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A Holistic Approach to Medical Ministry

Henryk Wieja

Recovering From the Fortress Mentality

I come from Poland, a country strongly influenced by the Soviet Union, the leading country in the Soviet Bloc. Former communist countries are going through a very dramatic change. Things that took decades to develop in Western culture are occurring in Poland at cosmic speed, sometimes in only months. The greatest problem, however, is that there are no models to follow in this very difficult transition, and it is very difficult to find people to assist us as mentors. The greatest challenge for the Christian church—which Western missionaries often do not understand—is the mindset, a heritage of several decades of communism: people tend to respond the way they think they are supposed to respond, not revealing their true understanding.

We Christians feel a sense of urgency, not knowing how long these open doors will last. For lay leaders, however, this urgency is combined with a high dimension of impatience, because we observe on all levels—political, government, business, and even church—a crisis of leadership. In the past, leadership was very corrupt, which pushed many churches to develop a legalistic fortress mentality to cultivate their own identity. But this produced a Christian subculture or a Christian ghetto, with less and less influence in society.

The Case for Christian Counseling

Our churches are slowly recovering from this fortress mentality, but they are not recovered enough to support the Foundation for Life and Mission, which I head. Our ministry is not very representative for my culture. According to research in Sweden, 49 percent of patients expect a physician's concern to be wide ranging, not just strictly medical. How does the situation look in Poland? Sixty-one percent of patients expect from medical personnel expressive functions, or efforts directed to emotional needs, even more than in Sweden. Patients have an emotional vacuum that they expect filled. According to the World Health Organization, health is not just a lack of disease but good physical and emotional well-being. In different parts of Europe, 30-50 percent of patients were found to have no organic disorders

The impetus for the present theme issue on Christian medical and health ministries came from a November 1997 conference



on the subject sponsored by the Institute for East-West Christian Studies and supported by the Christian Medical and Dental Society, Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, World Vision, and the Domanada Foundation. Topics included networking and partnership; keeping an evangelistic focus in compassionate ministries; medical education; clearing customs; and church-based medical clinics. For a complete list of speakers and topics and an audiotape order form, consult the Institute for East-West Christian Studies website: <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/iewcs/>.

whatsoever when they came to the doctor. More than 30 percent had complaints of a psychosocial nature related to marital and family relationships and environmental problems. Only 39 percent of patients focus on instrumental functions, medical knowledge, medical expertise, equipment, and professional qualifications. The main challenge before us is to focus on the person of the patient, to see him as a whole being. The person should be the subject—not his complaints, not his problems, not his disease, but his whole person. And here we need a wider perspective.

Medical doctors are in a very unique position in our part of the world. There is little Christian counseling and no psychoanalysis. It is very humiliating to go to a counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist, for emotional disorders. Yet all of these troubled people end up in medical clinics. This is the reason for the statistics above. These are the needs of the patients. In Luke 17:19 we see the definition of well-being. Christ says about the leper, "Your faith made you well." This is the wellness; this is the wholeness that we want to promote in our society—not just a lack of symptoms, not just treatment that removes complaints, but wholeness, wellness, for those who enter into a secure relationship with Christ. Christ defines eternal life in John 17:3 as

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The main challenge before us is to focus on the person of the patient... not his complaints, not his problems, not his disease, but his whole person.

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entering into a personal relationship with God. Faith is not knowledge about God but a personal relationship with God. Hurting, suffering people are receptive to this comforting message, discovering what it means to be in personal relationship with God. God's goal is not just health of individuals, but the individual's salvation through a personal relationship with God through Christ. Any so-called gospel focusing on physical health only, and not on well being, is a false gospel.

A Crying Need for Medical Mentoring

At the early stages of the transition from communism to a free-market economy, those introducing a false gospel were often present in our part of the world before the whole true gospel came. It is not always best to send people who do not know the language and culture, who spend years studying the language and never becoming fluent, who try to replace nationals in the ministry. But there is one area in which we are desperately crying for help. This is the mentoring process. When there are medical

missionaries who are better skilled, better trained, and have dealt with better equipment, they can be mentors for those of us who may not have resources to implement this knowledge to meet people's needs.

Let me share with you the philosophy of our medical center: John 13, which talks about a sacrificial lifestyle. John 13:17 is extremely important. I go back to this passage at least once a year to meditate, pray, fast, review my life, and consider the model Christ left for us to follow. Here we see in verse one that, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love." First, we have to discover what God's love is, in Greek, *agape*. In our profession, we need this *agape* love. Unless we have this *agape* love in us, unless we are the carriers of the Holy Spirit, and Christ in us, the hope of glory, we will not be able to fulfill the ministry that God gives us as missionaries in the medical field. Do you know why our clinic is so successful that it receives national attention now? Because *agape* love gives incredible security; it transforms you to live in agreement with yourself, in ownership of yourself, because you can give up, you can resign from something if you possess this something first. In our profession as medical doctors as long as we look for self-fulfillment and self-realization, and as long as we feed our own egos, we will not be fulfilled. It is a serving attitude and sacrificial ministry that are so attractive to hurting people. ♦

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HEALTH, ETHICS, AND RELIGION:

Perceptions of Russian and American Medical Personnel

David S. Barnes

A survey conducted in 1997-98, designed by the author, focused on the perceptions of physicians, nurses, and nursing students in Novgorod, Russia, and in Novgorod's sister city, Rochester, New York, regarding aspects of health, medical ethics, and religion. Novgorod, a city of 250,000 people, is located 300 miles north of Moscow and 100 miles south of St. Petersburg.

Novgorod subjects included 25 physicians and 32 nurses and medical nurse practitioners from the Novgorod Regional Hospital and 144 nursing students from the Novgorod Medical College (NMC). Rochester subjects included 20 physicians from several hospitals; 31 nurses from Highland Hospital; 57 nursing students from Roberts Wesleyan College (an Evangelical liberal arts institution); and 73 nursing students from Genesee Community College (GCC), Batavia (metropolitan Rochester), New York. Each completed a questionnaire.

BACKGROUND

The advent of Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika in the late 1980s opened to the West and to many Russians a clearer understanding of health care, medical ethics, and religion in the Soviet Union.

Health Care

The Soviet health system theoretically provided free access to quality health care. In reality, the system was inequitable, inadequate, inefficient, and dominated by military and space priorities.¹ As a two-tiered system, it provided excellent Western-style hospitals for the elite and much less for the general population. In 1990, the State Statistical Committee reported that the Soviet Union had one hospital bed per 259 people and one doctor per 72 people, double that of the U.S.² However, 24 percent of hospitals

lacked plumbing, 45 percent lacked bathrooms, and 19 percent lacked central heat.³ Physicians generally had a lower level of training than those in the U.S., lacked adequate modern equipment and pharmaceuticals, and were poorly paid—less than half the salary of industrial workers.³ Health care funding received three percent of Soviet gross domestic product in 1990 versus 12 percent in the U.S.⁴

By 1994, with the economy in near ruin, life expectancy had dropped to 57 years for men and 71 for women, the lowest in 40 years. While life expectancy had increased in 1997 to 61 and 73 respectively, the average gap between developed countries and Russia was 15 years for men and 10 for women. The three major causes of death are cardiovascular disease, "external causes" (accidents, poisoning, suicide, and violence), and cancer.⁵

Medical Ethics

Soviet medical ethics are reflected in the 1991 "Oath of the Soviet Physician," including the pledge to "conduct all my actions according to the principles of Communist morality, to always keep the high calling of Soviet physicians and the high responsibility I have to my people and the Soviet government."⁶ The duty of the Soviet physician had as its foundation obedience to the state as defined by the state—not morality as expressed in Western medicine within the context of the Hippocratic Oath and the Judeo-Christian tradition.⁷

Religion

Extensive studies of religious belief were conducted shortly before the fall of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 and in the Soviet Union in 1991.^{8,9} Father Andrew Greeley, a researcher at the University of Chicago, conducted an extensive study of religious belief among Russians just prior to the fall of communism in 1991. He found that 40 percent of Russians believed in God (99 percent of those were Russian Orthodox), 40 percent in miracles, 33 percent in heaven and hell, and 75 percent had a "great deal of confidence" in the Orthodox Church and its leaders.¹⁰ Whether religious belief is significant or superficial is more difficult to determine. In a 1996 study by Susan Lehmann of Columbia University, 13 percent of Russians considered themselves to be "observant believers," but of these only 13 percent attended services weekly, 13 percent monthly, and 55 percent only for religious holidays and family occasions.¹¹

While Russian Orthodoxy generally claims 50 to 60 million adherents (33 to 40 percent of the Russian population), Anatoly Rudenko, director of the Russian Bible Society, estimates that in Moscow only one percent of Russians attend church each week, and only two percent attend biweekly. These figures are based on estimates of church attendance at the 240 functioning Russian Orthodox churches and 120 Protestant congregations in Moscow. A Ministry of the Interior report that 120,000 people (one percent

of Moscow's population) attended Orthodox Easter services in 1997 supports this conclusion.¹²

SURVEY FINDINGS

Health Care

Novgorod student responses contrasted most markedly with their American counterparts by their support of herbal medicine (96 percent), their belief that birth control pills commonly result in severe maternal or fetal problems (81 percent), and their belief that air and water pollution are major causes of disease (98 percent), perhaps reflecting, respectively, a long tradition of folk medicine, lack of extensive experience with birth control pills, and Russia's profound problems with water and air pollution. Until recently, cancer was commonly thought to be contagious among Russians, magnetic fields were ascribed special powers to increase the effectiveness of drug injections, and needed antibiotics were supposedly available and free.

Medical Ethics

Novgorod physicians, nurses, and nursing students contrasted markedly with their American counterparts on essentially all questions of medical ethics, most of which in the U.S. are commonly considered patients' rights. These rights include providing the patient a) an explanation of a potentially fatal diagnosis, b) access to test results and medical documents, c) the right to refuse treatment, d) informed consent for treatment, and e) confidentiality. This contrast may reflect both the 70-year authoritarian Soviet period and the widely accepted Russian principle that physicians and nurses should not reveal to patients a diagnosis for which there is no hope of recovery.^{3,7,13}

A 1993 Russian law on patient rights grants for the first time the right to confidentiality, to see test results and medical documents so as to understand the diagnosis and prognosis, to request consultation, to be informed of possible experimental treatment, to refuse treatment, and to give informed consent.³ In marked contrast to Rochester medical personnel, half of Novgorod respondents felt the state should encourage euthanasia of the elderly sick and the severely mentally handicapped. This contrast may reflect the fragile state of the present Russian economy, the general plight of the poor and handicapped, and the traditional Soviet willingness to sacrifice the individual for the apparent collective good.

Religion

In contrast to Greeley's 1991 study of religious belief⁹ and a 1993 study conducted by Roger Russell Research⁸ noted above, 95 percent of Russian students describe themselves as Russian Orthodox, 88 percent indicate a belief in God, 70 percent believe in life after death, and 90 percent know several biblical stories at least somewhat. About half

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stated, "I do not know if God exists, but I would like to know," suggesting interest in religious faith. Of the 80 percent of Novgorod students who have a Bible or New Testament in their home, four percent read it several times a week, and 70 percent occasionally, which is higher than Genesee Community College (GCC) students. However, fewer than 10 percent of Novgorod students, nurses, and physicians attend church weekly, compared to 31 percent of GCC, 75 percent of Roberts Wesleyan College students, and 50 percent of Rochester nurses and physicians. Of the 80 percent of Novgorod nursing students, 70 percent of nurses, and 50 percent of physicians who believe God created life, most felt God may have used evolutionary mechanisms.

Overall, the data suggest the appeal and resiliency of religious faith in Russia and in the U.S.: in Russia, despite over 70 years of official atheism, and in the U.S., despite twentieth century scientific progress and materialism. ♦

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Russian Medical Missions: Breadth and Depth

David S. Barnes

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, scores of U.S.-based and international Christian mission agencies have sent thousands of short-term volunteers to Russia in various evangelistic, medical, and educational programs. They also have provided tens of millions of dollars in humanitarian aid. Two of the largest providers have been CoMission and Josh McDowell Ministry. CoMission raised \$40,000,000 and sent 3,300 volunteers to work with 42,000 public school teachers in educational programs in the former Soviet Union. It raised another \$18,000,000 worth of medical and relief products, that were distributed through 60 partners in the former Soviet Union.

Josh McDowell Ministry has dispensed \$20,000,000 worth of humanitarian aid in the region, including 54 tons of medicine, vitamins, and medical supplies and equipment. Over 5,000 American volunteers have traveled to Russia and other former Soviet republics to participate in these programs.

The underlying rationale for these and other efforts has been multifaceted: to meet spiritual and physical needs of the people, to develop and strengthen local churches, and to promote peace and understanding. This article considers models for the provision of humanitarian aid and medical ministry, sources for medical supplies and equipment, opportunities for medical personnel, and suggestions for coping with Russian customs.

Models for Action

Methods used effectively by various Christian humanitarian and medical agencies have differed considerably. At least three models have emerged. Some agencies have participated in mass distribution of health care items and literature. This approach involves limited personal contact with recipients and limited long-term linkage with local churches. Others have shipped containers of medical supplies

and equipment to Russian clinics and hospitals or have funded short-term medical or educational consultations. Again, long-term follow-up is limited. Still others, using what I call a holistic model, have developed long-term relationships with active, nurturing, local churches, involving medical, educational, and humanitarian aid programs.

Various U.S. efforts to assist Novgorod, a city located 100 miles south of St. Petersburg, serve as an example of holistic ministry. First Baptist Church of Little Rock, Arkansas; the Fellowship of Christian Farmers, International; and the Rochester, New York–Novgorod Sister City Connection began networking with this Russian city in 1992. East–West interaction has included regional and city hospitals, Novgorod State University, collective and state farms, the city government, sister-city friendship organizations, and a local evangelical church. This partnership has resulted in extensive medical and university faculty exchanges, shipments of \$2,000,000 worth of humanitarian and medical aid, extensive agricultural consultation and seed distribution, Christian literature distribution, and low-profile religious crusades. During the past four years, these U.S. groups have partnered with a growing Protestant congregation, the Temple of Christ, to build a 50,000-square-foot church complex—now 65 percent complete—that will serve as a house of worship, a facility for pastoral training, and a community center. Humanitarian and medical aid programs have been vital to this partnership with the church.

The Novgorod experience suggests that, when practicable, medical missions and programs of humanitarian aid programs in Russia should be networked as much as possible with local medical, educational, civic, and church leadership, with the intent of fostering long-term relationships with each of these groups. On a practical basis, this networking may begin with a five- to seven-day exploratory meeting in a chosen Russian city with the goals of a) meeting key medical and city officials; b) identifying a competent, honest physician or medical director committed to coordinating a city's long-term relationship with Western partners; c) working with medical contacts to prepare an official list of needed supplies, equipment, and services; and d) meeting with religious leaders to share ideas of mutual concern. When available, sister-city relationships—there are 114 official U.S.–Russian city partnerships—can greatly facilitate comprehensive medical mission programs.

Directors of medical mission programs in some Russian cities may also find it helpful to maintain contact with Christians who previously participated in short-term ministry in that city, many of whom have continuing interest and valuable contacts. Josh McDowell Ministry, CoMission International, and Book of Life International may be of help in locating people who have participated in their programs. Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, the Institute for East–West Christian Studies, and many mission agencies can facilitate communication with Russian churches as well as Western ministries.

There is general agreement in East and West that, while the former Soviet Union may have a surplus of physicians and hospital capacity, Russians desperately need drugs, including antibiotics, medical supplies and equipment, technical assistance, medical educational-training programs, and the capacity to network with the U.S. Given present economic conditions in Russia and the lack of a strong medical support infrastructure, the Russian medical community is becoming increasingly dependent upon the West for medical materials and training.

When Western Christians partner with local Russian churches to provide medical assistance, the potential is tremendous. For example, while evangelicals have invested millions in humanitarian aid in the greater Moscow area, only 10 of the 250 evangelical fellowships and churches in this area have their own church buildings and most have little ongoing contact with U.S. Christians and churches.

Sources of Medical Supplies and Equipment

Christian nonprofit organizations such as MAP International, World Medical Relief, Interchurch Medical Assistance, and International Aid receive donations of pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, and equipment from U.S. firms, and make these available to individuals and mission agencies for a handling fee of approximately 5 to 10 percent of wholesale value. For example, MAP International provides travel packs of supplies for hand-carried delivery valued at \$5,000 for a handling fee of \$375, as well as container-sized shipments for Russian hospitals. Both Worldwide Lab Improvement and Chosen Mission Project provide refurbished equipment, technical assistance, and supplies at low cost. Supplies and equipment are sometimes available from local hospitals without cost.

Other organizations such as Americares, Feed The Children, and Brothers' Brother network with Christian agencies in promoting medical relief. The Eli Lilly Pharmaceutical Medical Mission Program donates \$850 worth of drugs to physicians traveling to Russia. Most other pharmaceutical firms deal with large church or nonchurch agencies. Individual drug representatives commonly provide significant amounts of pharmaceuticals for short-term mission trips.

Main Street Supply and Logistics, a for-profit business, sells bulk food purchased in Russia and U.S. medical supplies. It can provide for shipment to Russia of materials not necessarily available from nonprofit organizations. Containers of medical supplies and equipment are shipped from the U.S. to Russian ports of entry by licensed and bonded international freight forwarders such as Missionary Expeditors, Inc.

Programs for Medical Personnel

World Medical Mission, the medical arm of Samaritan's Purse, is an excellent facilitator of short-term and long-term teaching and clinical trips for

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physicians, dentists, and other medical personnel. It also provides medical supplies and equipment. Its handbooks, "Christian Medical Mission: Moscow and the Surrounding Areas, Russia" and "Russia Far East Medical Ministries: Provideniya, Russia and Surrounding Areas," provide health care workers with practical, comprehensive orientation to Russian medical missions. Its Christian Medical Mission office in Moscow has extensive experience in facilitating customs clearance and is a key source of much-needed customs information and advice. In addition, the Christian Medical and Dental Society's Commission on International Medical Educational Affairs provides short-term teaching opportunities in Russian medical and dental clinics, typically two to six weeks.

In 1993 World Vision and Azusa Pacific University teamed with the Russian Ministry of Health and Russian nursing colleges for the purpose of reforming nursing curriculum and forming national and regional nursing associations. The project has fostered a new nursing curriculum and the formation of new nursing associations. In another positive development, in 1997 the government adopted new nursing care standards and a nursing code of ethics consistent with a Christian perspective. USAID funded the program with a \$230,000 matching grant.

U.S.-based Nazarene Compassionate Ministries is registered in Russia as the National Christian Humanitarian Society, with ministry centers in Moscow and Volgograd. It provides medical services, distribute medical supplies, and network with local churches. It also works with Zashchita, a Ministry of Health relief agency, to provide shipments of medical

supplies.

The Mississippi-based Luke Society expedites the formation of joint ventures with national Christian physicians who operate fee-for-service clinics. Fees fund most of the operating budget of each clinic, which provides services gratis to those unable to pay.

Surviving Russian Customs

Without doubt, clearing Russian customs is the Achilles heel of Russian aid programs. Regulations on container-shipped aid can change daily. For latest developments it is best to consult with Americares or World Medical Mission. Bringing pharmaceuticals in flight luggage can be problematic. 1) Before leaving, prepare an itemized drug list, including expiration dates, which must be at least six months after the date of arrival in Russia. 2) Obtain an official letter of request from the hospital, clinic, city administration, or church for all drugs and medical supplies. 3) Use official stationery as much as possible, with liberal use of Notary Public and other seals and stamps. 4) Obtain letters from a local church, friendship society, sister-city organization, medical society, or mayor's office officially commending this occasion of friendship and peace. 5) Pack aid in less conspicuous duffel bags or mix it with each suitcase of each person in a group. 6) Disperse group members randomly through customs. 7) Be friendly, firm, and confident. Insist on speaking with a supervisor if necessary.

As evident in the examples of medical and health ministry above, a variety of models can be adopted—and adapted—to meet the needs of the former Soviet Union. With background research, a willingness to learn, and long-term commitment, medical and health ministries can play a key role in the future of Christian ministry in Russia in flux. ♦

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Models for Medical Ministry in East Central Europe

Barbara Kertai

Just as East European cultures are diverse, so too are medical ministries seeking to serve the region. While one group seeks to reach hospitals, another may focus exclusively on a children's camp for Chernobyl victims. Some carry supplies in their suitcases, while others strive to influence national health care policy. But all have the same foundation: the integration of medical skills and material aid with spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many complaints have been made about difficulties with customs. Without bribery, the process can be long or impossible.

What Is Being Done?

Christian medical ministries typically stress both the physical and the spiritual well-being of a person. For example, one ministry to Ukraine sends short-term personnel to perform surgery and treat patients, while other team members distribute humanitarian goods. Other missions focus on the medical professionals of a country and strive to shape health care policy. The International Christian Medical and Dental Association (ICMDA), for instance, organizes conferences for Christian doctors, desiring to help them integrate their faith with their profession. ICMDA also serves as a support network for Christian medical professionals through local associations and newsletters. In other instances, seminars invite non-Christian doctors and medical students, such as International Health Services (IHS) in Hungary and the Bulgarian Christian Medical Association (BCMA). Both of these organizations envision starting Christian clinics, as well as organizing lectures and distributing Christian literature. In Bulgaria, for example, BCMA sponsors seminars on bioethical issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and alcoholism.

What Are The Needs?

The nature of medical assistance is often defined by the country itself. Impoverished and war-torn countries, for example, have their own special needs. BCMA is involved in relief work, such as distribution of medicine and the provision of free medical care. The current situation in the countries of former Yugoslavia provides many opportunities for relief and development work. ICMDA and other organizations have responded to recognize the need for immediate humanitarian aid. Many short-term missions take material aid to Ukraine as well.

Approaches chosen are very diverse, reflecting the vision of an organization as well as skills of

individuals involved. Dr. Kenneth Gimple's Ukraine Mission, for example, began with two doctors performing orthopedic surgery in Ukraine. Similarly, some organizations equip local hospitals or carry out relief work in a particular area. On a more organized level, some groups host conferences, provide medical consulting, and offer expertise to local doctors. Finally, organizations with a national or international scope cooperate with local medical and governmental authorities, thereby influencing national relief or health-care efforts. IHS, for example, researched Hungarian health care, seeing a need to involve the church in medical care. IHS hopes to assist the government in providing quality national health care, encouraging others to do so as well.

Overcoming Obstacles

The most common difficulties appear to arise from a lack of cooperation with the national government or other official authorities. Communication problems—beyond the obvious language barriers—result from cultural misunderstanding, insufficient preparation, or the resistance of local officials. Many East European authorities are distrustful and suspicious. Also, many spheres, from hospital care to customs, are infected by corruption, raising the problem of bribes and the need for personal connections.

Many East European governments frequently change laws and policies, causing difficulties for mission organizations attempting to abide by the most current legislation. Two solutions have been suggested to remedy the problem. One suggestion is to work within an existing local church or a registered national organization. Another suggestion is to make contacts with key people. National co-workers are irreplaceable. A medical doctor serving in Macedonia writes:

Any aid work [to Macedonia] must be aligned with the appropriate ministry in government. It is best to find mid-level bureaucrats and work with them, as top level people change with the political winds.... You can't do anything here without someone on the ground who knows the language and the culture and can move things through the governmental hassles.

Although Communism has failed throughout the region, an anti-Christian attitude may still be sensed in some countries. Macedonia is a restricted-access country, with the visas of some missionaries revoked and others threatened.

Many complaints have been made about difficulties with customs. Without bribery, the process

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can be long. Certain countries regulate the kinds of goods imported. On the other hand, by defining goods carefully, e.g. referring to children's toys as pediatric therapeutic devices, one can avoid paying duty on them. Information on regulations for each country is often available from that country's embassy or consulate. (See *EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT* 6 (Summer 1998), 13-14, and 2 (Spring 1994), 10-11, for contact information.) When shipping aid and equipment, one must remember that the process may take months, and it can be extremely expensive. For a 20-foot container from the U.S. to Europe one should expect to pay between \$3,800 and \$4,600.

Making a Difference

Winning acceptance from local authorities takes time, but charity work and humanitarian aid are generally looked upon with respect. Therefore, if a ministry provides tangible services—treats patients, donates medical equipment, cares for the elderly—it will make a difference in the region and will gain support from local authorities as well. “We cannot go in forcing Western religion on our hosts,” says Dr. Norman Carlson of Ukraine Medical Teams. “An element of trust that comes with time is the only thing that works.”

The efforts of Ukraine Medical Teams (UMT) illustrate this point. By assisting a children's camp for Chernobyl victims, establishing dental and medical clinics, and working together with the local medical school and government dental facility, UMT became accepted and respected by the Ukrainian government. The president of Ukraine has instructed regional authorities to cooperate—including assistance with customs clearance and mission outreaches! All mission organizations—denominational and parachurch—represent the church of Jesus Christ. While it is fruitful to have background support groups, such as churches or parent organizations, it is vital to establish contact with local churches in the country. Such contact proves valuable both on a spiritual level and in practical matters. Most large Protestant organizations work with local evangelical churches, although cooperation with historic state churches, when possible, can provide advantages. While many missions serve entire communities, ICMDA encourages the formation of small professional associations, and IHS-Hungary focuses on individuals. “Our times of greatest impact have been in small groups or one-on-one,” says Dr. Robert Snyder, founder of IHS. “We have also encouraged physicians and health-care workers with whom we have relationships to do likewise.”

As in all international missions, it is important to be culturally aware, not imposing Western ideas and agendas on people. Work should be delegated to nationals, even if at times problems result. “Not infrequently the comment is made ‘you have not told us what to do,’” writes Dr. John Reader of ICMDA. “Such comments arise from years of living under regimes which have discouraged individual thought.

In effect, individuals are told what to do. There is a need to teach people how to think and apply principles.”

It is important to know what drugs and supplies are already available. Buying equipment in Europe can save a good deal of money and decrease difficulties with shipping. Electrical equipment purchased in Europe normally operates on 220V, versus the U.S. standard 110V.

Overall, medical ministries in Eastern Europe have opportunities and privileges that other types of missions do not enjoy. Also, medical aid is very badly needed throughout the region. Western doctors and medical personnel are greatly respected everywhere. “Dental assistance and medical assistance opens doors that cannot be opened in any other way,” according to Darrell Clark, president of Ukraine Children's Project. “The testimony of the most ‘authoritative’ figure—a doctor or dentist—can have a powerful impact.” ♦

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Humanitarian Aid and Customs Regulations: A Hungarian Case Study

Barbara Kertai

Approximately 150,000 foreign and international organizations are currently registered in Hungary. Any Christian organizations desiring tax-exempt status and authorization to distribute humanitarian aid in Hungary must register with the Ministry of Public Welfare by submitting founding documents and any valid contracts with local companies or agencies. A registered humanitarian organization, with a tax number entitling it to certain exemptions, can import humanitarian aid under certain conditions. Generally, every item must clear customs, and duty and value-added tax (VAT) must be paid, which may be partially or completely reclaimed afterwards. Such a claim must be filed separately in each case.

The following goods/conditions allow for duty exemption in Hungary:

- ◆ Those items which are to be used or distributed free of charge by registered charities or humanitarian organizations in Hungary and are received free of charge. Exception: vehicles, including ambulances [#0361/111/2].
- ◆ Medicine, food, and clothing that arrive free of charge to registered churches and denominations [#0361/111/4].
- ◆ Food, medicine, clothing, and other essential items intended for free distribution to victims of natural disasters such as fires and floods [#0361/111/5].
- ◆ Religious objects donated to registered churches and denominations and material assistance given to construct or renovate churches and prayer houses [#0361/111/6].
- ◆ Medical items and equipment given to state or church-run hospitals, under the condition that they not be sold or rented within three years [#0361/111/8].

Sending Humanitarian Aid to Eastern Europe: Guidelines for Clearing Customs

Barbara Kertai

- ◆ Complete a thorough investigation of a country's needs. Gifts must make common sense: for example, do not donate videotapes if VCRs are scarce.
- ◆ Become familiar with each nation's trade and customs regulations. Generally speaking, donations are duty-free if they offer educational, social, or cultural aid, or help for health care or ethnic minorities. Websites on international trade laws and regulations include: *The Commonwealth Yearbook* (<http://www.tcol.co.uk/cyb.htm>); *International Trade Law Monitor* (<http://itl.irv.uit.no/>); International Chamber of Commerce (<http://www.iccwbo.org/>).
- ◆ The process is simplest when donations are made to a specific institution or organization, such as a single orphanage, hospital, or local humanitarian organization. In this case, all customs procedures (making an official list of the goods, filing for exemption, reclaiming VAT, etc.) are the responsibility of the recipient, thus minimizing donor responsibilities.
- ◆ If the donor organization is planning to distribute or use the nonprofit goods itself, procedures vary from country to country. In most cases, the organization must get official recognition as a charitable or humanitarian organization in country, which means having a valid contract, local representation, and a tax number. Be aware that bureaucracy in East Central Europe is complex and inefficient. Laws change rapidly, making procedures unclear and subjective and giving opportunity for corruption.
- ◆ For a description of customs regulations and duty-exempt items and categories, contact national consulates. See *EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT 6* (Summer 1998), 13-14; <http://www.tagish.co.uk/embassy1a/worldwide>; and <http://www.embassy.org/embassies/index.html> (U.S.).
- ◆ Gifts given by foreign states and international organizations which have a public/national purpose, especially educational, environmental, social, or medical [#0361/117/1].
- ◆ Educational and scientific objects donated to institutes of higher education, science, or health care, as well as to educational, scientific, and medical foundations [#0361/117/3].
- ◆ Donated books, periodicals, and printed music [#0361/118/1].
- ◆ Items received free of charge serving the public good in areas of education, health care, culture, religion, and ethnic minorities are eligible for exemption or discount [#0370/138/2].

These and other customs regulations can be found in Hungarian at <http://www.sztaki.hu/providers/torvenytar/>. For more information on Hungarian customs regulations and/or laws on registration, contact the customs hotline in Budapest (tel: 36-1-331-3536 or 36-1-332-6735; fax: 36-1-312-0621). ◆

Internet Resources on Medical, Dental, and Health Issues

Sharyl Corrado, compiler



The American International Health Alliance (AIHA), in cooperation with Friends and Partners, a key networking website for the former Soviet Union, provides a **Multilingual Document Library** (<http://solar.rtd.utk.edu/partners/health/english/health/transmat/>), a directory of over 400 health-related materials that have been translated into languages of the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe. Copies of documents may be requested from organizations listed. Available documents may be searched by language or subject. Other resources and links provided by AIHA are available at <http://solar.rtd.utk.edu/partners/health/english/health/>.

The Central and Eastern Europe Medical Resource Center of the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center (<http://medhead.uchsc.edu/europe/>) provides links to medical organizations, including clinics, hospitals, universities, and institutes; and to medical news and literature concerning or from the former Soviet Union and East Central Europe.

Narodni lekarska knihovna [National Medical Library] (<http://www.nlk.anet.cz/>), the principal information and library center in the field of medical sciences and public health in the Czech Republic, provides up-to-date information and resources in both Czech and English.

Audiocassettes of the November 1997 Consultation on Christian Medical, Dental, and Health Ministries in the Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe are available through the Institute for East-West Christian Studies (IEWCS). For ordering information, contact the IEWCS (address on page 20) or see <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/iewcs/>.

Drs. Rex and Jeanne Blumhagen, West Chicago, IL, have provided drafts of seven **unpublished health reports on Kyrgyzia and Tajikistan**, procured during their travels in post-Soviet Central Asia. For titles and ordering information, contact the Institute for East-West Christian Studies, or consult <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/iewcs/>.

Founded in 1990, the **Center for Communications, Health, and Environment (CECHE)** (<http://www.igc.org/ceche/>) publishes the *Monitor*, a periodical for professionals, the public, and policy-makers addressing environmental and health issues in the former Soviet Union and East Central Europe. CECHE also distributes an electronic bulletin, *The Global Health and Environmental Bulletin* via e-mail.

See *EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT* 5 (Fall, 1998), 12. For more information on these excellent resources, contact CECHÉ, 3333 K St., NW, Suite 110, Washington, DC 20007; tel: 202-965-5990; fax: 202-965-5996; e-mail: CECHE@igc.org. Both periodicals are free of charge.

“Sources of Money for Russia from Non-Profit Sources Specifically for Medical and Health Oriented Projects” (1995) by Dr. Pyotr Johannevich van de Waal-Palms (<http://members.aanet/~russia/texts/pd86.html>) contains descriptions and contact information for 32 organizations, many of which are Christian.

The Institute of Human Health, Saint Petersburg, hosts Medport (<http://www.medport.ru/>), a Russian- and English-language web server providing a **plethora of resources for medical professionals**. Another web server, **Dental** (<http://www.dental.ru/>), provides similar resources for dental professionals in Russian only.

The U.S. Institute of Medicine, in collaboration with the National Resource Council, published *The Impact of War on Child Health in the Countries of the Former Yugoslavia* (Washington: National Academy Press, 1995). This 1994 report is available in its entirety on the internet at <http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/impactwar/>. Issues addressed include: epidemiology, primary health care, preventive medicine, infant and child mortality, trauma, acute and chronic illnesses, mental health, and child protection. Workshop participants were doctors from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia, as well as senior U.S. and European pediatricians.

Eberhard R. Wenzel, Griffith University School of Public Health, Brisbane, Australia, provides a **WWW Virtual Library of Public Health** (<http://www.ldb.org/vl/geo/europe/>), with comprehensive coverage of relevant public health resources on the internet. For each European country (and most countries worldwide), links are provided to government organizations, schools, national public health associations, public health education and research facilities, private health organizations, and statistical data.

In 1997 *Newsday* (www.newsday.com) published a **graphic nine-day series by Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Laurie Garrett on the collapse of public health in the former Soviet Union**. Articles are available at <http://www.newsday.com/news/russpak/mainday9.htm>. ♦

Collectivism in the Russian World View and Its Implications for Christian Ministry

Steven R. Chapman

The collectivism of the Russian world view has both a positive and negative effect upon Russian Evangelicals. On the positive side, churches can exhibit a wonderful spirit of community. Believers are always helping each other.... On the more negative side is the tendency toward authoritarian leadership in the church.

The origins of Russian collectivism can be seen even from prehistoric times. People trying to maintain their existence in a rather harsh environment needed to band together in order to survive. The *zadruga*—a clan or extended family commune—formed the basis for Slavic tribal society. This then evolved into the *mir*, an agricultural village commune. Understanding the communal life of the pre-communist *mir* can shed some light on the communalism of Russian culture today. Russian villages typically featured peasant huts, side by side, one per family. The surrounding land was communally owned by the entire *mir* and was unfenced.¹ The primary function of the *mir* was to control the cultivation of the land, with each family being allotted a certain amount of land by it. The *mir* was led by an assembly of heads of households which met informally, often in the open air. While the discussion could become quite heated and animated, differences were not resolved by voting, but by consensus. Decisions reached unanimously became binding on the entire community.² Later, as peasants began moving to cities, they formed workers' cooperatives called *artels*, which were modeled on the *mir*. Members worked as a group and shared their payments. According to researcher Richard Stites, hundreds of thousands of workers adopted this lifestyle before the 1917 Revolution.³

Russia also has been strongly shaped by Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Father Anthony Ugolnik in his book, *The Illuminating Icon*, emphasizes *sobornost*, the strong sense of community that is so central to the Russian Orthodox Church. Orthodox believers de-emphasize independence and self-reliance in thinking. "Through their reliance upon tradition," Ugolnik notes, "they see the community as necessary to understanding." Russian *sobornost*, rooted in the strong Orthodox emphasis on the Trinity, contrasts sharply with the "individualism of the American mind" and the "Jesus-centered" consciousness of popular American Christianity.⁴ When the church was suppressed after the 1917 Revolution *sobornost* did not disappear. It simply took on a different form. In the 1930s, Stalin replaced the *mir* with the Soviet collective farm. As Victor Ripp explains, "The Soviet *kollektiv* is *sobornost* with a communist slant."⁵ The Russian communal ethic survived, but with a highly coercive communist component.⁶

So the social roots of collectivism may be observed in the *zadruga*, the *mir*, the *artel*, and the Soviet *kollektiv*. It also is clear that collectivism's religious roots derive from the *sobornost* of the Russian Orthodox Church. Perhaps the question is not so much where collectivism came from, but rather how it survived relatively intact in contrast to

the greater individualism that emerged in the rest of Europe and the United States. At least three factors are involved here. First, from a cultural standpoint, Russia never experienced the Renaissance with its emphasis upon individual creativity and potential. Second, from a religious standpoint, unlike Western Europe, Russia never experienced the Reformation with its emphasis upon individual reading of Scripture and personal salvation. Third, from a political standpoint, Russia almost always has been under authoritarian rule and has been relatively closed to outside contact.

Egalitarianism

One important element in the Russian communal mindset is a strong sense of egalitarianism, not simply fairness or equal opportunity, but a deeply held conviction that wealth should be equally distributed. In contrast to the Western drive to work hard and get ahead, Russians traditionally have tended to feel that doing very well financially is wrong, particularly if it is at the expense of others. "Most Russians," former foreign service officer Yale Richmond suggests, "would rather bring other people down to their level than try to rise higher, a mentality known as *uravnilovka* (leveling)."⁷ This is often referred to as a culture of jealousy.

Egalitarianism was not an invention of communism. Rather, it finds its roots in the culture of the *mir*.⁸ Hedrick Smith in *The New Russians* notes that the mentality of a person conditioned by the *mir* was to react "warily against anyone who tried to advance beyond his peers." This attitude is summed up well by a common saying among villagers, "Remember—the tallest blade of grass is the first to be cut down by the scythe."⁹ A person should not try to stand above the crowd, the collective.

One implication for cross-cultural ministry in Russia is that missionaries need to be very sensitive about issues of lifestyle and finances. Living at a material level above the majority makes it difficult to develop close relationships with those who are less privileged. Mission organizations which hire national workers have a difficult balancing act as well. On the one hand, they want to provide reasonable compensation as a just and nonexploitative employer. On the other hand, if this puts the income level of the national worker significantly above those with whom he works, resentments are predictable. Also, high salary levels make it very difficult for indigenous churches and ministries to compete for workers. They invariably have fewer financial resources available for employee compensation than their expatriate counterparts.

Dependence

Russian society fosters a climate of dependence, which can have its positive side. Through my years of exposure to Russian culture I gradually have been coming to the conviction that the interdependence found in Russian culture may better reflect a biblical world view than does the individualism of American culture. We in the West can become so protective of private rights and property that we close ourselves off from deep, healthy interdependent relationships. We insure ourselves to the nth degree to avoid ever needing help from anyone. We believe that we ought to be willing to give help to people, in keeping with biblical teaching, but in reality we tend to do so reluctantly, resentful of what we suspect is personal irresponsibility on the part of the needy. Why can't people be independent and self-sufficient like us? After all, think of all the personal sacrifice we have made to get ourselves to the point where we don't need to rely on anyone else. I suspect that we rob ourselves of the *koinonia* of the New Testament church because we have elevated self-sufficiency to an abnormally high position on our priority scale. Russians have much to teach us about healthy interdependence.

But the dependence found in Russian culture also has its negative side. People who have always been dependent on parents, on the collective, or on the state often lack initiative and a healthy sense of personal responsibility. They easily may become dependent upon foreigners and their resources, which is not helpful to Russians in the long run. Missionaries, frequently finding themselves subjected to requests for money, must undertake a difficult balancing act: they must exhibit cultural sensitivity, but not foster unhealthy dependence.

Cheating

A troubling moral issue related to the Russian collective mindset concerns cheating. A constant frustration of Westerners involved in theological education in the former Soviet Union is how to keep students from cheating. The Western inclination is to conclude that seminary students who cheat lack the integrity needed for ministry; they have a significant character flaw; and they should be expelled. But this issue requires an additional cross-cultural perspective.

In a communal society relationships are more important than rules. If a neighbor needs help and you can provide it, you must. If you need help and your neighbor can provide it, you ask for it. You and your neighbor are not competing; you are working together to further the common welfare. The thought of potentially damaging a relationship just to maintain what is considered in Russia a silly, arbitrary rule is unthinkable. In Russia this mentality is instilled from the earliest years and pervades the entire educational system. Children in school often work together in groups. Teachers sometimes give answers to struggling students during an examination to help raise their grades to the level of the majority.

I do not conclude from this collective dynamic

that cheating among seminary students should be condoned. On the contrary, seminarians are precisely the people who need to be taught how to hold up their culture to the light of God's Word to make corrections where necessary. The transformation of culture begins with those who uncompromisingly preach the Word of God and effectively apply it to everyday life. Cheating is wrong; personal integrity is crucial. But we need to be sensitive to positive elements in Russian culture and be humble enough to question our sometimes individualistic approach to education. Is it possible to adapt the communal spirit in a positive way to enhance the educational process and to avoid putting students in the position of being torn between relationships and rules?

Implications for Russian Evangelicals

The collectivism of the Russian world view has both a positive and negative effect upon Russian Evangelicals. On the positive side, churches can exhibit a wonderful spirit of community. Believers are always helping each other and often exhibit a sacrificial spirit. New believers often talk about having a close sense of family with their brothers and sisters in Christ, which they had not experienced in their own rather dysfunctional families. I remember hearing a 16-year-old youth lamenting the fact that he would be gone for a week or two and expressing how much he would miss his church family. Members will drop in on each other unannounced and enjoy spontaneous fellowship.

On the more negative side—from my perspective—is the tendency toward authoritarian leadership in the church. A high degree of control may be exercised to maintain the "unity" of the collective. Church discipline can seem quite harsh at times from a Western perspective. Some churches have excommunicated significant numbers of people. The reason for this seems to be that within the Russian Evangelical subculture, church elders equate independence and lack of conformity with spiritual pride and arrogance. To disagree with the pastor can be viewed as blatant pride, and by so doing, believers may be placing themselves outside of the collective. In this kind of environment, individual initiative and expression are often suppressed.

Russia today is in the throes of a fundamental cultural struggle as it seeks to come to terms with modernity. Slavic collectivism of many centuries'

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Differences Between Collectivist and Individualist Societies

Collectivist	Individualist
Children learn to think in terms of "we."	Children learn to think in terms of "I."
Harmony should always be maintained and direct confrontations avoided.	Speaking one's mind is a characteristic of an honest person.
Relationships prevail over tasks.	Tasks prevail over relationships.

Source: Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (London: McGraw-Hill, 1991), 67.

In Russia a strongly task-oriented approach, which makes light of relationships, may achieve short-term results, but is unlikely to flourish in the long term.

standing is now rapidly giving way to a new individualism, although Russia is still far less individualistic than is the United States. (Geert Hofstede's *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* reported that of 53 cultures studied, individualism was strongest in the U.S.)¹⁰ This shift in Russia toward individualism is particularly prevalent among young people, and so the struggle often takes on intergenerational dimensions.

Implications for Western Missionaries

American missionaries must note that they come from one of the most individualistic cultures in the world. In addition, U.S. Christians willing to venture abroad often have more than their fair share of individualism, even by American cultural standards. The biggest difficulty facing American missionaries in Russia today may not be the stress of living in another culture, the language challenge, or the lack of financial support. Often, the biggest challenge is simply getting along with co-workers, whether expatriates or nationals. While I do not want to suggest that American missionaries are more prone to relational problems than their Korean, German, or Finnish counterparts, Americans do tend to respond to such problems by following a deeply ingrained instinct to strike out on their own in lone ranger

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fashion. If there is a sense that certain teammates or national partners are hindering the accomplishment of certain goals, there is the temptation to isolate oneself from them or to ignore or bypass them.

A final implication for the Western missionary enterprise stems from the fact that Russia is a highly relational society. Relationships mean everything. Degrees, skills—even ministry success—mean relatively little in comparison. In Russia a strongly task-oriented approach, which makes light of relationships, may achieve short-term results, but is unlikely to flourish in the long term. Missionaries need to understand that effective long-term ministry can only occur in an ethos of trust and respect created by healthy relationships. These relationships require time and flexibility in schedule that does not come naturally to Westerners. But such relationships can be richly rewarding and may open the door to significant, lasting ministry. ♦

- 1 Yale Richmond, *From Nyet to Da: Understanding the Russians* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1992), 14–15.
- 2 Ronald Hingley, *The Russian Mind* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1977), 122.
- 3 Richmond, *Nyet*, 15.
- 4 Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989, 93–94; 114–15.
- 5 Victor Ripp, *Pizza in Pushkin Square* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 114–15.
- 6 Richmond, *Nyet*, 20.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 37.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 34.
- 9 New York: Random House, 1990, 203.
- 10 London: McGraw-Hill, 1997, 53.

Church-State Entanglements in the Post-Soviet Era

Stephen Holmes

The “separation” of church and state is sometimes emblazoned prominently in the new national charters of Eastern Europe (see, for instance, Article 60.3 of the Hungarian Constitution and Article 14.2 of the Russian Constitution), but whatever the constitutions announce in the abstract, the entanglement of religion and politics is always the case in practice. Communist-era constitutions, too, drew a sharp line between church and state (see the 1949 Hungarian Constitution, Art. 54.2; or the 1977 U.S.S.R. Constitution, Art. 52.2), although clergymen were not necessarily deterred thereby from informing on their flock to the secret police. Today, needless to say, everything has changed.

Poland

The shape of church-state entanglement in strong-church nations, such as Poland, differs sharply from what we find in weak-church nations, such as Romania or Hungary. For how can the Polish [Catholic] Church be consigned to the private sphere when its historical ties to Polish nationalism are so

deep, and when the tradition of a national church is more continuous than the tradition of a national state? How can the Polish priesthood be depoliticized when its Church is the bearer of so many national memories, and when, before 1989, it was so intimately associated with the opposition to communism? (Among the national denominations in the region, only the Polish Church can draw popular legitimacy from its record of anticommunism.) After 1989, the Polish Church, having apparently decided that it was in a favorable position to call in its debts, launched an aggressive political campaign for the concordat with the Vatican, a ban on abortion, control over school curriculum, influence over the media, and so forth. Even though it was not uniformly successful in these endeavors, it did establish itself as a formidable player in the nation's political game.

Romania and Russia

In more thoroughly secularized societies, such as Romania and Russia, the rinsing of religion out of

public life is also nearly impossible, but not for the same reasons, since the churches there are so weak.* Why do Russian officials, with no apparent religious feelings (Moscow's Mayor Yuri Luzhkov is a good example), still want to appear on national television being "blessed" by national religious leaders? An adequate answer to this question must begin with the insight that "democracy" itself is a cultural problem whenever and wherever it appears as a foreign implant with shallow national roots. In such a setting, not God, but a national church, however enfeebled in its own right, can help fortify the anemic legitimacy of national politicians, who are being mercilessly excoriated as puppets of the International Monetary Fund and other triumphant outsiders.

National churches, in other words, can help define the limits of permissible Westernization. Their message is: foreigners can control our economy, but they cannot touch our souls! This message is political gold. With 80 percent of television programming produced in the West and video piracy making it technically impossible to arrest Hollywood's unremitting onslaught, national politicians will eagerly mount this last rampart of cultural protectionism. The national churches in Romania and Russia, for their part, have scant recent experience in, or skill at, being socially or psychologically useful to their peoples. They are therefore naturally intimidated by Protestant missionaries who threaten to offer something

ordinary citizens might actually want. This explains why competition-shy religious leaders will gladly bless any politician willing to erect "barriers to entry" that promise to extend the life span of apparently noncompetitive home industries. The church-state entanglements now appearing in the region definitely remain works in progress whose future developments are both important to monitor and impossible to predict. ♦

* Article 3.3 of the 1991 Bulgarian Constitution can serenely declare Eastern Orthodox Christianity to be the country's traditional religion, for even if the Bulgarian Church has sufficient prestige to enhance the state's authority, it has insufficient clout to constitute a political threat.

Editor's note: *Excerpt reprinted with permission from the East European Constitutional Review 7 (Spring 1998), 65-66. The entire theme issue devoted to "Church and State in Eastern Europe" may be downloaded from the EECR website: <http://www.law.nyu.edu/eeer/>. EECR is published in Russian as Konstitutsionnoe pravo: vostochnoevropieskoe obozrenie. Contact: Olga Sidorovich, Moscow Public Science Foundation, Box 245, 101000, Moscow, Russia; tel: 7-095-280-35-26; fax: 7-095-280-70-16; e-mail: post@mpsf.org; website: <http://www.mpsf.org/>.*

Stephen Holmes is editor of the East European Constitutional Review.

In the new national charters of Eastern Europe, whatever the constitutions announce in the abstract, the entanglement of religion and politics is always the case in practice.

Letter to the Editor

Thank you again for publishing my research on cults in the former Soviet Union. In reviewing the article as it appeared in final form (*EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT* 6 (Summer 1998), 1-3), I found two things especially worthy of comment. First, on page 3, I question the wisdom of using Peter Brierley's figures, which are evidently out of date (i.e., a 1997 book with numbers "derived from the 1995 update of the database used by Patrick Johnstone in *Operation World*") and which diverge widely from those used in Jehovah's Witnesses' own publications. (For example, the number of cultists in Moldova is given as zero, whereas in their 1997 *Service Year Report*, the Witnesses report a peak of 14,415 publishers! In contrast, the statistics given for both Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses in Ukraine are grossly inflated.)

Second, on the same page you write: "It is the editor's impression that, paradoxically, many Western and Russian Evangelicals and many opponents of Evangelicals tend to exaggerate the influence of cults in Russia." On the one hand, I agree that estimates of cult membership and growth have been blown out of proportion by some parties. As I note in the article, the wealthy and powerful Mormon church has found Russians remarkably unresponsive to their missionary efforts, although it should be added that 1) their political clout enabled them to gain full registration ahead of many indigenous Christian churches, and 2) Ukraine is proving to be far more fertile terrain for them, as

evidenced by both membership growth and the recent decision to build a temple in Kyiv.

On the other hand, the article examines only a small sampling of the cultic and aberrant groups now active in the former Soviet Union, so the actual number of adherents of such movements is likely to be much larger. Beyond this, such groups have an impact beyond their immediate membership. Based on our five years of experience at the Center for Apologetics Research, the perceived need for information about such groups among Christians and the general public is high; this reflects not only a reaction to sensational reports in the mainstream press, but the reality that many families and churches are being troubled and genuinely harmed by anti-Christian and antisocial religious sects.

Again, I deeply appreciate the opportunity to present this research to readers of the *EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT* and hope that, despite these areas of disagreement, it will be of great value to those seeking information on the growth and influence of cults. The section on "Christian Resources on Cults in Russian" is especially important.

Paul Carden
Executive Director
The Centers for Apologetics Research

RESOURCES

Roeder, Norie, Merike Uudam, and Alland Parman. *How Christian is Estonia?* [Tallinn]: Estonian Evangelization Alliance, 1997.

Sources for this 45-page statistical study include data gathered from the Estonian Board of Statistics and Bureau of Religious Affairs; a 1993-94 questionnaire to church pastors, with responses "scarcer than expected;" and a 1994 public opinion survey cosponsored by the Estonian Council of Churches, the Estonian Bible Society, and the Estonian Evangelical Alliance. The U.S.-based Alliance for Saturation Church Planting sponsored the project.

Research indicates that Estonia is a heavily secularized country: only some 16 percent of the population hold membership in a Christian church; only 9 percent of citizens identify themselves as believers; and only 7 percent attend church one to four times per month.

Available in Estonian at the Kehra Evangelical Free and Baptist Church website: <http://sool.ioc.ee/~alland/kogudus/stat/kuikr0.htm>. For more information, contact Alland Parman, Kreutzwaldi 1, Kehra, EE2240, Estonia; tel: 372-2-764384; fax: 372-2-765696; e-mail: alland@teek.ee; or Merike Uudam, Kungla 16, Tartu, EE2400, Estonia; tel/fax: 372-7-428898.

Editor's Note: *According to Alland Parman, an English translation of the entire study can be prepared and maintained on the internet for approximately \$300. Please contact Alland Parman (address above) if you wish to assist in this project.*



The Donetsk Independent Christian Center, organized in 1991 by students of the Donetsk Polytechnic Institute, has prepared a "Russian Electronic Bible" (Slavic Bible 1.5 for Windows 3.1, 3.11, 95 or NT). This program has Bible texts in **Russian (several translations), Ukrainian, Church Slavonic, Romanian, Hungarian, Czech, Slovak, Albanian, Biblical Hebrew, Greek, Latin Vulgate, English, and other modern languages.** The base package of Slavic Bible 1.5 (software with Russian Synodal text, cross-references, maps, photos of the Holy Land, Alexander Men commentaries, Russian dictionary of biblical names, and topical handbook) is shareware, distributed for the price of four disks or CD-ROM and shipping and handling only. After a month of use, the distributors request a payment of \$10.

The Donetsk Independent Christian Center is looking for Christian organizations or missions interested in duplicating and distributing the Slavic Bible 1.5 for a wholesale price not more than the equivalent of \$2.50 in local currency. For more information, or to order Slavic Bible 1.5, contact Sergei A. Fedesov, Christian Center, Ul. Pintera 18-27, 340120 Donetsk, Ukraine; tel: 038-0622-346475; e-mail: sergej@mov.a.donetsk.ua; website: <http://www.gospel.crimea.ua/resource.html>.



Manastireanu, Danut. "The Place of Scripture in the Orthodox Tradition." M.A. Thesis, London Bible College, an Associated College of Brunel University, 1994. 50 pp. Reviewed by Mark Elliott.

The author explores the Eastern Orthodox understanding of the interrelationship of the Church, Scripture, and Tradition. While the consensus among most Orthodox is that the Church is the preeminent partner in this "trinity," more disagreements emerge

in the ranking of Scripture and Tradition. "Some authors tend to give Scripture a higher authority, which makes their position compatible, at least to a certain extent, with the Protestant understanding." Twentieth-century Russian Orthodox theologian Sergius Bulgakov, in *The Orthodox Church*, thus writes that "the Word of God is above all other sources of faith, especially of all Tradition." Others, such as nineteenth-century Greek theologian Christos Androustos, in his *Symbolics*, equate "the same value" to tradition and Scripture.

The explanation for the difference can be found in the two directions that divide Orthodox dogmatics in the twentieth century. Androustos represents the older direction, which is a form of Orthodox scholasticism of Roman-Catholic origin, having its roots in the theology of the counter-Reformation. This explains its lower view of Scripture and the respective higher view of tradition, as a reaction on the Reformed insistence on the principle *sola scriptura*.

The other direction, represented by Sergius Bulgakov and other Russian theologians, in Russia and in the Diaspora, as well as a number of other writers such as Dumitru Staniloae, John Zizioulas, and Kallistos Ware, stands under the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius, St. Maximus the Confessor, and St. Gregory Palamas. Even if this group of theologians is more inclined than the others to affirm the supremacy of Scripture over tradition, at the same time, because of their sacramentalism, they tend to give an exaggerated importance to the liturgic use of Scripture, which is considered by far the most important one. The result is a neglect of the private use of Scripture in the life of the Orthodox believer (pp. 30-32).

As the above treatment illustrates, Manastireanu is adept at clear summary and synthesis of complex theology. He also demonstrates careful and balanced judgment, as in the following thought-provoking conclusion: "Lack of instruction in the Scriptures in the Orthodox circles has opened the gate for a lot of confusion and syncretism, while a practical neglect of tradition in the Protestant milieu has given birth to liberalism and continuous fragmentation" (p. 35).

To request a copy of "The Place of Scripture in the Orthodox Tradition," contact Danut Manastireanu, Str. Columnei Nr. 18, Bl. K6 Ap. 4, 6600 Iasi, Romania; tel: 40 32 156 156; fax: 40 32 215 255; e-mail: danut@mail.dntis.ro. Available free-of-charge via e-mail.



Downes, Stan, ed. *Ghidul Retelei Organizatiilor Crestine din Romania [Directory of the Network of Christian Ministries in Romania]*. Bucharest: OC International, 1998.

OC International, in cooperation with the Romanian Evangelical Alliance, has produced a preliminary edition of a directory of 47 Christian organizations. A second edition projected for 1999 anticipates coverage of an estimated 200 church and parachurch ministries. Each entry, in Romanian and English, includes name, address, phone, fax, e-mail, denominational affiliation, name of director, name and address of international affiliate, beginning date in Romania, number of full-time staff, publication(s), and description.

Closing sections of the directory list organizations by types of ministries and by geographic regions (counties). Cost for the 43-page directory is \$8 to Europe and \$12 to the U.S., postage included. Checks drawn on U.S. banks should be sent to OC International, Box 36900, Colorado Springs, CO 80936-6900. Contact: Stan Downes, OC International, C.P. 57-93, Bucharest, Romania; tel/fax: 40-1-323-7710; e-mail: DownesSD@aol.com.



The *Russian Regional Report* is published weekly via e-mail by the EastWest Institute (EWI), New York, NY, formerly known as the Institute for EastWest Studies. Part of the EWI Understanding Russia Project, it is "designed to provide a steady flow of informed analysis that seeks to identify emerging ideas, trends, and patterns of power and governance in Russia." Each issue contains articles on the many regions of Russia under headings such as breaking news, patterns of regional development, center-periphery relations, social and economic issues, foreign ties, and special regional reports. While the *Russian Regional Report* deals primarily with business and political news, it is **one of the best sources of regular information on current events outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg. The Internet Edition is available free of charge.** To receive the *RRR-Internet Edition*, compose a message to rorttung@iews.org. Leaving the subject field blank, in the text of the letter, type "subscribe regions," then first and last name and institutional affiliation. An Executive Edition of the *Russian Regional Report* is also available, with both print and e-mail options, for \$475/year. The most recent edition is available on the EastWest Institute website, and a searchable archive of back issues since August 1996 is provided for paid subscribers. For more information, contact Robert Orttung, Senior Editor, EastWest Institute, 700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003; tel: 212-824-4100; fax: 212-824-4149; e-mail: rorttung@iews.org; website: <http://www.iews.org/>.



Rutland, Peter, ed. *The Challenge of Integration: Annual Survey of Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union 1997* (New York: EastWest Institute, 1998).

This 352-page volume provides summary and analysis of key political and economic developments in each country of the region during 1997. Supplementing the chapters are maps, data boxes, documents, profiles, and sidebars. The *Annual Survey 1997* can be ordered for \$85 using the online order form at the M.E. Sharpe website (<http://www.MESharpe.com>). A discount price of \$25 is available for subscribers to the *EWI Russian Regional Report* (see above).



The **hardcover edition of the *English-Russian Dictionary for a Christian Translator*** is now available from Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries. The 8,000 entries, triple the number of the previous edition, include Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic theological terms, with "problem" words specifically marked. It also includes a list of the seven most common errors that Christian translators make and a list of differences in Russian and English Bible chapter designations. Available for \$30 in the USA at PDRM, Box 496, Wheaton, IL 60189; tel: 630-462-1739; fax: 630-690-2976; e-mail: rmusa@mcimail.com; website: <http://www.russian-ministries.org>. In Russia, contact Assotsiatsiya Dukhovnoye Vozrozhdeniye; Kv. 29-30 Noviye Cheriomushki, ul. Nametkina, Korpus 5, 117420 Moscow, Russia; tel: 7-095-719-7945; fax: 7-095-719-7890; e-mail: nadp@asr.ru; website: <http://www.asr.ru>.



Religiya i pravo: informatsionno-analiticheskiy zhurnal [Religion and the Law: A Journal of Information and Analysis] is published bimonthly by the Institute for Religion and Law (*Institut Religii i Prava*), Moscow. This informative Russian-language journal, edited by Protestant human rights lawyer Anatoly Pchelintsev, contains articles on topics such as religion and the military, recent news relating to legal proceedings, and recommendations for registration of Christian organizations. Also included are statistical data, contact information for relevant parties, and notices of upcoming events in the sphere of religious liberty in Russia. For a table of contents of Volume 6, see

<http://www.glasnet.ru/~irlaw/journal6.htm>. For current price and subscription information, contact: Institute for Religion and Law, Leninski Prospekt 20, 117071 Moscow, Russia; tel: 7-095-795-3979; fax: 7-095-954-9255; e-mail: irlaw@glasnet.ru; website: <http://www.glasnet.ru/~irlaw/>.



Svoboda sovesti i zloupotreblenie svobodoy massovoy informatsiy: zashchita chesti, dostoinstva i delovoy reputatsii [Freedom of Conscience and the Misuse of Freedom of the Press: Defense of Honor, Dignity, and Business Reputation] is a practical textbook published by the Institute for Religion and Law in May 1998. Author Anatoly Pchelintsev examines legal strategies for defending the reputation of citizens and religious organizations from unscrupulous journalists. For current cost and ordering information, contact the Institute for Religion and Law (address above). ◆

Lessons Foundations Have Learned in Eastern Europe

Kevin Quigley

Editor's Note: Lessons learned by Western foundations working in postcommunist societies can be of benefit to church and parachurch missions working in the region.

There are a number of factors that contributed to the successes foundations experienced in assisting democracy in Central Europe. Among the most important are significant local involvement; a high convergence between the ends, the means, and the resources available; and an emphasis on sustainability. Sustainability is the clearest measure of success. Perhaps the single most important factor in sustainability is providing significant opportunities for local involvement, including real partnerships.

Strong, effective leaders by themselves are not enough. Also essential are strong local staffs and boards, and locally adapted modes of operation that support the institution's objectives. Having transparent democratic governance that promotes accountability is important, too. Appropriate local operations and staffs are necessary to build strong, trust-based relationships. They are also critical to ensuring that the foundation's activities are truly responsive to local needs rather than being a reflection of the foundation's perceptions of what those needs may be. All these steps are helpful for sustainability. Empowering local partners with decision-making authority is essential to any project's long-term success. Engaging them in every stage of the project is also important. ◆

Excerpt reprinted with permission from Kevin F.F. Quigley, For Democracy's Sake; Foundations and Democracy Assistance in Central Europe (Baltimore, MD: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1997). Hardback, \$38; paperback, \$15.95. Available from Johns Hopkins University Press, 2715 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21218-4319; tel: 800-537-5487 or 410-516-6900; fax: 410-516-6998; e-mail: bkinfo@jhupress; web site: <http://www.press.jhu.edu>.

NEWS NOTE

Russia: Secret Police Lowering Iron Curtain On Internet

Julie Moffett

A Russian Internet expert believes Russia's secret police are poised to implement a regulation that will permit them to monitor all electronic mail and Internet communications in the country without having to show a warrant. Anatoly Levenchuk, the webmaster of a special site devoted to educating the public about the new regulation, told RFE/RL in a telephone interview from Moscow that he is exposing the regulation, code-named SORM-2, as an attempt by the secret police to return to totalitarian-style tactics. Levenchuk says SORM-2—which stands for “systems for ensuring investigative activity”—is an enhancement of SORM-1, a regulation already in place in Russia. According to Levenchuk, SORM-1 permits surveillance of specific electronic mail or Internet

communication, but only after officials petition the courts for a warrant. SORM-2 would require all Russian Internet and network providers to install a so-called “black box,” or special surveillance device, in their main computers and devote a high-speed line directly to each local FSB (secret police) department.

Source: Excerpt reprinted with permission from the *Weekday Magazine* of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 20 August 1998. The complete text is available at <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/1998/08/FRU.980820125102.html>.

Editor's Note: View Levenchuk's website at <http://www.ice.ru/libertarium/sorm/> (in Russian). Levenchuk also maintains a smaller, English-language site at <http://www.ice.ru/libertarium/eng/sorm/>. New Zealand activist Craig Carey also maintains a helpful website of English-language news on SORM and issues of internet and e-mail privacy at <http://home.clear.net.nz/pages/research/sorm.htm>. For a comprehensive analysis of SORM, see Jeanette Borzo, “Russian Legislation Strikes Fear on the Net,” *The Industry Standard*, 5 August 1998, available at http://www.thestandard.net/articles/news_display/0,1270,1300,00.html. At present, no word has been received on the implementation of SORM-2 regulations. ♦

INTERNET RESOURCES

Sharyl Corrado, compiler

Editor's Note: Find below a description of additional useful websites, continued from EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT 6 (Spring 1998), 3-6. For additional new links, consult the Institute for East-West Christian Studies website: <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/iewcs/links.htm>.

Center for Apologetics Research

<http://members.tripod.com/~CFAR/> (in English)

Formed in 1993, the primary task of the Center for Apologetics Research, St. Petersburg, Russia, is to equip Christian leaders and laity in the former Soviet Union to defend the historic Christian faith by providing training and Russian-language resource materials on cults. This informative web page provides a complete list of the Center's Russian-language resources, as well as complete texts (requires Adobe Acrobat Reader) of 16 of its 66 articles, brochures, newsletters, and books.

Christian Website Collection

http://www.glasnet.ru/~zeleny/ch_cites.htm (in Russian, KOI-8)

Mikhail Zeleniy, an Orthodox believer and student at St. Filaret Orthodox Christian High School, has compiled a list of links to various Russian Orthodox institutions, including eparchies, churches, monasteries, educational institutions, social organizations, and publishers, as well as links to English-language Orthodox sites and other Christian sites worldwide. Zeleniy has also provided links to 31 Russian-language theological and philosophical texts at <http://www.glasnet.ru/~zeleny/theologi.htm>, including articles by a number of Orthodox clergy and theologians.

Chrześcijańska Społeczność

Internetu (Christian Internet Fellowship)

<http://www.chsi.rubikon.net.pl/> (in Polish)

Contains many links and addresses to fellowships all over Poland and is known for its forum which contains 30 to 60 letters daily—usually small notes with references to facilitate use. The site also has a library of Evangelical Protestant and Catholic writings, including

articles of Professor and Roman Catholic Priest Franciszek Blachnicki, founder of Poland's Oasis Youth Movement.

Hope for Europe

<http://www.hfe.org/toc.htm> (in English)

Hope for Europe, a pan-European, German-based evangelical initiative “aiming to help Christians proclaim and demonstrate both the contemporary and eternal hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” cooperates with the Association of International Mission Services-Germany to provide a multitude of resources on European missions and evangelism. Includes articles, press releases, contact information and links for mission-sending organizations, and a variety of other information, such as profiles of people groups in the Caucasus and a bibliography on postmodernism.

The Institute for Religion and Law

<http://www.glasnet.ru/~irlaw/> (in Russian, 1251 Windows; and English)

The goals of the Institute for Religion and Law, which works in close cooperation with the Russian State Duma and serves as a consultant to religious and nonprofit organizations in the areas of freedom of conscience and human rights, include developing and improving church-state relations and defending freedom of conscience. Includes the complete English and Russian texts of the 1997 Russian religion law and analyses of the law by Director A.V. Pchelinstev and lawyer V.V. Ryakhovsky.

Keston Institute

<http://www.keston.org/> (in English)

An Oxford-based research and information center dealing with religion in communist and postcommunist countries, Keston Institute has championed religious freedom since 1964 acting as publisher, research institute, and news agency. Included on its web page are sample articles from Keston's three publications: *Keston News Service*; *Religion, State & Society*; and *Frontier Magazine*; and subscription information.

MIRT Christian Publishing

<http://www.cityvision2000.com/v1/> (in Russian 1251 and English)

This Russian Christian publishing house in St. Petersburg has published 31 books to date, with plans for 22 more. The site includes

bibliographical information and descriptions of the books published, as well as pictures of the covers. The site also contains a downloadable newspaper and an excellent list of e-mail and website addresses of churches and Christian organizations throughout Russia.

Roman Catholic Church in Poland

http://www.ipipan.waw.pl/~klopotek/church/rcc_in_p.htm
(in English, with links to Polish)

Contains links to homepages of 20 of the 42 Catholic dioceses of Poland, biographies of Polish saints, Catholic education, Catholic mass media, and church government, as well as articles on Polish church history, architecture, and traditions. Maintained by Mieczyslaw Klopotek, assistant professor of mathematics, Warsaw University of Technology.

Russian-American Christian University

<http://www.racu.org> (in English and Russian, Windows 1251)

Licensed by the Russian Ministry of Education, the Russian-American Christian University is a Moscow-based liberal arts university grounded in historic biblical Christianity. The university strives to train Russian students to be agents of renewal and reconciliation in the university, the church, society, and the world of business. Along with course catalogs in English and Russian, recent RACU news, and detailed information on the history and governance of RACU, the site includes *Reflections on Russia*, a series of essays on Russian culture in flux by RACU founding president, Dr. John Bernbaum.

Russian Literature Ministries

<http://www.rlm.org> (in English)

The Oregon-based Russian Literature Ministries website includes ordering information for more than 100 Russian-language Christian books, reference works, and videos available through its Moscow

office, Triad Christian Publishing. Especially helpful are descriptions of each title, most of which are translations of English works.

Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

<http://www.synod.com/> (in English)

Provides a concise history of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia; a worldwide directory of parishes and related institutions; a directory of clergy worldwide, including names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail addresses; synod news; and links to ROCOR-related sites.

Virtuálna Krest'anská Kaplnka

(formerly Czech and Slovak Christian Page)

<http://www.kaplka.sk/> (In Slovak)

Among the goals of this page, created by internet specialist Branislav Vartík in Bratislava, Slovakia, are keeping an updated list of websites providing information about the Christian faith (primarily Catholic and Lutheran) and culture in Slovakia, and providing a site interesting for both Christians and nonbelievers. Included are large numbers of links, as well as information about churches, organizations, upcoming events, literature, and culture. A search engine facilitates use of this site. ♦

Correction

The *EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT* mistakenly reported in volume 6 (Summer 1998), 11, that the Armenian Apostolic Church had withdrawn its membership from the World Council of Churches. It has not. The editor expresses his regret for this error.

“Successful” Ministry (continued from back page)

Some could simply be a desire to look good. Undoubtedly, we are fascinated with the worldly image of success—large numbers, a triumphant march towards victory, satisfaction with the rightness of our own unique approach. And perhaps it is in part due to our own sinful desire for control, and fear of change, which would threaten our security. While our spoken theology may appear flawless, our practice often reveals an assumption that individuals are not important in and of themselves, but are simply part of a larger structure designed for their own good. If any belonging to this structure cause problems, they are seen as dangerous, rebellious, weak, or sinful (to name but a few options) and are best removed.

Diminishing Human Dignity/Diminishing God's Greatness

Francis Schaeffer, in *How Should We Then Live?, Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* and other books, points out that, since people were created in God's image, treating them as less than human is wrong and, in fact, insulting to the Creator. By diminishing the value of humanity as created by God, we diminish God's greatness, viewing Him as something less than divine. We dare not deny human beings their God-given personality, freedom, will,

emotions, creativity, or uniqueness—for all of this reflects God's character.

Thinking about true spiritual priorities has had an incredible effect on my view of ministry, discipleship, and the Church. Repenting of my sinful views of people as alternately burdens or means of maintaining a successful image, I now experience far less tension. While formerly mourning decreasing numbers at gatherings, I now rejoice in genuine depth of growth demonstrated by some members. The pressure to appear successful is still very much felt in Christian circles. It has been hard to allow young Christians genuine freedom to grow, especially when this conflicts with strategic programs and long-planned events. We need to abandon sinful patterns in ministry that amount to targeting and manipulating people. We need to say no to the worldly image of success, asking God to give us true freedom from other people's opinions. Progress may seem slow, but we continue at God's pace. Above all, we must not insult our Creator by treating His human beings, created in His image, with anything less than their rightful human dignity. ♦

Olga Loukmanova, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, teaches English at Nizhny Novgorod State Linguistic University. She serves on the board of Soobshchestvo Studentov Khristian (Fellowship of Christian Students), an independent Russian student movement with fraternal links with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

“Successful” Christian Ministry: Confusing the Appearance and the Substance

Olga Loukmanova

A Confession

While what I write is in no way an official opinion of a church or an organization, it has been on my mind—dare I say, spirit—for some time. It has to do with the way we, Russian Christian leaders, treat people in our ministry, our view of people and ministry—our whole worldview. Whether we realize it or not, every action and motive reflects our basic values and beliefs. Calling ourselves Christians, we must strive to let biblical truth transform our minds, and consequently our work and attitudes (John 8:32). Those of us who came to know Christ as adults (as have many Russian believers) carry an incredible amount of “baggage,” dragging our previous philosophies and practices into our new Christian life. We are often unaware of this. But that makes it even more urgent to deal with these issues as soon as possible, before we hurt or wound more people. I have in mind instances where we Christians treat each other as mere means to an end, as “pegs” to fill empty holes in ministry, as ego-booster, or as threats. I write this because I myself have been both guilty of such attitudes and a victim of them. Let me give some examples.

Evangelism, Discipleship, and Ego

Several times in Russia I have witnessed street evangelism in which people were practically pushed to “pray a simple prayer,” and, cringing, did so out of mere politeness to a foreign guest—so that later that day believers could praise God for yet another brother or sister and proudly declare that “today we had 52 divine appointments.” I thank God that He

brought some of these people into the church. Yet it’s no secret that these were very few.

Very often Russian Christian leaders seem more concerned with the appearance of things than with their essence. In my experience, the vision of one local pastor happened to include organizing believers into home groups for fellowship and discipleship. When several members of the congregation temporarily chose not to attend such meetings, church leaders—in a mild and friendly manner—insisted upon their attendance. However, after talking to the pastor, these church members were left depressed, feeling as if they had been “walked over.” One was upset that no one asked her *why* she chose not to attend. She felt no one cared about her relationship with God. Rather, leaders were anxious that she comply with their vision of the church and not disrupt the status quo.

Other examples can be given. A pastor asked a member of his congregation why he never prayed aloud in public, the view of success in that congregation being that “a powerful church is at all times filled with the Spirit.” (In practice, this meant praying loudly and emotionally.) Sadly, the question seemed to reflect the pastor’s concern not so much for the believer, as for conformity in his congregation. Another pastor confessed to feeling insecure when his congregation was silent, needing to hear their amens during the sermon. Silence was perceived as a threat. I remember personally fuming inside, even breaking out in anger, when members of a local Christian student group failed to pray aloud at prayer meetings, to participate in evangelistic events, or to arrive on time and behave “properly” at various Christian functions. I myself was concerned with our group appearing successful, so that no one could peg us as “unhealthy,” rather than with the true and real spiritual well-being and development of the members. It was a boost to my ego as a leader to “produce” good Christians. When young and immature believers “messed things up,” I firmly believed that they were the guilty ones, and that, but for them, we would have had everything together.

A Desire to Look Good

I do not presume to analyze the causes of these attitudes that too often prevail in our churches and organizations. Some may be due to years of Communism, where we were pressed to produce results and give successful reports to authorities. Some of it is due to humanism, the dominant philosophy of the Communist society for so long.

(continued on page 19)

Since people were created in God’s image, treating them as less than human is wrong and, in fact, insulting to the Creator.

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