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## The 1997 Russian Law on Religion: The Demographics of Discrimination\*

Mark Elliott with Sharyl Corrado

Russia's September 1997 law on religion replaced the October 1990 law on freedom of conscience, widely applauded for its careful safeguards of religious liberty.<sup>1</sup> In summary, the new legislation calls for a two-tier approach to state recognition of religious bodies. A privileged few "traditional" religions, including the Russian Orthodox Church, are designated as "religious organizations" while less-favored "religious groups" face major impediments to free exercise of religious rights. Fifteen years of state registration on good behavior are required before a "religious group" can aspire to become a "religious organization."<sup>2</sup>

### Factors That Have Worked Against Harsh Enforcement

Implementation of the 1997 law to date has been uneven. At least in the short run, a number of factors appear to have worked against consistently harsh application, including: 1) Russia's centuries-old experience with finding ways around official requirements; 2) certain ambiguities in the law and ambiguities and delays in the preparation of implementing regulations; 3) the growing use of e-mail, which appears to have made it difficult for local Russian authorities to engage in blatant religious discrimination without rapid public scrutiny; and 4) Russian human rights lawyers' inventive utilization of an apparent oversight in the law to the advantage of religious minorities. Protestant attorney Vladimir Ryakhovsky is convinced he has found a loophole for non-Orthodox in the language of this rushed legislation. He believes that drafters by mistake failed to restrict "centralized religious organizations" (CRO) and that forming a CRO should effectively circumvent most discriminatory and punitive provisions of the new 1997 law on religion.<sup>3</sup>

### At Least Sixty-Nine Documented Instances of Repression

Still, life since passage of the law has not been easy for many who wish to worship outside the fold of the Moscow Patriarchate. The first 15 months of the new law included at least 69 specific instances of state harassment, restriction, or threat of restriction, against non-Moscow Patriarchate religious communities in the Russian Republic. (See the forthcoming Keston article for a table of incidents.) Most Orthodox and Cossack actions against religious minorities<sup>4</sup>—with the passive assent of the state—are not documented. On the other hand, reported instances of discrimination or repression to date have been relatively few, compared to what could have been expected, considering the stringent language of the law.<sup>5</sup>

### The Demographics of Discrimination

While the tabulation of 69 incidents undoubtedly is incomplete, it still reveals certain patterns and demographics of discrimination under the new law on religion.<sup>6</sup> Fifty-two of the 69 reported incidents involve Protestants (37 indigenous groups, 11 foreign missionary organizations, and four both); eight incidents involve Catholics; six incidents involve Orthodox, including two reprisals against Moscow Patriarchate clergy not supportive of the new law; five incidents involve cults; one incident involves Old Believers; and one incident involves Jews.

### Indigenous Protestants

The months before passage of the new law witnessed a barrage of press attacks against foreign cults and Protestant missionaries. However, cults (5 instances, or 7.2 percent) and Protestant missionaries (15 instances, or 21.7 percent) together account for only 27.5 percent (19 instances total, including one affecting both Protestants and cults) of reported government restrictions or threats of restrictions. In contrast, 59.4 percent (41 of 69) of reported incidents involve indigenous Protestants.

\*The present article is excerpted from a revised version of a paper originally delivered at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Boca Raton, FL, 25 September 1998. The complete paper is forthcoming in Religion, State and Society, the Keston Journal.

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### Cults

Surprisingly, foreign cults have been comparatively unaffected by the latest wave of religious discrimination (only four reported incidents). And Mormons actually appear for the moment to be enjoying something of a privileged status, despite the minimal response of the Russian people to their missionaries.<sup>7</sup> Mormons' official recognition as a centralized religious organization, a preferred status under the new Russian legislation, came on 15 May 1998, just days before the U.S. Congress voted ye or nay on Russian aid, which was contingent upon evidence of Moscow's nondiscrimination in religion.<sup>8</sup>

### More About Protestants: Pentecostals and Evangelical Christians-Baptists

Pentecostals have had the greatest difficulty of any group to date (20 of 69 reported incidents, or 29 percent). Twelve reported incidents involve Evangelical Christians-Baptists (17.4 percent), which is surprising, since this church satisfies the "fifteen-year rule" and theoretically should not face restrictions.

### Repression Reversed

A final observation regarding state harassment, restrictions, and threats of restrictions against religious minorities: It is striking, to date, how often repressive measures of authorities have been unsuccessful or reversed, and how often believers have refused to be intimidated. In at least 15 instances, officials, so far, have not had their way.<sup>9</sup> For example, in November-December 1997, in Ioshkar-Ola, capital of the Mari El Autonomous Republic, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association evangelist Viktor Hamm, a Russian-German émigré with Canadian citizenship, organized a preaching crusade with the help of local Evangelical Christians-Baptists. Mari El authorities granted permission, withdrew permission, and again reversed themselves, finally allowing the meetings to be held, following a blizzard of e-mail reports and e-mail appeals for readers to phone or fax the Mari El president opposing restrictions.<sup>10</sup>

The most recent instance, and a quite dramatic example of religious discrimination reversed, involves Russia's June 1998 denial of one-year visas for foreign missionaries, even as they continued to be issued to foreigners for business and cultural purposes. Without explanation, Moscow began issuing only three-month visas to foreign religious workers, and again, without explanation, on 26 August, Moscow reversed itself and began, once again, issuing one-year visas to missionaries.<sup>11</sup>

### What the Future May Hold

Russian President Boris Yeltsin very likely will be succeeded by a nationalist beholden to Russian Orthodoxy who will be little swayed by Western ideas of human rights.<sup>12</sup> Post-Yeltsin repression certainly is possible, perhaps even probable. But it

appears unlikely that any state actions will end Protestant, Catholic, non-Moscow Patriarchate Orthodox, and cult presence in Russia, short of an improbable return to Stalinism or its equivalent. Basically, a decade of unprecedented opportunities (1989-98) created enough of an expanded infrastructure that many faith communities outside the fold of the Moscow Patriarchate should be able to weather any coming storm. ♦

### Notes

1. John Witte, Jr., "Introduction; Soul Wars: The Problem and Promise of Proselytism in Russia," *Emory International Law Review* 12 (Winter 1998), 5-6.
2. See Mark Elliott, "New Restrictive Law on Religion," *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 5 (Summer 1997), 1-2.
3. Minutes of the "Gathering" meeting, Moscow, 9 October 1997. As soon as the law's definitive implementing regulations were released on 10 March 1998, religious bodies began applying for, and at least 14 to date have received, legal recognition as centralized religious organizations (CROs), theoretically exempt from most of the discriminatory provisions of the September 1997 law on religion. The 14 religious bodies with CRO status include the Russian Orthodox Church, Roman Catholics, Jews, Mormons, five Pentecostal and charismatic churches, Evangelical Christians-Baptists, the Association of Churches of Evangelical Christians, Methodists, Adventists, and the Association for Spiritual Renewal (a Russian Protestant parachurch ministry closely affiliated with U.S.-based Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries).
4. For example, Roman Lunkin, "Cossacks Use Whips Against Protestants," *Keston News Service (KNS)*, 15 September 1998; and Lilia Solomonova, Radiotserkov, 16 September 1998.
5. Lauren B. Homer, "The 1997 Russian Federation Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations: Should the Smith Amendment Sanctions Be Implemented?," Testimony Presented to the Subcommittee on Europe of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 20 May 1998 (<http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/homer.htm>); Lawrence A. Uzzell, "Concrete Effects of Russia's New Religion Law," *KNS*, 23 April 1998.
6. Beverly Nickles, "More Complications Are Expected in 1998 as Religious Groups Attempt to Re-Register," *Compass Direct*, 19 December 1997, 38-41.
7. Uzzell, *KNS*, 29 March 1998; Associated Press, 22 March 1998; *Religion Today*, 26 August 1998.
8. Associated Press, 15 May 1998.
9. Salvation Army, St. Petersburg; Lutheran, Tuim; Pentecostal, Gatchina; Evangelical Christian-Baptist (ECB), Syktyvkar; Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, Ryazan; Presbyterian, Reutov; ECB, Ioshkar-Ola; Pentecostal, Yaroslavl; Independent Baptist, Khabarovsk; Pentecostal, Abakan; ECB, Tula; Pentecostal, Magadan; Jehovah's Witnesses, Yaroslavl; Protestant and Catholic visas, Moscow and nationwide; and Jehovah's Witnesses court case, Moscow.
10. Mark Elliott, "The New Russian Law on Religion: Will E-mail Undermine Draconian Enforcement?," *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 5 (Fall 1997), 16.
11. *Ibid.*; Beverly Nickles, "Trouble in Russia's Far East," *Compass Direct*, 23 September 1998.
12. This is the argument of Alexei Malashenko, Moscow office of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Gareth Jones, "Russian Religion Law," *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 6 (Summer 1998), 10-11.

The first 15 months of the new law included at least 69 specific instances of state harassment, restriction, or threat of restriction, against non-Moscow Patriarchate religious communities in the Russian Republic.

# Provincial Reports on the 1997 Russian Law on Religion: Mixed Messages

Editor's Note: In January 1999, Moscow's Association for Spiritual Renewal, affiliated with U.S.-based Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, hosted a conference for national representatives of its Evangelism and Church Planting Centers from across the former Soviet Union. Peter Deyneka Jr. asked participants to summarize the impact of Russia's 1997 law on religion on their ministry. Just as journalists have commented upon uneven enforcement of the law to date—serious restrictions in some locales and negligible interference in others—so too, the responses of conference participants suggest a contradictory pattern of enforcement.

## REPORTS FOR THE WORSE

- ◆ **Salekhard, Yamalo-Nenetsky Autonomous Region**  
The law on freedom of religion has made ministry more difficult in our region. Today we are not allowed to preach the Gospel in schools or in any other educational institutions. Before the law was passed, we regularly visited children's homes and schools where Nentsy and Khanty children both live and study. We are no longer allowed to visit these institutions.
- ◆ **Ukhta, Komi Republic**  
There are frequent attacks from the Orthodox Church in the Komi Republic. These are in the form of slander and accusations of sectarianism, which hinder our ministry in general curriculum schools.
- ◆ **Voronezh**  
The law laid the groundwork for accepting Orthodoxy as the traditional church, and all others as sects. This has served as an occasion for people to express their negative attitudes about minority Christian movements. There was more freedom at the beginning of the 1990s than there is now.
- ◆ **Moscow**  
People have become more cautious. Some don't go to [an Evangelical] church out of fear that they are betraying the "one, true faith" (Orthodoxy). Opportunities still exist, but great wisdom is required in carrying out evangelism as well as investing in local churches.

## REPORTS OF MINISTRY UNCHECKED

- ◆ **Ukhta, Komi Republic**  
There has been practically no change. We face minor local difficulties, which are resolved locally.
- ◆ **Vyshnii Volochek, Tver Oblast**  
The new law has not affected ministry in Tver Oblast. There has been some resistance by the Orthodox Church in some cities, but this occurred even before the new law was passed.
- ◆ **Krasnodar**  
There have been few changes with regard to the law, except the problem of restrictions affecting Christian programs broadcast over radio and television. In comparison to the Communist regime, we now have the freedom to preach, evangelize, and rent facilities.

### ◆ Tyumen

The situation with regard to the law has not changed substantially. However, local authorities have begun to request verification of an organization's registration and charter. No limitations have been observed in our region. During the past ten years it has been possible to carry out practically all activities in agreement with legal procedure. During the past year, it has become more difficult to work in schools and children's homes, but it is nevertheless possible.

### ◆ Novyi Urengoi, Yamalo-Nenetsky Region

There are no problems with the law. This is a time of freedom. It must be used quickly and to the maximum, since there has never been a time like it.

## MIXED SIGNALS

### ◆ Murmansk

There were never any particular problems as a result of the new law. But there is a sense that local bureaucrats are afraid to violate the law. For example, in July 1998, the director of education for the Murmansk city administration would not allow children to attend our summer camp. But the Lord inclined the hearts of the directors of children's homes, and they took the responsibility for sending their children to our camp. Also, the director of a local radio-television station would not give me air time for a sermon. She said that there is an agreement with the Orthodox bishop that only he can grant air time. But we contacted another radio company, and were then able to broadcast our Christmas program. Praise Him for this! Regarding preaching the Gospel, things have improved. It is possible, with practically no difficulty, to rent buildings for evangelism and use city streets and squares. It is only necessary to get permission in advance from the local administration.

### ◆ Krasnodar

The law which was passed in 1997 has strengthened the Orthodox Church's opposition to Evangelical Christians-Baptists. During the ceremonial opening of our new church in Krasnodar, some Orthodox came with posters which read: "This church does not have any relationship to the Orthodox Church."

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Responses of conference participants suggest a contradictory pattern of enforcement.

The most common difficulties noted involve rental restrictions and increasing restrictions on ministry in schools, orphanages, hospitals, and prisons.

[Nevertheless,] preaching the Word of God has become much freer than it was 15 years ago.

◆ **Ufa, Bashkortostan**

Difficulties related to the new law arise with regard to the renting of halls for evangelistic services and ministry among children (in educational institutions, schools, boarding schools for orphans, hospitals, other institutions, and military troops). But in comparison to times when the Iron Curtain existed, we have considerable freedom.

◆ **Bryansk**

Some restrictions have occurred with regard to the new legislation on religious associations: a ban on teaching in educational institutions by religious associations. Some school directors still allow this. Incidents forbidding evangelistic meetings in cultural institutions, houses of culture, movie theaters, etc., have become more frequent. [But] there is no comparison between the situation today and that of ten years ago. Ten years ago, we were not permitted to do anything. Today we have only slight restrictions.

◆ **Omsk**

There is a great difference [between the present time and the former Communist period]. In the past everything was forbidden, and many were even imprisoned. Now it is possible to work. Now

is the time to fulfill the Great Commission. [However,] there is a ban on working with children in general curriculum schools. The Orthodox are often not pleased with our activities and make statements against us.

◆ **Nemchinovka Region, Moscow**

We work in the Moscow-Mozhaisk region. Here everything depends on the specific locality. For example, in Puchkov, we do not have any particular difficulties. In the village of Korinsky and the cities of Ruz, Zvenigorod, and especially Mozhaisk, no public activities can be carried out without the blessing of the Orthodox priest. ◆

**Editor's Observations:**

1. Most, if not all, of the above respondents are Evangelical Christians-Baptists. As members of a religious group registered more than 15 years, they should be exempt from most of the restrictions of the 1997 law on religion—but local interpretation counts for everything.
2. The most common difficulties noted involve rental restrictions and increasing restrictions on ministry in schools, orphanages, hospitals, and prisons.
3. Orthodox influence upon state authorities to restrict non-Orthodox believers is commonplace.
4. Younger respondents compare today with the early 1990s unfavorably, while older respondents still compare today with the *perestroika* era favorably.

## Russian Religion by the Numbers

*Vyacheslav S. Polosin*

In Russia today there are no official statistics on the membership of religious organizations. The law prohibits demanding that citizens declare their religious affiliation, and many denominations do not have a fixed membership. Under these conditions, a tendency can be observed among politicians and publicists to try to pass off the desirable as the actual.

### **Passive Faith**

In terms of socially passive religiosity, two traditional confessions are more or less noticeable in Russia as a whole: Orthodoxy and Islam. Orthodoxy dominates, for the most part, the sphere of religious ritual, sacred seasonal holidays, and also the most important stages and events of human life—birth, marriage, and death. Not only passive believers without a specific denominational orientation, but also nonbelievers who are inclined toward superstition strive to enlist support from on high. On the holiday of Epiphany huge lines of people stand to receive holy water. However, a poll of those standing in line reveals that the majority believe in the magical properties of the water, even in the absence of faith in the Church, and perhaps even with a negative attitude towards it. Up to 85 percent of people turn to this kind of ritual or observe relatively respected holidays by tradition,

without a personal religious faith. About 50 percent of people are passive believers, that is, those who in one way or another consider themselves believers.

Islam fulfills an analogous function, as a rule, among "ethnic" Muslims (up to 15 percent [of the Russian population]). Protestants, by virtue of their inherent accent on awareness of faith and their weak development of ritual and implantation of it in society, have almost no passive social base. New religious formations, having no roots in the sphere of ritual, are forced against their will to display extreme social activity in order to draw attention. This situation causes them to be labeled extremists. For people who are not inclined toward active religiosity, and this is the overwhelming majority, the actions of the disciples of such new groups appear irritating and maniacal.

### **Active Faith**

In terms of active believers, it is possible to distinguish three large groups (Russian Orthodox Church, other Christians, and Muslims), as well as religious minorities and new religious unions: 1) Russian Orthodox Church—more than 8,000 parishes and brotherhoods; 2) Muslims—2,900 communities; 3) Christians of other confessions or

jurisdictions—4,000 registered and no fewer than 1,500 unregistered fellowships.

### 1. Russian Orthodox Church

In Russia there are 74 eparchies, more than 300 monasteries, and 40 educational institutions. There is no fixed membership today, although before 1917 members of each parish were strictly counted. According to sociological data, believers who have consciously become involved in the church comprise 2.5 to 3.0 percent of the general population, or four to five million people. Approximately seven percent, or an additional 10 million people, attend churches relatively consistently (once a month). Almost 50 percent of the population call themselves Orthodox but do not have faith in the dogma of the church, do not have connections with a particular local church, or do not have personal involvement in the life of the church and its discipline. Approximately 60 percent trust the Church as a social institution; however, this number began to decline in 1997-98 as a result of published facts about the church's sale of humanitarian aid intended for free distribution to the poor and its trade in tobacco, alcohol, and precious metals.

The sociopolitical orientation of the majority of active [Orthodox] believers can be characterized as a traditional, anti-Western one. Furthermore, according to 1996 data, organizations with a patriotic Communist tendency led the political preferences of Orthodox—31 percent. (Arnold Toynbee justly recognized the ease of moving from Orthodox Slavophilism to Communism and back again on the basis of a vision of a common image of the enemy—the West.) However, radical nationalists and anti-Semites still do not have serious support, although a tendency toward growth can be traced.

### 2. Muslims

Muslims do not have a unified structure. More than 40 spiritual centers and administrations are registered. By far the most well-known religious unions are the Central Spiritual Government of Muslims in Ufa, under Supreme Mufti Talgat Tadzhuddin, and the Council of Russian Muftis, under Mufti Ravil' Gaynutdin. Spiritual governments in the Caucasus conduct their own policies. Overt and potential Muslims in Russia number about 20 million people, or 15 percent, although the number of actual believers is only about three to four percent of the total population, or four to five million people, according to sociological data. However, it is important to bear in mind that the transition from passive to active religiosity is much simpler and quicker for a Muslim than for an Orthodox believer. The increase in the Muslim population far outstrips others. The sociopolitical orientation is traditionally anti-Western and anti-Semitic. Among the political preferences of Muslims, the Communist Party is the leader, but Islamic parties, and nationalistic parties among Tatars, are becoming stronger and growing in influence. The majority of Muslims are Suni, although owing to the residence of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis in Russia, the number of

Shiite is also growing. If in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan the development of Islam goes hand in hand with the growth of national movements, then in the Caucasus, where Shariat [the Muslim religious code] often joins with the laws of the mountains, the situation has been complicated by the appearance of fundamentalists, or Wakhabi, who have support from Saudi Arabia.

### 3. Other Christian Denominations and Jurisdictions

#### 3.1 Orthodox of Other Jurisdictions

The Russian Orthodox Free Church headquartered in Suzdal, which separated from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1991, comprises seven eparchies, more than 100 parishes, and four monasteries. The True Orthodox Church [*Istinno-Pravoslavnaya Tserkov'*], or Catacomb Church, which formed as a result of the destruction of the Church's central structure in 1927, has four centers and more than 60 registered communities. Unregistered ones possibly number several dozen.

#### 3.2 Old Believers—five centers, over 200 communities.

#### 3.3 Protestant Denominations—more than 2,000 registered and up to 1,500 unregistered communities.

The total number of relatively active Protestants is as many as one million. In contrast to Orthodoxy, the membership of the communities is conscious and fixed, and it is characterized by a particular social activity. But accordingly, the number of passive believers (the social reserve) and "sympathizers" is not large. There are potential new members among youth who are attracted by the comprehensible sermons. In the area of social service and aid, especially among veterans' organizations, in hospitals, and in prisons, indications are that Protestant activity exceeds that of other confessions.

### 4. Religious Minorities

Religious organizations that have historical roots, but do not have a significant number of followers, or in other words, a social base, include: Jews—three centers and over 80 communities; Buddhists—seven centers and about 140 communities; Tolstoyans—two communities; Dukhobor—two; Molokane—16; Teetotalers [*Trezvenniki*—five; Pagans—12; Zoroastrians—two. Many sects exist without registration, such as *Skopty* and *Khlysty*.

### 5. Religious Unions New to Russia

#### 5.1. Of Native Origin

The Church of Visarion—eight communities; *Bogorodichniki* [those who identify with the Virgin Mary]—nine. A multitude of new unions exist without registration, such as the cult of the Mistress of the Copper Mountain, which formed in the Urals and is distinctively reconstructing national Russian mythology. Among youth a number of national and nationalistic groups, based on pre-Christian Russian

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## Religion by the Numbers (con't from page 5)

Grand Orthodoxy [*Velicheskoye Pravoslaviye*], are growing.

### 5.2 Of Foreign Origin

Since they do not have any national or social roots on Russian soil, these religious unions must depend on missionary activity and factors that are neglected by traditional religions. The most prominent, rapidly growing, and professionally working, organization that has the most resources and a modern publishing house is Jehovah's Witnesses. They have one center in St. Petersburg and approximately 200 communities. The organization is run by an overseas center and involves tens of thousands of members, especially youth and intelligentsia. The Society of Krishna Consciousness has one center and over 110 communities. It is run by independent Russian citizens and was legalized in the Soviet Union. According to the Society's own data, about 9,000 conscious members (devotees [*posvyashchennykh*]) are involved in the most active charitable activity,

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including work in "hot spots," where representatives of traditional religions are not visible. The Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon has 10 communities (although in practice the number is much greater—according to approximate data, the number of followers is no less than 30,000 people) and highly significant financial, intellectual, and organizational resources.

### Prognosis

Parishes based on agricultural locations and small towns are becoming a thing of the past. Mainline clergy have lost their previous advantages, while those focusing on individual relationships have gained influence. New forms of conveying religious content by visual mass media, such as occult video clips, should be expected to appear. The center of religious life will become relationships within small groups with common interests, with personal competence and charisma the definitive factors. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from Vyacheslav Polosin, "Religiya i sotsialnyy okhvat naseleniya," *Religiya i prava*, No. 1-2 (1998), 42-43.

# Macedonian Evangelicals Win Court Case Against Repressive Law on Religion

Stephen Goodwin

Recent evangelical Christian court challenges to the July 1997 law on religion in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have resulted in more freedom for believers to practice their faith and have prompted a reevaluation of the constitutionality of the law itself. The law severely limited the practices of evangelicals, threatened denominations with loss of church properties, made home groups and Bible studies illegal, and was the basis for the dismissal of eight foreign missionaries from Macedonia in 1998.

The 1997 law ostensibly provided freedom for religious expression in Macedonia. In practice, however, it did the opposite for all but the officially recognized religious communities: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Muslim. Under Article One of the law, all other groups, including evangelical denominations, are categorized by the pejorative phrase "religious group." By creating two levels of recognition for religious entities, the government guaranteed unequal status, favoring some, while restricting others.

Because evangelical denominations and ministries were not officially recognized as "Faith Communities" by the government, they could not register their buildings as churches. And because the law also prohibited any religious practice outside officially recognized and sanctioned buildings of worship, virtually all forms of religious activity undertaken by

evangelical groups were officially illegal. Open evangelism and Bible studies in believers' homes were strictly forbidden under the law and punishable by stiff fines of several thousand dollars for each offense. While no fines were levied under the law, it remained a threat to church workers in the country who knew that at any moment their activities could be halted by the very government that publicly claimed to be the guarantor of religious freedom.

Foreign missionaries ministering in Macedonia also have been victimized by the 1997 legislation. The law made no provision for foreign religious workers to obtain visas and it still prohibits the formation of new "faith communities," precluding the registration of new denominations or parachurch groups. Eight missionaries were evicted from the country in 1998 because of activities that allegedly challenged the sovereignty of the Orthodox Church or violated the religion law, such as holding Bible studies in homes. Missionaries working with the Albanian minority population were particularly at risk. One missionary couple working with Albanians was evicted from the country with only 24 hours' notice.

In late 1998 and early 1999, however, a few religious workers' visas have been issued from government offices. This may be a result of an act passed by the U.S. Congress in October 1998 that links trade and aid from the United States to freedom of speech and freedom of religion abroad. Whether

**Eight missionaries were evicted from the country in 1998 because of activities that allegedly challenged the sovereignty of the Orthodox Church or violated the religion law.**

this had a direct impact on Macedonia's law on religion is not known, and it is too early to determine if such visas will continue to be issued to missionaries as a matter of policy.

The Macedonian law has been successfully challenged in court. In December 1997 Ivan Grozdanov, a Baptist pastor and denominational leader living in the capital city of Skopje, with the support of representatives from Evangelical, Congregational, and Pentecostal churches, spearheaded a court case which succeeded in providing some breathing room for believers to practice their faith more freely. After five sessions over a period of 12 months, the Constitutional Court rescinded five of 11 challenged articles, ruling that they violated the constitutional rights of Macedonian citizens. Grozdanov nevertheless asserts that the situation is still unsatisfactory and favors repeal of the law in its entirety. He intends to take the case to the European Court in order to challenge the basis of the law as outlined in Article One, which creates the disparity between a "faith community" and a

"religious group."

For now, the court's rescinding of some articles of the law on religion leaves uncertainty as to the true status of religious rights in Macedonia. Clarification is expected from Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski, elected in December 1998, who stood for many years as leader of the party of opposition to the government which drew up Macedonia's 1997 law on religion.

Evangelicals sense that under the new government there will be more sympathy for minority religious organizations and a more favorable climate for religious freedom. Georgievski attended the annual prayer breakfast in Washington, D.C., at the personal invitation of U.S. President Bill Clinton, and appears to be supportive of tolerance for Macedonia's diverse religious minorities. The new prime minister has promised to meet with church leaders to hear their concerns. ♦

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## The Curse of State Privileges for Orthodoxy

Anatoly Krasikov

After years of tense confrontation, the president's administration, the government, the Federal Assembly, and the Russian Orthodox Church expressed satisfaction with the new [1997] Law on the Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Associations. Some people were honestly mistaken in supporting the law. They believed that the law would protect Russians from pseudo-religious groups (or "totalitarian sects"). They felt the law would guarantee the freedoms of all "normal" religious organizations, preserving equal rights, while at the same time maintaining the Russian Orthodox Church's special status. In fact, none of these assumptions has been confirmed by the facts.

Today a government aspiring to establish the rule of law cannot accomplish what the Soviet totalitarian regime, with its gulag, failed to achieve. The 1997 law surreptitiously introduces different types of rights and opportunities. Only those religious associations that "acted on a legal basis" 50 years ago (in other words, under Stalin and Beria) are considered "all Russian" organizations. The religious organizations most disadvantaged are those that neither have, nor belong to, a centralized structure and cannot document their "existence on the territory for at least 15 years," that is, since the time of Brezhnev and Andropov.

The spirit of the law is even stronger than its letter. Religious associations from all over the country, which had been recognized officially after 1990, have now lost their certification of registration. The authorities have told many groups that, from now on, they should not practice their religions. Those who are "not ours" are permitted neither to build churches nor even to rent space for holding

worship services. In several cases, organizations have even been told that they must obtain consent for their religious activities from the local bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church. Russia is on the path leading to a return to an official state Orthodoxy, where Orthodox bishops inherit the role of Communist Party secretaries.

In fact, the new law does palpable damage to the Russian Orthodox Church. Rather than engaging in spiritual regeneration, the Church is now a party to the repression of "dissidents." Its rapprochement with secular authorities has led to results that are the opposite of what was expected. For regardless of the intentions of the holy leadership, the Church is being called upon to serve as a spiritual auxiliary guard or policeman of sorts, reinforcing secular authority when that authority ceases to command or otherwise earn the respect and allegiance of the population. This flirtation with the state compromises the Church, just as it did prior to 1917. As the patriarch said, "Our position as a state church brought us much sorrow and suffering." Before the Revolution, a majority of Russians saw the Church as a servant of the tsarist autocracy. At the decisive moment, they turned away from religion and to the demagogy of the Bolsheviks. ♦

Excerpt reprinted with permission from the *East European Constitutional Review* 7 (Spring 1998): 83-84.

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Russia is on the path leading to a return to an official state Orthodoxy, where Orthodox bishops inherit the role of Communist Party secretaries.

# A Model for Collaborative Ministry

Tom Correll

When most of us read Jesus' promise, "Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them," we think in terms of individuals. The Minnesota Coalition for Eastern Europe (MCEE) is proof that the principle also applies to organizations. MCEE is a network of Minnesota churches, ministries, and individuals committed to working together in evangelistic outreach to the nation of Bulgaria. Our vision statement is to "Honor God through the establishment of a community of evangelical churches that together are discipling the nation of Bulgaria for Jesus Christ." In the five years of its existence God has done wondrous things through MCEE. But first a bit of history.

MCEE could propose ideas, but Bulgaria was to drive the agenda.

## Coming Together

MCEE was the brainchild of Al Larson who was, in 1993, the Upper Midwest representative for Advancing Churches in Missions Commitment (ACMC). His goal was that Minneapolis-St. Paul churches might work together on a common missionary project. Through a series of events, several key churches became aware of the needs of Bulgaria, with about 1-1.5 percent evangelicals in a nation of some nine million. Next, Dwight Gibson of World Evangelical Fellowship led a vision trip to Bulgaria in spring 1994. During this visit the Minnesota delegation met with leaders of the recently reconstituted Bulgarian Evangelical Alliance (BEA). This trip focused primarily on building relationships and searching for avenues through which Minnesota churches could make an impact. In the meantime, a missionary from Minnesota was preparing to go to Bulgaria to minister with the Alliance for Saturation Church Planting.

## Members of the Minnesota Coalition for Eastern Europe

### Churches

Colonial Church  
Crystal Evangelical Free Church  
Friendship Church  
Grace Church of Edina  
Grace Church of Roseville  
Grace Evangelical Free Church  
Oak Grove Church  
Wooddale Church

### Others

Alliance for Church Planting  
Bethel Seminary  
Bible League  
Conservative Congregational  
Christian Conference  
Evangelical Christian Publishers  
Outreach  
Robbinsdale Bibles for Missions  
Thrift Center  
The Evangelical Alliance Mission  
(TEAM), Upper Midwest

### Foundations

Getsch Family Foundation  
Wallestad Foundation

## Ground Rules

Upon returning, the team reported its findings to those willing to consider working with the partnership. MCEE was launched in 1994 based on the interest of five churches and some key individuals. The ground rules were simple:

- ◆ All projects would be voluntary. Churches and individuals chose which projects fit their objectives and their budget constraints. (MCEE is yet to be constituted as a formal entity.)
- ◆ The initial field would be Bulgaria so that participants could build relationships and be able to see the impact of their efforts.
- ◆ Projects would be initiated at the request of the Bulgarian Evangelical Alliance and ministries "on the ground" in Bulgaria. MCEE could propose ideas, but Bulgaria was to drive the agenda.

## First Steps

The Bulgarians' first request was to send Emanuel and Nellie Naydenov and family to seminary in the West to prepare them for ministry with the Bulgarian Biblical Academy Logos. This project (approximately \$35,000 per year) was larger than anticipated as a first effort. Also, some MCEE members, fearing brain drain, had reservations about the wisdom of bringing foreign nationals to the U.S. for study. However, the ground rule was, Bulgaria drives the agenda. Bethel Theological Seminary in Minneapolis joined MCEE and provided scholarship help for the Naydenovs. (Nellie is doing an M.A. in marriage and family counseling and will be the first Bulgarian with that degree.) Three churches and a local foundation agreed to cover the balance.

In 1996 MCEE gained the help of Loren Garborg, a retired businessperson with missions experience, who agreed to serve as facilitator for MCEE activities; and in 1997 MCEE and the Bible League opened a Bibles for Missions Thrift Center as a joint venture. All funds generated from the store serve needs in Bulgaria: half to Bible League ministries and half to MCEE projects. All profits support Bulgarian evangelism, church planting, and Christian literature. Volunteers from local churches who donate their time to operate the thrift center also take daily breaks to pray for the ministries in Bulgaria.

## Goals Set and Missions Accomplished

MCEE has six goals for its efforts: leadership development, strengthening the evangelical

infrastructure, humanitarian assistance, economic development, encouraging relationships between Minnesotans and Bulgarians, and encouraging Bulgarians in the development of a missionary vision. To date, MCEE has provided support for the Naydenovs' education, for a Bulgarian women's ministry, for the Bulgarian Evangelical Alliance, for a study of evangelical presence through a national demographic and mapping project, for Bulgaria's only evangelical publisher, and for a \$100,000 loan fund for economic development in the city of Plovdiv with training in business principles. It also has established sister-church relationships between 11 Bulgarian and Minnesota churches; provided humanitarian aid, with particular focus on orphanages distributed through evangelical churches; supported work on Hebrew and Greek grammars for use in theological education; and assisted in training projects for church planters and church leaders. Plans also are under way for evangelistic outreach to Bulgarian minorities in Macedonia and Moldova.

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### In Summary

What has made MCEE effective? It is, of course, God's work. But from a human perspective, the following strategies can be credited: a commitment to Bulgarian leadership in decision-making; a focus on one country and projects that can be completed; a facilitator with a heart and the time for the project; networking and cooperative efforts; creativity in finding new ways to do ministry; and long-term, personal relationships. There are trips between the two countries three, four, or more times per year and most participants have Bulgarian friends. Today MCEE consists of eight churches, four ministries, two foundations, a regional denomination, and several individual members, all thrilled to find that where two or three groups join in the name of Jesus, He is in their midst, working through them for His kingdom's work. ♦

**Tom Correll** is missions pastor of Wooddale Church, Eden Prairie, MN.

## Russian Collectivism Article Triggers Lively Response

The *EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT* received nine requests to reprint or redistribute Steven Chapman's article on Russian collectivism, Vol. 6 (Fall 1998), 12-14, the most requests ever for a single article. Yale Richmond, author of *From Nyet to Da, Understanding the Russians*, also wrote that he enjoyed the article very much and may use some of its insights if he does a third edition of his book. Daniel Bulzan requested permission to distribute the collectivism article to missionary friends working in Timisoara, Romania. "We Romanians," he wrote, "are not as collectivist as the Russians, but some of the things in that article can be applied to us as well, and are a cause of frustration for Westerners who come here."

Note below excerpts from comments on the article on Ray Prigodich's e-mail list on religion in the former Soviet Union.

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### From Dan Beck, Denver, CO

I must say that I hesitate to comment at all, since the article [on Russian collectivism] has many excellent insights on differences between Russian and American culture and church practices. Moreover, I have never been to Russia. Despite these circumstances, I want to address what I believe to be a lack of balance in some Western (especially U.S.) perspectives on the roots of Russian behavior and thought today. It is true, for example, that Russia did not experience the Renaissance and Reformation as we know it in the West. But there were other, more recent developments in Russian history that clearly suggest Russia was not destined for a non-individualist, "collectivist consciousness" that would result in some of the behaviors the author cites. The *zemstvo*

political movement in late nineteenth century Russia, the broader democratic initiatives from the government at the turn of the century, and the success of agriculture during this time frame (Russia was the world's leading exporter of wheat prior to World War I, I believe) are a few noteworthy pieces of evidence that question the author's broad characterization of a purported Russian communal mindset (and its lingering impact to this day), all before the onslaught of Lenin and Co. If this is the line of thinking the author wishes to pursue, then the road he should travel should include what Soviet socialism did to the Russian people—an omission in his comments that is so glaring as to be unnerving.

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### From Charley Warner, Odessa, Ukraine

Dan Beck openly admits, "I have never been to Russia." To study culture is one thing. But to live in it is another. The sources that Chapman used are of impeccable quality and depth. His analysis wasn't just "one view." It's the predominate and accurate view of both academics and those who actually have experience living in Russian culture long term, both Christian and not. To suggest that having missed the Renaissance and Reformation, there were other, later, developments in Russian history that would lead to more individualist, "democratic" thinking is simply academically untenable. The sociological structure of Russian society in the 1860s, when serfdom was abolished, was completely the opposite of American society during the same period: 90 percent of the Russian population were serfs, while only 10 percent of the U.S. population were slaves. Russia has never overcome the powerful, mainstream

The question is not one of reconciling Western and Russian norms of behavior. Rather, the question is one of reconciling behavior in both cultures to biblical standards.

cultural forces that resulted from such historical development. Westerners hold out the hope that if democratic ideals are planted in Russian soil then eventually something like a Western democracy will develop. It is not going to happen! The Russian economic smoke screen of "market" ideals was blown apart by the August 1998 crisis. Further, the question is not one of reconciling Western and Russian norms of behavior. Rather, the question is one of reconciling behavior in both cultures to biblical standards. *Sobornost* is an important, controlling, major cultural influence. The Soviet cultural legacy was a continuation of prerevolutionary Russian culture with a veneer of socialism. Lenin set up the gulag system based on the tsarist system of camps. Stalin's dictatorship mirrored the tsars' dictatorship, censorship, societal control, etc. In short, Chapman's article is right on and deserves wide usage.

**From Ted Mole, CB International missionary,  
Donetsk Christian University, Donetsk, Ukraine**

I agree with Charley Warner's assessment of Chapman's article. Although I do not have as much experience living here as Charley, perhaps I can observe the following: We cannot characterize Russians or Ukrainians with a broad generalization any more than we should characterize all Americans with a generalization. While I believe and have experienced the truth behind Chapman's article, I would be cautious about using his conclusions across the board. Why don't we try to personally get to know individual Russians and Ukrainians and see for ourselves that they are each unique. While Chapman's article is historically and culturally accurate, put it aside and get to know the real person rather than categorize them. I can only love the person and not the stereotype. ♦

## Western Ministry in the East: Sorting Out Praise and Condemnation

Paul Negrut

After the collapse of Communism East European churches possessed a living faith purified through fire, but with few resources and significantly weakened leadership. Alternatively, Western churches which had not undergone the fire of persecution did have resources for mission and individual initiative. Consequently, thousands of Western missionaries entered Eastern Europe in the past decade. It became commonplace in the West to affirm that "Eastern Europe is a mission field.... The opportunities are now to reach Eastern Europe for Christ."<sup>1</sup>

East European Christians have responded with a range of opinions from unselective acceptance to unselective rejection of foreign missionaries. Thus, Vasili Karcha, a Russian Baptist, launched this appeal:

To all missions and churches in Norway, Sweden, Finland, USA, Great Britain, Germany, and Canada. Murmansk Christian Mission "Good Samaritan" asks for help and support in Jesus' name. We need videocassette players, films in the Russian language, books, and more. People in Russia are very open to the Gospel now. We need to develop our Christian work and fulfill the proclamation of God's Word.<sup>2</sup>

Alternatively, when asked by a Western Christian, "How can the church in the West help you?" another East European pastor replied: "First, pray; second, pray; third, pray; and please stay away!"<sup>3</sup> Western missionaries express equally contradictory views regarding the best way to help Eastern Europe. Thus, some advertise a sort of Christian tourism ("Come meet real Christians!"),<sup>4</sup> while others warn that Western Christians have ignored many key principles of missionary involvement.<sup>5</sup> Joseph Tson affirms that

there can be a fruitful cooperation between East and West if the West fulfills its promises in East European countries:

There is a rush from hundreds of organizations in the West to do mission. Some of them do good; some of them not so good; some of them do bad things. It would be much better if someone who is serious and really means to help would say, "We see that you don't have children's ministry. We have a project for you. Here is exactly what we can do for you. Here is how much money we are prepared to spend on helping you develop this children's ministry." If you don't have such a project and you are not ready to spend money, don't go there to deceive people into believing that you are there because you want to help.

It appears that "projects" are the marks of missiological correctness, whether or not these "projects" are relevant for Eastern Europe. What is missing on both sides is a theology of the church and mission that overcomes the legacy of Western individualism and East European collectivism. ♦

### Notes

1. Ron Davies, *After Gorbachev? How Can Western Christians Help?* (Eastborne, East Sussex: Missions Advanced Research and Communications, 1991), 17.
2. The request appeared in *Frontier* (September–October 1990), 3.
3. Tom Lewis, "Help or Hinderance: The Western Church in Eastern Europe," *Facts* 32 (1990), 5.
4. Brian Jose et al., *Current and Future Trends in Central and Eastern Europe* (Leedsdorf-Baden, Austria: EEMR, 1990), 14.
5. Davies, *After Gorbachev?*, 25.
6. Joseph Tson, "Toward Reformation in Romania," *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 1 (Spring 1993), 1–2.

What is missing is a theology of the church and mission that overcomes the legacy of Western individualism and East European collectivism.

Paul Negrut is president of Emanuel Bible Institute, Oradea, Romania.

# Orthodox Charges of Protestant Proselytism...and a Response

Dear Editor,

With all due respect, I would like to ask you to remove my name from your e-mail list. As a Western convert to Eastern Orthodoxy who has experienced the fullness of the historic Christian faith, I don't believe Western Christianity has much to offer the East other than money.

I pray that the people of Russia will return to the Christian faith which was inextricably woven into the very fabric of their society and culture centuries before the appearance of Western Christianity. I do not mean to be offensive and I am not accusing you of this attitude, but I am appalled at the arrogance of some Western Christians who view the former Soviet Union as a heathen land waiting to be evangelized. This is an insult to over a thousand years of Orthodox Christian influence, not to mention the dedicated Orthodox Christians who suffered mightily under the Communist yoke.

Regards,  
Bob Yannes

**The Protestant and Papal invasion does nothing but promote the confusion that is the mark of Satan's activities everywhere.**

Dear Editor,

I am a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church. I have to say that I find your e-mail to me attempting to sell subscriptions to a magazine which encourages Western Protestants to invade Russia and steal people from the Orthodox Church to be highly offensive. I strongly suggest that you and your Protestant friends attend to your own salvation, which is a somewhat moot point, rather than continue

with your offensive activities in stealing people from the Orthodox Church. We do not recognize you as members of the Church founded by Christ, so please leave Russia alone and please do not send me any more of your offensive e-mail.

I pray that religious invaders will be frustrated at every turn and that the Church of Russia will be relieved from this evil. The Protestant and Papal invasion does nothing but promote the confusion that is the mark of Satan's activities everywhere. Where he failed to destroy Christ's Church by the Communists, he will try using Protestants and Roman Catholics. May I suggest that those Protestants and Roman Catholics who imagine themselves to be doing a good work with their invasion of Russia judge themselves now lest they be judged hereafter with Communists and others who oppose Christ's Church.

Hieromonk Michael Mansbridge-Wood,  
St. Petroc Monastery,  
Russian Orthodox Church Abroad,  
South Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

Editor's Response

*It is the editor's impression that most Western Protestant ministries working in the former Soviet Union focus on the unchurched and nominal believers, not practicing Orthodox. I personally believe that should be the focus. It is the best use of resources and one would hope that it would reduce Orthodox-Evangelical tensions. (See full texts of relevant EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT articles, such as "Are Evangelicals Interlopers?," Vol. 1 (Summer 1993): 3-4, available from the Institute for East-West Christian Studies website: <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/iewcs>.) However, Orthodox very often support a territorial understanding of faith. Thus, if Russia historically was Orthodox, this territory, some claim, should be off limits to Protestants and Catholics, regardless of the secularization of the vast majority of the Soviet population. (See EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT 5 (Summer 1997), 5-6.)*

*It is especially puzzling to receive letters from Orthodox in the West who, in their championing of the "traditional" Orthodox faith of Russia, are willing to sacrifice freedom of religion in the process. If the same standard applied in the West, there would be no possibility for "nontraditional" Orthodox to worship or witness either in Australia or in North America outside Alaska. Unfortunately, some Western Orthodox who are beneficiaries of religious freedom would deny it to non-Orthodox in Russia and Eastern Europe. Father Michael deplores "stealing people from the Orthodox Church," while the website of his monastery ([www.rocor.org.au/stpetrocomonastery](http://www.rocor.org.au/stpetrocomonastery)) states that its "primary task is to attract Anglo-Saxon-Celtic people to Orthodoxy." Where is the consistency? ♦*

**Some Western Orthodox who are beneficiaries of religious freedom would deny it to non-Orthodox in Russia and Eastern Europe.**

## Local Church Response to "Cults and New Religious Movements"

The EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT received a letter from Mr. Daniel Towle following publication of Paul Carden's article, "Cults and New Religious Movements," Vol. 6 (Summer 1998), 1-5, stating that the Local Church movement should not have been included in the article. The effect, Mr. Towle wrote, was "guilt by association." His letter in defense of the Local Church affirmed unequivocally that the movement is not a cult and that it is, in fact, evangelical.

Mr. Carden, a respected authority on new religious movements, along with many other evangelicals, believes that the Local Church movement is "aberrant theologically." Other evangelicals would not make such an assertion. Litigation brought by the Local Church movement has led some organizations to retract assertions that the movement is a cult. For additional information on the Witness Lee movement see *Nezavisimaja gazeta*, 5 September 1996, available in English and Russian at the News About Religion in Russia website: <http://seer.stetson.edu/~psteves/relnews/9609.html#04>. See also the following Local Church websites: <http://www.lsm.org> and <http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~jkh8x/soc257/nrms/loca.html>. ♦

## RESOURCES

**Bible. Russia. Moscow** (Moscow: Center for International Education, Moscow State University, 1998) by Tatiana Vladimirova, is a textbook specially designed to improve usage of fundamental Russian language while developing vocabulary which enables learners to express their faith. This textbook teaches biblical and church language while at the same time acquainting the learner with church-related aspects of Russian history and culture. The author, on the faculty of Moscow State's Center for International Education, developed this unique text after several years of teaching foreign missionaries. To order, contact Vera Stepanenko, Center for International Education, ul. Krzhizhanovsogo, d. 1, 24/35, 117259 Moscow, Russia; tel: 7-095-125-3261 (Russian) or 7-095-124-8488 (English); fax: 7-095-125-4461; e-mail: adm@cie.msu.ru. Price: Ruble equivalent of \$10.

Reviewed by Beverly Nickles.



The Albanian Evangelical Mission (AEM), formerly known as Albanian Evangelical Trust, is the only Western Christian organization ministering solely to Albanians. AEM has prepared a 77-page booklet detailing its history, beginning with its first work with Albanians in Montenegro and Kosovo, up to its current outreach in Albania itself: *Mission Albania: Ten Years of Vital Christian Work for the Albanian People* (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 1996, £3.99). Contact information: Albanian Evangelical Mission, 29 Bridge St., Penybryn, Wrexham LL13 7 HP, UK; and Christian Focus Publications, Geanies House, Fearn, Tain, Ross-shire, IV20 1TW, UK; tel: 44-01862-871011; fax: 44-0-1862-871699; e-mail: cfp@geanies.org.uk; website: [http://www.geanies.org.uk/cfp/bookfile/general/mission\\_albania.htm](http://www.geanies.org.uk/cfp/bookfile/general/mission_albania.htm).

For additional material on Albania, see *Albania in Pictures: Visual Geography Series* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1995, \$19.93), which includes an excellent, succinct history of Albania; Reona Peterson, *Tomorrow You Die* (London: Lakeland, 1976, \$12.99), a moving account of two courageous Youth With A Mission sojourners in communist Albania; a website with Albania links (<http://traveldocs.com/al/>); and *Albanian Insight*, a very informative mission newsletter available in print (\$20 donation/year) or via e-mail from Ancient World Outlook-Insight, Box 118, GR-57019 Nei Epivate Thessaloniki, Greece; tel/fax: 30-392-27148; fax: 30-392-26682; e-mail: awoint@one.gr.

Reviewed by Jennifer Farmer and Mark Elliott.



### A Five-Star Website on Missionary Care

"Mental Health and Missionary Care," part of the Asbury College Psychology Department website ([www.asbury.edu/academ/psych/mis\\_care/](http://www.asbury.edu/academ/psych/mis_care/)), should prove greatly beneficial to every missionary and mission executive with Internet access. The site includes 10 brochures on such subjects as missionary relationships, burnout, and personal conflict, and a database containing information on over 400 articles and books on missionary care, which can be used to produce customized lists of publications or annotated bibliographies on more than 100 topics. This impressive array of helps for the missionary community is the work of Dr. Ronald Koteskey, professor of psychology at Asbury College, Wilmore, KY. Dr. Koteskey, who also serves as a mental health consultant for New Hope International Ministries, is the author of *Psychology From a Christian Perspective*; *General Psychology for Christian*

*Counselors*; *Understanding Adolescence*; and *The Love Triangle: Sex, Love, and Dating*.

Dr. Koteskey's downloadable brochure, "What Missionaries Ought to Know About Books for Missionary Care," underscores the practical value of this website. The author includes only titles that are reasonably priced and in print, with full bibliographic data to ease the ordering process. Dr. Koteskey updates his recommendations annually so that "in print" means "in print" and price information is no more than one year old; he provides helpful annotations for each title; and he groups books under subtopics: "General Missionary Care," "Care of MKs," "Problems from the Past," "Relationships with Others," and "Personal Issues." The author welcomes suggestions for additional brochure topics. Contact: Dr. Ronald Koteskey, Asbury College, Wilmore, KY 40390; tel: 606-858-3511; fax: 606-858-3921; e-mail: [ronald.koteskey@asbury.edu](mailto:ronald.koteskey@asbury.edu).



### Budapest Journalists Launch Christian News Agency

Barbara Kertai

Two Budapest-based Christian journalists have launched NewsLife, the first Internet-based Christian news agency in East Central Europe (<http://www.nexus.hu/newslife>). Tamas S. Kiss, a reporter with Hungary's English language *Budapest Sun*, and Stefan J. Bos, a correspondent with Voice of America and other networks, see NewsLife as an "answer to a vacuum in the news market." Updated weekly, this English-language news service provides information about the church in East Central Europe, as well as current general news from a Christian perspective. "We have discovered," Bos notes, "that most news agencies show little interest in Christian issues, although these play a crucial role in the societies of rapidly changing former East Bloc nations." Kiss stresses that NewsLife will become a "voice for Christians in Russia and all other former Communist nations," with a correspondent network throughout the region. NewsLife will cover economics, politics, and sports, in addition to Christian news. "We would like to be more actively involved in the news gathering process with our own investigative, research unit," he noted. "News agencies have become a mouthpiece for government policies. We would like to change that."

NewsLife may be contacted at tel/fax 36-1-200-12-44; e-mail: [bosnews@compuserve.com](mailto:bosnews@compuserve.com) (Stefan Bos); or tel/fax 36-1-303-27-16; e-mail: [tomkiss@bpsun.hu](mailto:tomkiss@bpsun.hu) (Tamas Kiss).

## PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

The International Project Advisory Board (IPAB), Menlo Park, CA, a nonprofit corporation serving the international Christian community, provides travel coordination to individuals and groups associated with charitable organizations. IPAB offers net prices through consolidation arrangements with international airlines. For more information, consult its website, <http://www.pccsf.com/travel/travelintro.html>, or contact:

Max Rondoni  
International Project Advisory Board  
Box 7248  
Menlo Park, CA 94026-7248  
Tel: 415-854-2770  
Fax: 415-854-2075  
E-mail: [rondoni@pacbell.net](mailto:rondoni@pacbell.net)

# NEWS NOTES

## Kidnappings in the Caucasus

After coaching a basketball practice on 11 December 1998, American TEAM missionary Herbert Gregg was walking home in Makachkala, the capital of Dagestan, a Russian province in the north Caucasus. Four men posing as police abducted the 51-year-old teacher off the street and presumably spirited him off to neighboring Chechnya to be held for ransom. Gregg's kidnapping occurred just two days after the heads of four abducted British and New Zealand telecommunications workers were discovered at the side of a road in Chechnya (*Moscow Times*, 9 December 1998).

The 1994-96 war between Russia and its breakaway province of Chechnya effectively ended Moscow's control over this predominantly Muslim region of the north Caucasus. But while Chechnya is largely free of Russian rule, it now has fallen prey to near anarchy. A kidnapers' reign of terror is driving off foreign investment and international relief aid and even threatens to topple the government of President Aslan Maskhadov.

According to the Russian government, armed bands abducted over 200 people in Chechnya and the neighboring provinces of Dagestan, Ingushetia, and North Ossetia in 1998 alone (*BBC News Online*, 30 December 1998). Between 150 and 550 persons were being held for ransom as of late 1998 (*Compass Direct*, 28 October 1998; and *Reuters*, 13 November 1998). By various estimates, victims include up to 400 Russian soldiers, seven Dagestan police, and 100 or more expatriate businessmen, relief workers, and missionaries (*Compass Direct*, 28 October 1998).

Eleven Christian workers are known to have been taken prisoner in 1997-98 in Chechnya and neighboring Dagestan and Ingushetia. (See chart.) Besides TEAM missionary Herbert Gregg, two others remain in captivity: Rev. Alexander Sitnikov of the Grozny Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church (ECB) and Father Issihy of the Grozny Russian Orthodox Church, both abducted on 9-10 October 1998.

Members of Rev. Sitnikov's ECB congregation have been subjected to telephone threats, extortion demands, and beatings. Chechnya's general lawlessness and the kidnapping of Rev. Sitnikov prompted the leadership of the Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church in Moscow in 21-23 October meetings to recommend the departure of the congregation from Grozny and its resettlement in Russia (*Radiotserkov*, 7 November 1998). As of January 1999 no evacuation of

the ECB congregation had taken place. A. D. Samoshkin, an ECB church worker in Vladikavkaz, is circulating a list of 58 Grozny church members who want to leave Chechnya for resettlement in Russia. An accompanying report by Samoshkin dated 12 January 1999 notes:

The situation in Chechnya is very complicated due to lawlessness, robbery, murder, theft, and violence. No one knows when this suffering will end. I have proposed to the leadership of our [ECB] Union and to some Christian brothers from abroad that we organize the evacuation of all the [Evangelical Christian-Baptist] Christians from the church in Grozny. So far we have had no results. (Samoshkin report in editor's possession.)



**Civil charges filed against the Moscow Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses** on 6 August 1998 claimed that the group's adherents, active in Russia for more than 100 years, "destroy families, foster hatred, and drive their members to insanity and suicide." This lawsuit is the first court attempt to disband a religious group under terms of Russia's 1997 law on religion. The trial, begun in September but postponed several times, resumed on 9 February 1999. Prosecutors have secured testimony from a specialist at the Serbski Center for Social and Forensic Psychiatry, infamous for its incarceration and abuse of dissidents in Soviet times. Ludmila Alekseeva, president of the Moscow Helsinki Group, fears the impact this trial may have on other minority groups: "What happens today with Jehovah's Witnesses should be at the center of attention of all human rights organizations, since the precedent created by the case will have serious consequences for all religious minorities." Diederik Lohman, director of the Moscow office of Human Rights Watch, sees the Jehovah's Witnesses trial as "a major test case" because, if prosecutors win, "they can easily use it as a precedent to close down groups throughout Russia."

Detailed information on the case is available in English and Russian at <http://www.jw-russia.org>. See also Maura Reynolds, "Jehovah's Witnesses Under Fire in Russia," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 February 1999; and Anna Astakhova, "If You Don't Like It, You're No Patriot!," *Segodnia*, 23 November 1998, available in English at <http://www.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/9811b.html#18>; and in Russian at <http://www.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/jehovah231198.html>.



**Galina Starovoitova, 52, Duma member and strong defender of human rights, was murdered** by automatic weapon fire outside the entrance to her St. Petersburg home around midnight, 20-21 November 1998. Her aide, journalist Ruslan Linkov, was wounded. Thousands of mourners

(continued on page 14)

## Christian Workers Kidnapped in the Caucasus

Name	Citizenship	Organization	Date and Location of Abduction	Released	Source
Camilla Carr Jon James	British	Center for Peacemaking and Community Development (Quaker)	July 1997 - Grozny	20 Sept. 1998	Associated Press, 22 Sept. 1998
Dmitry Penkovsky	Russian	International Orthodox Christian Charities	20 Sept. 1997 - Ingushetia	24 March 1998 11 Aug. 1998	International Orthodox Christian Charities <i>News and Needs Online</i> 1 (Spring 1998), 1; <i>Blagovest Info</i> , 17 Aug. 1998
Dmitry Petrov					
Gabor Dunajski Istvan Olah	Hungarian	Hungarian Church Aid	23 Sept. 1997 - Grozny	25 July 1998	<i>East-West Church &amp; Ministry Report</i> 6 (Summer 1998), 11; <i>Religion Today</i> , 29 July 1998
Daniel and Pauline Brolin	Swedish	Youth With A Mission	8 Jan. 1998 - Makachkala, Dagestan	23 June 1998	<i>Compass Direct</i> , 20 March 1998
Alexander Sitnikov	Russian	Evangelical Christian-Baptist	9 Oct. 1998 - Grozny		<i>Compass Direct</i> , 28 Oct. and 20 Nov. 1998
Fr. Issihy	Russian	Russian Orthodox	10 Oct. 1998 - Grozny		<i>Compass Direct</i> , 28 Oct. and 20 Nov. 1998
Herbert Gregg	United States	The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM)	11 Dec. 1998 - Makachkala, Dagestan		TEAM press release, 15 Nov. 1998

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**19-20 March 1999**

## **Modern Russian Religious Spirituality**

Ann Arbor, MI  
Contact: Center for Russian and East European Studies  
University of Michigan  
1080 South University Ave., Suite 4668  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1106  
Tel: 734-764-0351  
Fax: 734-763-4765  
E-mail: crees@umich.edu  
Website: <http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/crees/>

**24-27 March 1999**

## **Christian Teacher '99**

St. Petersburg, Russia  
Date: 24-27 March 1999  
Sponsor: Association of Christian Schools International  
Contact: Raymond LeClair, Regional Director ACSI  
CIS/Baltics  
Box 22  
252162 Kyiv, Ukraine  
Tel/fax: 380-44-474-5354  
E-mail: cep@acsi.ukrpack.net

**25-27 March 1999**

## **Dynamics of Movement**

Budapest, Hungary  
Sponsor: Alliance for Saturation Church Planting  
Contact: Julia Toth  
Budaföki út 34/B  
H-1111 Budapest, Hungary  
Tel: 36-1-466-5978  
Fax: 36-1-365-6406  
E-mail: 100263.426@compuserve.com or SCPAlliance@compuserve.com

**5 April - 25 June 1999**

## **Principles in Child & Youth Ministries**

Budapest, Hungary  
Contact: Youth With A Mission  
Att. PCYM  
Pf. 766  
1437 Budapest, Hungary  
Tel/Fax: 36-1-334-1843  
E-mail: 106310.457@compuserve.com  
Note: 3-month training program for children's and youth workers. In English and Russian.

**17-18 April 1999**

## **Academy of Christian Thought: Christianity and Politics**

Warsaw, Poland  
Contact: Chrzescijanskie Stowarzyszenie Akademickie ul. Wojewodzka 29/8, Skr. Pocz. 412  
40-594 Katowice, Poland  
Tel: 48-32-251-88-92  
Fax: 48-32-2561-96-00  
E-mail: biuro@chsa.pik-net.pl  
Website: <http://www.chsa.pik-net.pl/>

**18-20 April 1999**

## **European Prayer Link Consultation**

Prague, Czech Republic  
Sponsor: European Prayer Link  
Contact: Pieter Bos  
Serving The Nations  
C. Parkerstraat 50  
1311PJ Almere, Netherlands  
Tel/fax: 31-36-546-9661  
E-mail: phb\_serving@compuserve.com  
Website: <http://www.hfe.org/epl/epl.htm>

**20-23 April 1999**

## **Prague '99 Reconciliation Conference**

Prague, Czech Republic  
Sponsors: European Prayer Link, Spiritual Warfare Network, International Reconciliation Coalition  
Contact: Pieter Bos  
Serving The Nations (see above)  
or: Chris Seaton  
Peace Works  
61 Annandale Avenue  
Bognor Regis PO21 2ET, England  
Tel: 44-1243-866085  
E-mail: foxontherox@compuserve.com

**27 April 1999**

## **Roundtable Discussion on Part-Time Theological Education**

Odessa, Ukraine  
Contact: Sergei Sannikov, Executive Director  
Euro-Asian Accrediting Association  
Box 8  
270008 Odessa-08, Ukraine  
Tel: 38-0482-33-70-12  
Fax: 38-0482-32-34-59  
E-mail: eaaa@te.net.ua

**24-26 May 1999**

## **Higher Education in 21st Century Russian Culture: A Christian Perspective**

St. Petersburg, Russia  
Sponsor: International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE)  
Contact: Dr. Natalia Pecherskaya  
St. Petersburg School of Religion and Philosophy  
Universitetskaya nab. 5  
199034 St. Petersburg, Russia  
Tel: 7-812-234-24-39  
Fax: 7-812-314-59-64  
E-mail: srph\_pech@infopro.spb.su

**3-5 June 1999**

## **New Europe Forum**

Brussels, Belgium  
Sponsor: Hope for Europe  
Culture, Values & Politics Track  
Contact: Kees Voogd  
Heidebeek

### **News Notes (con't from page 13)**

paid their respects at a 24 November 1998 funeral in the ornate Marble Hall of St. Petersburg's Museum of Ethnography. Among bouquets left at the grave in the Alexander Nevsky Monastery was one that read: "From Ruslan. Galina, forgive me that I didn't protect you." Starovoitova was one of the few Duma deputies to oppose the 1997 Russian law on religion. Her pro-democracy views earned her many enemies, especially among Communists and nationalists. Her assassination is widely regarded to have been politically motivated. Father Viktor Klinkukhov of the Church of the Archangel Michael in Tropariyov, Moscow, secretly baptized Starovoitova on Orthodox Christmas Day, 7 January 1996. Unlike many other public figures she did not try to gain political advantage by public association with Orthodoxy.

For more information see: Lawrence A. Uzzell, "Defender of Religious Freedom Slain in St. Petersburg," *Keston News Service (KNS)*, 21 November 1998; Xenia Dennen, "How Galina Starovoitova Quietly Became an Orthodox Christian," *KNS*, 15 December 1998; and Celestine Bohlen, "Russian Deputy Is Given a Funeral Marred by Dread," *New York Times*, 25 November 1998, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/library/world/europe/112598russia-funeral.html>.

On 22 December 1998 an unknown assailant shot and killed Protestant layman Vadim Privezentsev outside his Moscow apartment. An employee of Otis Elevator Company of England, he previously worked for several years as manager of St. Petersburg Christian Publishing. Privezentsev became a Christian through the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ at Leningrad State University and was nurtured in his faith through St. Petersburg's Salvation Army Corp, established in 1991. (Source: William T. Greig II, Chairman, Gospel Light, Ventura, CA.)

**Lawrence A. Uzzell**, *Keston News Service* Moscow correspondent, has been named **director of Keston Institute**, Oxford, England, effective March 1999. Keston Institute, founded by Canon Michael Bourdeaux, for decades has been a leading champion of religious rights in Communist and post-Communist states. Uzzell, a graduate of Yale University, is a convert to Eastern Orthodoxy from the Episcopal Church. At the same time, he has been an ardent defender of the rights of non-Orthodox believers in the former Soviet Union. (Source: *KNS*, 4 August 1998.)

8181 PK Heerde,  
Netherlands  
Tel: 31-5786-96975  
Fax: 31-5786-96978  
E-mail: 100550.1157@  
compuserve.com



**14 June – 6 August 1999**  
**Russian Language Institute**  
Columbia International  
University, Columbia, SC  
Contact: Dr. Marc Canner,  
Director  
Russian Language Ministries  
Box 213026  
Columbia, SC 29221-3026  
Tel: 803-333-9119  
Fax: 803-333-9117  
E-mail: rlmoffice@  
russianlanguage.org  
Website: <http://www.russianlanguage.org>



**15–16 July 1999**  
**Alexander Men Conference**  
Drew University, Madison, NJ  
Contact: Bishop Seraphim  
Sigris  
206 Sarles Lane  
Pleasantville, NY 10570  
Tel: 914-747-8552  
Fax: 914-773-3508  
E-mail: sigrist@pace.edu  
or sigrist@yahoo.com



**21–25 July 1999**  
**Rock for Life Music Festival**  
Baja, Hungary  
Contact: Randall Morgan  
Youth With A Mission  
PF-766  
1437 Budapest, Hungary  
Tel/fax: 36-1-252-3915  
E-mail: rockforlife@  
compuserve.com



**23–24 August 1999**  
**Alliance for Saturation  
Church Planting Seminar**  
Union Mills, NC  
Contact: Betty Sadler  
Center for Intercultural  
Training  
Box 250  
Union Mills, NC 28167  
Tel: 800-877-1786  
E-mail: bettysadler@  
compuserve.com



**9–11 September 1999**  
**Area Field Leaders (AFL)  
Consultation**  
Budapest, Hungary  
Sponsor: Alliance for  
Saturation Church Planting  
Contact: Julia Toth  
Budafoki út 34/B  
H-1111 Budapest, Hungary  
Tel: 36-1-466-5978  
Fax: 36-1-365-6406  
E-mail: 100263.426@  
compuserve.com  
or SCPAlliance@  
compuserve.com



**15–19 September 1999**  
**Evangelism and Leadership  
Conference**  
Balle Herculane, Romania  
Contact: Dr. Peter Regez  
Janz Team  
Im Käppele 8  
D-79400 Kandern, Germany  
Tel: 49-7626-91-60-70  
Fax: 49-7626-91-60-99  
E-mail: pregez@stepnet.ed  
Website: <http://www.janzteam.com>



**21–26 September 1999**  
**The Bible in the Spiritual  
Life, History, and Culture  
of Russia and the Slavic  
Orthodox World**  
Moscow, Russia  
Contact: Vera Klevtsova,  
Registrar  
St Andrew's Biblical  
Theological College  
ul. Sportivnaya 6-11  
Dzerzhinsky, Moscow  
Region  
140056 Russia  
Tel: 7-095-135-8292  
Fax: 7-095-551-3462  
E-mail: standrews@  
standrews.ru  
Website: <http://www.standrews.ru>



**4–7 October 1999**  
**Coalition of Evangelization  
of Central/Eastern Europe  
Consultation**  
Szepalma, Hungary  
Contact: Drew Parsons  
Baross u. 77. Pf. 296  
2040 Budaors, Hungary  
Tel: 36-23-414-347  
Fax: 36-23-414-318  
E-mail: DrewParsons@  
compuserve.com



**3–7 November 1999**  
**WEF Commission on  
Women's Concerns  
Consultation**  
Prague, Czech Republic  
Contact: Susanne Bart  
European Evangelical  
Alliance  
Wilh. Allee 258  
34131 Kassel, Germany  
Tel: 49-561-314-97-11  
Fax: 49-561-938-75-20  
E-mail: 100341.550@  
compuserve.com



**4–6 November 1999**  
**Conference on Eschatology  
featuring Dr. Jan Lochman**  
Prague, Czech Republic  
Contact: Dr. Karel Taschner,  
President  
Evangelikální teologický  
seminár  
(Evangelical Theological  
Seminary)  
Soukenická 15  
11000 Praha 1, Czech  
Republic  
E-mail: etspraha@login.cz



**14 November 1999**  
**Day of Prayer for the  
Persecuted Church**  
Contact: Steve Haas, President  
Prayer for the Persecuted  
Church  
2025 S. Arlington Heights  
Rd., #113  
Arlington Heights, IL 60005  
Tel: 888-538-7772 or  
847-718-0560  
Fax: 847-718-0564  
E-mail: idop@xc.org  
Web site: <http://www.persecutedchurch.org> or  
<http://www.worldevangelical.org/dayprayer.htm>



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



**1–4 December 1999**  
**Hope for Europe Round  
Table**  
Prague, Czech Republic  
Contact: Susanne Bart  
European Evangelical  
Alliance  
Wilh. Allee 258  
34131 Kassel, Germany  
Tel: 49-561-314-97-11  
Fax: 49-561-938-75-20  
E-mail: 100341.550@  
compuserve.com



**12–13 December 1999**  
**St. Andrew's Biblical  
Theological College  
Annual Conference**  
Moscow, Russia  
Contact: Vera Klevtsova,  
Registrar  
St. Andrew's Biblical  
Theological College  
ul. Sportivnaya 6-11  
140056 Dzerzhinsky,  
Moscow Region, Russia  
Tel: 7-095-135-8292  
Fax: 7-095-551-3462  
E-mail: standrews@  
standrews.ru  
Website: <http://www.standrews.ru>



**7–11 June 2000**  
**Hope for the Balkans  
Conference**  
Greece  
Sponsor: European Evangelical  
Alliance  
Contact: Rev. Nikolay  
Nedelchev, Executive Director  
Bulgarian Evangelical Alliance  
Box 13  
1330 Sofia, Bulgaria  
Tel/fax: 359-2801-555  
E-mail: be.alliance@  
mbox.cit.bg

# Religious Freedom After Communism: Will the Suppressed Become the Suppressor?

Henry R. Huttenbach

The region has evolved from one of suppression of religions (suppression of churches) to religious oppression (oppression by churches).

The demise of Communist rule opened the way for the revival of religious life. But, as with the struggle between majority and minority ethnic populations, so did there emerge among religious leaders a bitter battle between the principles of religious uniformity and pluralism. Not surprisingly, those representing dominant faiths tended to harbor little tolerance for minority faiths.

It has long been falsely argued that religion *per se* embodies the principle of tolerance. There is, of course, little evidence for this. The rapid revival of the Russian Orthodox Church in particular, and Orthodoxy in general in Eastern Europe, has demonstrated a high degree of intolerance and insensitivity toward "sister" religions. Indeed, why should one expect anything else from organizations that rest their teachings on the absolute rectitude of their truths, on inflexible dogmas, and immutable doctrines? These are recipes for intolerance and, if given the power, opportunities for suppression. In virtually all the ex-communist countries there is ferocious lobbying by clerics for monopoly status or, at least, primacy on the basis of tradition.

To wrestle on behalf of religious tolerance in the cultures of Eastern Europe, where ethnicity and religious affiliations are almost synonymous, is to struggle upstream. Biased cultural habits and traditions are not easily tamed. Doctrinal and historic rivalries over jurisdictions, property, and land will be exacerbated as ethnic wars (hot and cold) are fought in the same areas. Contested land becomes "sacred" land, disputes become "crusades," and language and education become the "holy" words and teachings of the faithful.

As specific religious disputes mount from Kosovo to Tajikistan, so will ethnic ones intensify and vice versa. Ukraine is a case in point, where at least three overlapping Orthodox jurisdictions and loyalties are at loggerheads. All three tend to fuel regionalist identities at the expense of Ukrainian integration. From week to week, these rivalries have done little toward furthering a dialogue of tolerance. On the contrary.

And if intrafaith controversies cause intractable divisiveness, then interfaith ones are no less destructive, fomenting climates of mutual fear and recrimination. In Russia the established Orthodox Church is, for example, actively against Baptists, foreign minorities, [and] missionaries. In the Balkans, efforts at religio-inspired ethnic cleansing have taken place in every country and region, the local clergy rarely exercising moderating influences. In Poland, the Catholic hierarchy has done next to nothing to discourage outbursts of anti-Semitism. Muslim minorities throughout the Balkans face uncertain futures. In turn, Christian minorities in Caucasia (outside of Armenia and Georgia) experience increasing episodes of intolerance from Muslim majorities. To be sure, anti-Russian ethnic sentiments compound these incidents. Nevertheless, one does not hear many voices of restraint coming from the mullahs.

In all, there is a growing atmosphere of religious intolerance in postcommunist Europe coming on the heels of Communist-inspired anti-religious persecution. It would indeed be a bitter irony—though by no means a surprising development—if the region has evolved from one of suppression of religions (suppression of churches) to religious oppression (oppression by churches). ♦

Excerpt reprinted with permission from *Analysis of Current Events* 7 (June 1996): 2-3.

Henry R. Huttenbach is professor of history at City College of New York and editor of *Analysis of Current Events*, published by the Association for the Study of Nationalities.

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