Balkans" Conference, Sofia, Bulgaria
 Sponsored by the European Evangelical Alliance
 Contact: Rev. Nikolay Nedelchev, Executive Director
 Bulgarian Evangelical Alliance
 Box 13
 1330 Sofia, Bulgaria
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24-27 September 1998
American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies Convention, Boca Raton, FL
 Contact: Wendy Walker, Convention Coordinator
 American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies
 8 Story St.
 Cambridge, MA 02138
 Tel: 617-495-0677
 Fax: 617-495-0680
 E-mail: aaass@hcs.harvard.edu

28 September—2 October 1998
LITT-WORLD '98, Publishing Priorities in a Fragile World, High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, England
 Contact: Sharyl Sieh
 Media Associates International
 130 N. Bloomingdale Rd., Suite 101
 Bloomingdale, IL 60108-0218
 Tel: 630-893-1977
 Fax: 630-893-1141
 E-mail: MAI_LittWorld@compuserve.com
 or: Rodney Shepherd
 MAI-Europe
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 Grenville Place, Mill Hill
 London NW7 3SA, England
 Tel: 44-181-906-9768
 Fax: 44-181-959-3678
 E-mail: rods@angushudson.com

18-21 November 1999
American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies Convention, St. Louis, MO
 Contact: Wendy Walker, Convention Coordinator
 American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies
 8 Story St.
 Cambridge, MA 02138
 Tel: 617-495-0677
 Fax: 617-495-0680
 E-mail: aaass@hcs.harvard.edu

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

In 1997 the World Student Christian Federation and the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe established the **Eastern European Language and Leadership Training Project**. It recruits volunteer teachers who devote several weeks, usually in the summer, to offer courses in English, Greek, and/or administrative theory in seminaries and Bible schools in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. In 1997 sixteen courses were held in Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania, taught by 29 teachers from Great Britain, Germany, America, Hungary, France, Holland, Greece, and Australia. Project coordinator Esther Hookway of London, England, reports, "Emerging from decades of atheistic communism, these young people often seem more aware of a spiritual side to life than in Western European countries where we have had complete religious freedom." For more information consult the Project home page (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/~euscm/EELLTP/>) or contact Esther Hookway at 10 Kings Ave., London N10 1PB, England; tel/fax: 44-181-883-3739; e-mail: esther@eclipse.co.uk.



Russian Language Ministries, based at Columbia International University (CIU), Columbia, SC, offers **Russian language courses for missionary candidates** at both beginning and intermediate levels. Dates for upcoming terms follow: The Summer Institute: 15 June – 7 August 1998; fall semester: 31 August – 18 December 1998; and spring semester: 18 January – 7 May 1999. *Russian for Missionaries* by RLM director Marc Canner, the primary course text (with tapes), is also available for separate purchase. Contact: Rochelle Zurburg, Graduate Admissions, CIU, Box 3122, Columbia, SC 29230-3122; tel: 800-777-2227, ext. 3335 (U.S.) or 803-754-4100, ext. 3335 (outside U.S.); fax: 803-786-4209; e-mail: yeschs@ciu.edu.



World Wide Printing, with a plant in Minsk, Belarus, specializes in Bibles and Christian literature for East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. Since 1990 it has published 2 million Bibles, 15 million New Testaments, and 78 million other books, tracts, brochures, etc., for 140 Christian organizations. Customers have included Tyndale House, Gideons, International Bible Society, and Josh McDowell Ministry. Contact: Gilbert Lindsay, President, World Wide Printing, 703B Big Stone Gap, Duncanville, TX 75137; tel: 972-780-2511; fax: 972-780-2626; e-mail: wprint@ix.netcom.com; or Alexander Shneerson, General Director, PICORP, ul. Zhodinskaya 18, Minsk 220141, Belarus; tel/fax: 375-17-264-7513; e-mail: picorp@picorp.minsk.by. ◆

RESOURCES

The Association for Spiritual Renewal (ASR) offers over 488 Christian books, CDs, and CD-ROMs in Russian, addressing evangelism, discipleship, family relations, children's literature,

Christian education materials, and business ethics. Authors include Oswald Chambers, Gary Chapman, Josh McDowell, J.I. Packer, T. Austin Sparks, C. H. Spurgeon, Charles Stanley, John Stott, and A. W. Tozer. ASR offers discounts for orders over \$500 and additional educational discounts for qualifying educational institutions. For more information, or to place an order, please consult the ASR web page, <http://www.asr.ru>, or contact Nadya Pomazkova, ASR, 29-30 kv. Novye Cheryemushki, ul. Nametkina, korpus. 5, Moscow 117420, Russia; tel: 095-719-7945; fax: 095-719-7890; e-mail: nadp@asr.ru.



St. Petersburg Times reporter John Varoli, cofounder of Off the Streets, a charity for homeless children, has written a troubling, yet insightful, report on "Homelessness in Russia," in the Jamestown Foundation biweekly, *Prism* 3 (no. 20, 5 December 1997). This study, as well as other articles and information, is available free of charge on the Internet (<http://www.jamestown.org/publications/archive/prism/97/December/varolfin.htm>) or by contacting The Jamestown Foundation, 1528 18th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036; tel: 202-483-8888; fax: 202-483-8337; e-mail: long@mx.jamestown.org.



A 28-page *United Bible Societies Special Report* (no. 17, April 1998) highlights recent developments in Russia.

- **The Bible Society of Russia (BSR)** employs a staff of 63 at the Moscow headquarters and three branches: St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, and Vladivostok.

- The BSR distributes 1.5 million Bibles per year, 800,000 in Russia, and 700,000 in other post-Soviet republics.
- Ninety-five percent of BSR Bibles are published in Russia, while half of the paper stock is imported from Western Europe.
- Dr. Michael Seleznev, leading a team of six scholars, completed the first-ever Russian-language *Biblical Hebrew Handbook* in 1998. BSR published 10,000 copies.
- Since 1992 Wycliffe Bible Translators' Summer Institute of Linguistics has worked with the Institute for Bible Translation on some 30 Bible translation projects in the former Soviet Union. The United Bible Societies provide translation consultants to these projects semi-annually.

For a free copy of the *Special Report* contact: UBS World Service Center, Reading Bridge House, Reading, England RG1 8PJ; tel: 44-0118-950-0200; fax: 44-0118-950-0857. For an e-mail copy send a request via Biblenews@ubs-wsc with the word *menu* or *index* in the subject line.



Petrenko, Vitalij Ivanovich. "Theology of Icons: A Protestant Perspective." Master of Theology thesis. Brunel University, supervised by London Bible College, 1997. 105 pp.

This thesis, available on the Internet at http://www.bethel.edu/seminary_academics/international/russian/icon.html, sees both value and danger in the use of icons in worship. Positively, Petrenko argues, "The icon represents sacred art which testifies to historical truth and God's revelation in Jesus Christ. It...represents a valuable, visible aid to the Gospel proclaimed by Word.... The value of the icon ought to be reconsidered by those churches outside [the] Orthodox tradition which were affected by the theology of [the] Reformation or by their own prejudice and suspicion." Negatively, "Any suggestion of the icon having the real presence or being used as a channel of grace leads inevitably to the danger of idolatry and superstition." The author questions whether

Reporting on Religion (continued from back page)

Bennett and Orrin Hatch of Utah) have traveled to Russia to voice their opposition to the law and have spearheaded legislation aimed at rolling back Russian restrictions. Russian officials who headed West in September 1997 to calm Western fears about the law visited not only Brussels (European Union) and Washington, but also Salt Lake City (Mormon headquarters). And in March, the Russian Federal Security Service, the successor to the KGB, moved expeditiously and successfully to secure the release of two Mormon missionaries kidnapped in Saratov, while two British Quakers, two Swedish Pentecostals, and two Hungarians and one Russian working for ecumenical relief agencies remain in the hands of kidnapers in the Caucasus. Granted, Russian authority in Dagestan and Chechnya is limited to nonexistent, but the prompt and energetic police efforts brought to bear in the Saratov case surprised this writer and, as Lauren Homer advises, some Mormon officials as well. Finally, of the several dozen specific instances of discriminatory enforcement of the new law that

have come to the attention of Western observers to date, none has involved Mormons. This appears all the more surprising given the barrage of negative Russian press treatment of cults leading up to the law's passage in September 1997. Although the Salt Lake City headquarters at present prefers not to publicize Russian incidents, and some Mormon missionaries are having difficulties in Khabarovsk, Siberia, Mormons still have been relatively unscathed by legislation widely advertised as a direct challenge to cults.

Keston Institute and its founder, Michael Bourdeaux, are to be commended for supporting the outstanding investigative reporting of Moscow correspondent Larry Uzzell. May his number increase. ♦

Editor's note: For subscription rates and order information for Keston News Service contact Keston Institute, 4 Park Town, Oxford OX2 6SH, England; tel: 44-865-311-022; fax: 44-865-311-280; e-mail: keston.institute@keston.org.

Mark Elliott is editor of the EAST-WEST CHURCH AND MINISTRY REPORT.

Resources (continued from page 14)

Orthodox theological and philosophical justification for icons "correspond to Church praxis in the life of Orthodox believers" (pp. 74 and 71).



Texas-based Russian Resources has compiled a directory of 99 Western and indigenous organizations and individuals involved in Russian-language Christian literature production or distribution. Entries range from ministries which publish single booklets to the Association for Spiritual Renewal/Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries which distributes over 450 titles by various publishers. Each entry includes address, phone, fax, and when available, e-mail, web site, and description of available literature. Organizations with especially extensive entries and lists of titles include the Association of Christian Schools International (2 pp.), the Association for Spiritual Renewal (12 pp.), Ichthus Books (3 pp.), MIRT (1 p.) and Multi-Language Media (1 p.). While not claiming comprehensive coverage, this list provides valuable contact information for large and many lesser-known groups involved in the production or distribution of Russian-language Christian materials. To obtain a copy, contact Russian Resources, Box 3114, McAllen, TX 78502; fax: 210-682-6087; e-mail: kennethwes@aol.com.



Extensive survey work with high school students forms the foundation for *Young People in Postmodern Society—A Central European Perspective* by Dušan Jaura, Slovak theologian, high school teacher, and lecturer. This 47-page study seeks to help teachers, pastors, parents, and youth workers to better understand the coming generation of church members and citizens. Cost is \$15/£10 for print version and \$7/£5 for e-mail version, plus

\$2/£1.50 for postage and handling per print copy. Contact: SEN, Liptovská 10, 821 09 Bratislava, Slovakia; tel: 421-7-521-6293; fax: 421-7-521-6288; e-mail: juraj@citygate.org; or Central European Papers, Attn: Lesa Hudson, Box 202010, Florence, SC 29502-2010; tel: 888-819-3109; e-mail: lesa@acshone.com; or CEMF/SEN, 3 Springfield Rd., Hinckley, Leics LE10 1AN, England; tel: 44-1455-617074; fax: 44-1455-250534; e-mail: 100276.317@compuserve.com.



Ellis, Geoff and Wesley Jones. *The Other Revolution; Russian Evangelical Awakenings*. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 1996. 230 pp. \$16.95.

In this volume two Church of Christ authors survey the history of Russian Evangelicals, especially 1874–1928, seeking signs of affinity with the Restorationist movement, which emphasizes Christian unity and a return to unadorned New Testament faith. Nineteenth-century St. Petersburg Evangelicalism, resulting from the ministry of England's Lord Radstock and his disciple, Col. Vasili Pashkov, did resemble American Restorationism in some respects: in its aversion to denominational labels and in its emphasis upon the New Testament as its model for Christian life.

While *The Other Revolution* tells its story well, it breaks little new ground over standard accounts of Russian Evangelical Christians by Walter Sawatsky, Michael Rowe, Hans Brandenburg, and Edmund Heier. An exception is its coverage of U.S. Disciples of Christ ties to Evangelical Christian leader Ivan Prokhanov (pp. 147-50; 172-73). American Disciples ultimately, but reluctantly, concluded that the Russian Evangelical Christian movement had closer kinship to Russian Baptists than to American Restorationists. To order, contact: ACU Press, 1648 Campus Ct., Abilene, TX 79601; tel: 800-444-4228; fax: 915-674-6471; e-mail: sloanb@nicanor.acu.com. ♦

Reporting on Religion at Its Best

Mark Elliott

Full-fledged religious persecution is virtually nonexistent in Russia today. Religious repression is scattered but growing, while religious discrimination is pervasive.

"Keston News Service correspondent Lawrence Uzzell deserves a Pulitzer Prize for his exceptional reporting on recent threats to religious freedom in Russia." I made this statement at a conference on the new 1997 Russian law on religion at Emory University, Atlanta, GA, in October 1997, only to learn, to my pleasant surprise, that Mr. Uzzell already had been nominated by Professor John Witte, the organizer of the Emory meeting. Whether or not, in this instance, Keston's tenacious watchdog for freedom of conscience receives the recognition he deserves, his 23 April 1998 summary evaluation of the new law's impact is a perfect illustration of his reporting at its best. It should be required reading for all serious observers of the Russian scene. "Concrete Effects of Russia's New Religion Law" masterfully weaves together the complicated and contradictory strands of the story in nine single-spaced pages of carefully nuanced text. His observations deserve our close attention.

- Full-fledged *religious persecution* "of the sort seen in China, where one can be arrested simply for organizing a prayer group in one's own home" is "*virtually nonexistent*" in Russia today; *religious repression*, "the denial to disfavored confessions of the right to worship and proclaim their beliefs in public," Uzzell notes, "is *scattered, but growing*;" while *religious discrimination*, "preferential treatment for some religious bodies over others," is "*pervasive*."
- Contrary to expectations, enforcement of the new 1997 law to date has hampered indigenous believers more than expatriate missionaries.
- Infringements of religious liberty certainly began well before the 1997 law, but have increased since its passage. Conversely, Russia has not embarked on

anything like systematic enforcement so far. Will the teeth in the text of the law bite hard a) now that official implementing regulations have been issued (March)? b) Or once the deadline for reregistration (December 1999) has past? c) Or at whatever point the West tires of the story and ceases to highlight unfair treatment? d) Or never, but with the law's draconian provisions ever present to "perpetuate a climate of intimidation"?

- Enforcement to date has been uneven a) as some two dozen provincial laws on religion remain operative, despite their contradiction of federal legislation and the constitution; b) as the state arbitrarily delineates favored and unfavored Protestants, favored and unfavored Muslims, and even favored and unfavored Orthodox; c) as bribery of local officials—both willing and unwilling—further distorts the law's provisions; and d) as Protestants, especially Pentecostals, have suffered more than Catholics. (It should be noted, however, that Protestant congregations are more numerous than Catholic.)
- The reemergence of a republic-level equivalent of the heavy-handed Soviet Council for Religious Affairs appears ever more threatening and ever more likely.

These are only some of Mr. Uzzell's thought-provoking observations, which deserve to be read in their entirety. My closing compliment for Keston's Moscow correspondent is to observe that the best reporting leads readers to their own reflections and observations. Let me close with two of my own.

- Given its sparse population, Siberia has endured a disproportionate number of restrictions of religious liberty and threats of restriction, based on the 1997 law. Could this be a consequence of decades of deportations of religious dissidents to this region, along with a lingering xenophobic Gulag mentality among local officials? (Keston reports that Nikolai Volkhov, a Siberian provincial adviser on church-state relations, ascribes the increase in "nontraditional religions" in his region to the influence of America, which he describes as "a sewage ditch" for "all sorts of rabble.") Human rights lawyer Lauren Homer also suggests that Siberia's continuing economic deterioration has embittered the region toward the center (Moscow) and the West.

- Increasingly, Western Mormons appear to be having a singular impact upon Russian interpretation and implementation of the law, despite the minimal response of the Russian people to their missionaries. Three Mormons in the U.S. Senate (Gordon Smith of Oregon and Robert

(continued on page 15)

EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT, published quarterly by the Institute for East-West Christian Studies, seeks to encourage Western Christian ministry in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union that is effective, culturally sensitive, and cooperative. It also serves as a forum for the exploration of a variety of issues relating to Christianity's presence in Europe's formerly Marxist states. Letters to the editor are welcomed. Subscription rates are \$42.75 per year (U.S. and Canada); \$52.75 (international); and \$20 (e-mail). Reprint and photocopy policy: 1) Quantity photocopies or reprints of up to three articles from a single issue may be distributed or reprinted with no royalty charge. 2) Written permission is to be secured for each distribution or reprinting. 3) The following statement is to be carried on each photocopied article reproduced and each article reprinted: Reproduced (or Reprinted) with permission of EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT.

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