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Father Aleksandr Men: In Dialogue With Society

Janet Wehrle

Aleksandr Vladimirovich Men was an influential Russian Orthodox priest who was murdered on 9 September 1990, while walking from his home in a small village outside Moscow. He was struck on the back of the head with an ax. Those who consider Fr. Aleksandr a modern martyr find it troubling that, to date, authorities have been unable to apprehend the person or persons responsible.

During his life, Fr. Aleksandr had a broad sphere of activity that placed him in many different roles: a priest who officiated the liturgy and administered the sacraments to his parishioners; a spiritual father and guide to scores of people with whom he had a relationship; a lecturer who was invited to speak about Christianity to over 200 audiences during the last two years of his life; and an author who produced numerous books and articles on the history of religion, the Bible, and the Orthodox faith. Because of his activity, Men became well known and, just as with any prominent figure, was both criticized and praised. Although he was never arrested like many Soviet era clergy, he was regularly the object of KGB surveillance and interrogation. Persecution also came from within the Church, mostly from people who refused to consider Men, an ethnic Jew, a true Orthodox Christian. However, by the end of his life he had become very popular among large groups of both local provincials and Moscow intellectuals. Many of his followers likened him to the apostle Paul, someone who was "all things to all men."

Reviled and Revered

Since his death, Aleksandr Men has continued to be a controversial figure. The West is only beginning to hear about him, as some of his books are being translated into English, but in Russia he is more widely debated and discussed. His opponents write articles attacking him for his Jewish heritage and accusing him of various heresies that they believe his books promote. However, much of the focus on Aleksandr Men has been positive. His books are being published freely in Russia (during his life they were secretly printed abroad), organizations are carrying out charitable projects in his name, and churches are promoting his values and teaching. The

Open University, founded by Aleksandr Men, continues to offer a range of theological and other courses that center on religious culture. Some large churches in Moscow, such as the parish of Sts. Kosmos and Damian led by Fr. Aleksandr Borisov, minister with Men's zeal for biblically based traditional Orthodoxy and are ecumenically minded. Hosanna Community, an essentially lay group that grew out of the house churches Fr. Men created, undertakes a variety of works, including a Youth Missionary School and summer camps. It is important for Western Christians working in Russia to know something about Fr. Aleksandr Men because he is such a prominent figure in Russian Christianity. Most Russians, including non-believers, have heard of him and are familiar with his teaching as a result of seeing him on television or reading his books.

In Dialogue with Society

One of Men's strongest convictions throughout his life was that the Church needs to be in dialogue with society, thus his efforts to reach all groups of people with his ministry. In particular, he had an active relationship with intellectual circles, including people such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Nadezhda Mandelshtam. For most of his career as a priest, Fr. Aleksandr served in the village parish of Novaia Derevnia near Moscow. Like most village churches of the Soviet era, the parish was visited primarily by faithful old women, but when Fr. Aleksandr arrived, new people—intellectuals, youth, visitors from Moscow—began to come. Many people found the trip to Novaia Derevnia too dangerous politically, so Fr. Men often went to Moscow, where the foundation of his ministry was a system of small groups that met weekly in apartments. The groups focused on prayer and mutual help, but each one also had a specific purpose, such as training new believers or Bible study.

Fr. Men's activities as a priest were a reflection of his convictions about the nature of Christianity. He believed that Christian life is founded on a personal meeting with Jesus Christ, who is "God-manhood, the union of the human spirit, which is finite and

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limited in time, with the divine, which is infinite" ("Khrisianstvo," *Russkaia mysl*, no. 3850, 19 October 1990). This meeting with Christ should not be placed in a box, isolated from the rest of a person's life; instead, it should be integrated. Christianity does not require a person to reject culture because every aspect of life is connected with God, and to take anything away from the world, except sin, would impoverish Christianity. Christians should also not reject other denominations because the Church, in reality, is united, and division among Christians is the result of sin. Fr. Men embraced Judaism, as well, and saw his Jewish identity as a gift. He believed that a Jewish Christian did not cease to be a Jew but became more aware of the spiritual calling of his people.

Men believed that all humans, by nature, search for God.

Apologist with Pen in Hand

Besides his pastoral activities, Fr. Men devoted a great deal of time to writing books, which he considered an important aspect of his ministry. He recognized that books written before the 1917 Revolution were not always understandable to modern readers, and foreign books were not always relevant to Russians. His works include the following: *Son of Man*, a narrative biography of Jesus Christ; *In Search of the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, a six-volume series that looks at Christianity as the culmination of the spiritual development of mankind throughout history; *How to Read the Bible*, a commentary on the Old Testament; *Sacrament, Word, and Image*, a book designed to help new Orthodox believers understand the liturgy; an unpublished seven-volume dictionary of biblical studies; and numerous articles.

English Translations

Most of Men's writings are currently available only in the original Russian. However, there are several published English translations that make Men's works accessible to Western readers. For years, *The First Hour* (Patristic Society, 206 Sarles Lane, Pleasantville, NY 10570; E-mail: sigrist@pace.edu) regularly published Men translations and articles about Men. *Christianity for the Twenty-First Century: The Prophetic Writings of Alexander Men*, edited by Elizabeth Roberts and Ann Shukman (New York: Continuum, 1996), is a collection of various interviews, articles, and book excerpts. Many of the selections focus on Men's theories about the spiritual development of mankind, views that were influenced largely by Russian religious philosophers Nikolai Berdiaev and Vladimir Solovev. Men believed that all humans, by nature, search for God, and the religions of the world have been an attempt to find the truth of God. The history of religions in world cultures displays a process—a development of religious thought or a gradual revealing of the divine principle. Christianity is the culmination of the spiritual development of humankind. It is not another attempt

by man to find God; rather, it is God's response to the spiritual searchings of humankind. This response is namely the coming of Jesus Christ, whom Solovev called the "God-Man." This coming of the God-Man is the perfect response to the spiritual searchings of humankind, because the goal of religion is to somehow bind one's human spirit to the divine spirit.

Men said in a lecture that Christianity challenges many philosophical systems, but it is also the answer to the hopes of many of them. Three volumes of Aleksandr Men's works are available in English from Oakwood Publications (SVS Bookstore, 575 Scarsdale Rd., Crestwood, NY 10707-1699; tel.: 800-204-2665; fax : 914-961-5456; E-mail: oakwood@oakwoodpub.com; Web site: <http://www.nettinker.com/oakwood/>). *Awake to Life!* (trans. Marite Sapiets, Oakwood Publications, 1996) is a collection of sermons from the season of Lent and Easter, through Pentecost. Another collection, *About Christ and the Church* (trans. Alexis Vinogradov, Oakwood Publications, 1996), contains a series of conversations that were recorded on cassette as Fr. Aleksandr talked with his spiritual children around tables in their private homes. Because KGB surveillance often made it difficult for Fr. Aleksandr to meet with his parishioners in his office near the church, these home gatherings became his forum for teaching about Christ, the Church, and the Bible.

The third English translation is Aleksandr Men's first book, *Son of Man* (trans. Samuel Brown, Oakwood Publications, 1998), which he began to write when he was still a college student. The book synthesizes the four Gospels to give an account of the life of Jesus Christ. It also adds historical background and cultural information that is not found in the Gospels, such as geography, Jewish customs, and the political structure of the Roman Empire. The book is written in contemporary language and in a narrative style because Men wanted to make it accessible to the modern reader and to help people to see the Gospels in a fresh, new way. The style and language help to put the reader into the context of the Gospels and to feel like an eyewitness. The reader becomes one of the many people who are trying to figure out who the rabbi named Jesus is. Like Jesus' contemporaries, the modern reader has the choice to either accept or reject Him as Messiah.

Oakwood also has published a translation from the French of Yves Hamant's biography, *Alexander Men: A Witness for Contemporary Russia* (trans. Fr. Steven Bigham, Oakwood Publications, 1995). The book is a captivating account of Men's life from his birth to the last years of his ministry, including a chapter on the mystery surrounding his murder. The author provides abundant cultural background that highlights the uniqueness of Fr. Aleksandr's ministry in the years of religious oppression under the Soviet regime.

Without question, it is necessary for those ministering in Russia to be familiar with Aleksandr Men, because he was perhaps the foremost evangelically and ecumenically minded Orthodox reformer. His work will continue to influence the Russian theological and cultural landscape for years

to come. The best place to begin acquainting oneself with Men is Yves Hamant's commendable biography. Of the limited body of biographical material, this book gives the most complete overview of Men's life, ministry, and philosophy. To become acquainted with the actual work of Aleksandr Men, *Son of Man* is a good choice because it is one of his more well-known books among Russian readers. The anthology, *Christianity for the Twenty-First Century*, will give the Western reader a broad survey of Aleksandr Men's ideas and teachings. ♦

Janet Wehrle received her M.A. from Boston College in Russian language and literature after spending two years in Tiumen, Russia, with her husband, David. Her 1998 M.A. thesis, "The Life of Aleksandr Men: Hagiography in the Making," includes an extensive bibliography of Russian-language articles on Fr. Men.

ALEKSANDR MEN: CURRENT CRITICISM AND DEFENSE

On the Theology of Archpriest Aleksandr Men

Karelin, Feliks, Sergei Antiminsov, and Andrei Kuraev. *O bogoslovii protoiereia Aleksandra Menia [On the Theology of Archpriest Aleksandr Men]*. Zhitomir, Russia: Ni-Ka, 1999.

reviewed by Olga Loukmanova

This 104-page booklet includes three essays on different aspects of the theology of Aleksandr Men, a well-known Russian Orthodox priest, historian, and theologian. All three recognize the personal holiness and kindness of Men and the historical significance of his spiritual contribution, but, nevertheless, level severe criticism of his theology and teaching. The authors refuse to call Father Aleksandr an outright heretic. At the same time, they do charge him with serious distortions of the Orthodox faith.

Was Father Men Orthodox?

The first essay by Feliks Karelin questions Men's views on the special calling of the Jewish nation, especially Father Aleksandr's teaching on the "double consciousness" of Jewish Christians. The concluding article, "Aleksandr Men: poteriavshiisia missioner [Aleksandr Men: The Lost Missionary]," written by Deacon Andrei Kuraev, expresses not so much accusation as bewilderment. The author tries to account for what he sees as Men's indiscriminate openness towards parapsychological phenomena, ESP, nontraditional healing, UFOs, and astrology. Kuraev explains Men's position as a result of a sincere missionary passion, a desire to be relevant (which Kuraev argues turned into liberal broad-mindedness) and, ultimately, a tolerant, progressive attitude toward new sciences, discoveries, and ideas. Deacon Kuraev does not call Orthodox believers to stop reading Men's books or to view them as completely useless. Rather, he opposes calling Father Men an Orthodox believer and tries to prove that Men was, in fact, an Eastern-Rite Catholic. He points out ways the Orthodox Church might use Men's works and invites all readers to retain Men's missionary passion while avoiding what he considers Men's mistake—his loss of the distinctiveness of Christianity in his attempt to make its message relevant to modern culture.

Was Father Men a Heretic?

The essay written by Archbishop Sergei Antiminsov is the most critical and emotionally charged of the three. The attacks leveled against Father Aleksandr are weighty, bordering on an accusation of heresy. Men is said to lack academic integrity and is accused of failing to acknowledge the Bible as trustworthy and authoritative. The author argues that Men's works are influenced by Arianism, Manichaeism, Pelagianism, and Nestorianism. According to Antiminsov, Men arbitrarily changed the wording and meaning of Scripture, thus diminishing the divinity of Christ. Men's teaching is said to lack a biblical and moral understanding of human history, and his views on the fall and redemption are said to contain serious theological errors. Moreover, Father Aleksandr reportedly rejected everything miraculous in the Bible, as well as all biblical eschatology (the Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgment). As the way to holiness, Antiminsov charges that Men introduced a "spirit of demonic pride instead of a humble carrying of the cross." In conclusion, Men's theology is called "anti-Christian" and destructive. While the author acknowledges that Men might not have taught these doctrines openly and directly, he feels that Men led his followers to dangerous and heretical conclusions. These accusations are indeed serious, and to evaluate their fairness, one needs to be thoroughly acquainted with Men's works and theology. This reviewer calls readers to prayerfully consider the arguments, to compare these statements with a firsthand reading of Men, and to make their own responsible conclusions.

In Response

Bishop Seraphim Sigrist

The Russian pamphlet, *On the Theology of Archpriest Aleksandr Men*, is one of many representing a genre once overtly produced by the KGB, the methodology of which is, in general, to throw up a lot of dirt, hoping that some will stick. A friend of

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Selected Works by and about Fr. Aleksandr Men

Editor's Note: For a more complete bibliography, see Yakov Krotov's Web site, http://members.xoom.com/_XOOM/krotov/menn/bibl_menn.html. Portions of annotations by Sam Brown used with permission.

Works about Aleksandr Men

- Hamant, Yves. *Alexander Men: A Witness for Contemporary Russia*. Torrance, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1995. The official biography written by a close friend and admirer. Originally in French: *Alexandre Men: un témoin pour la Russie de ce temps*. Paris: Mame, 1993. Russian translation: *Otets Aleksandr Men: Khristov svidetel v nashe vremia*. 2nd edition. Moscow: Rudomino, 1996.
- Lilienfeld, Fairy von. "Erzpriester Aleksandr Men (1935–1990)" in *Kirchen im Kontext unterschiedlicher Kulturen: Auf dem Weg ins dritte Jahrtausend; Alexander Men in Memoriam* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991).
- Maslenikova, Zoia. *Zhizn ottsa Aleksandra Menia*. Moscow: Russlit, 1995. According to Yakov Krotov, "the best biography of Men."
- Talley, Sue. "Alexander Menn." *The First Hour* (1994): 47–48.
- Woiwode, Larry. "The Life and Death of Aleksandr Menn." *New Horizons* 19 (no. 2, 1998), 3–6.

Works by Aleksandr Men

- About Christ and the Church*. Torrance, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1996.
- Aequinox. Sbornik pamiaty o Aleksandra Menia [Aequinox: A Collection in Memory of Fr. Aleksandr Men]*. 2nd edition. Moscow: Carte Blanche, 1991. Includes a full bibliography of Men.
- Apokalipsis: Otkrovenie Ioanna Bogoslova: kommentarii [The Apocalypse: Revelation of St. John: Commentary]*. Riga: Fond im. Aleksandra Menia, 1992.
- Byt khristianinom: intervii i posledniaia leksiia [To Be a Christian: Interview and Final Lecture]*. Moscow: Protestant, 1992. Contains an interesting interview given a month before Men's death and the Russian text of Khristianstvo.
- Roberts, Elizabeth and Ann Shukman, eds. *Christianity for the Twenty-First Century: The Prophetic Writings of Alexander Men*. New York: Continuum, 1996. A special compilation of Men's sermons in English.
- Istoria religii: v semi tomakh: v poiskakh puti, istiny, zhizni [The History of Religion: In Seven Volumes: In Search of the Way, the Truth, and the Life]*. Moscow: Slovo, 1991, 1992. Men's six-volume exploration of religion from pre-history to the sophisticated Greeks, to the Hebrews, Asian religions, and finally, home to Christianity. Includes *Syn chelovecheskii* in the set, making it seven volumes. For full titles of all volumes, see Sam Brown's Web site.

- Kultura i dukhovnoe voskhozhdenie [Culture and the Ascent of Spirituality]*. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1992. Another collection of sermons and essays.
- Magiia, okkultizm, khristianstvo: iz knig, leksiia i besed [Magic, Occultism, and Christianity: From Books, Lectures, and Discussions]*. Moscow: Fond imeni Aleksandra Menia, 1996. Published in Latvian as: *Magija, okultizmas ir krikščionybe: zmonijos dvasines raidos gaires*. Vilnius: Spauda, 1995.
- Prakticheskoe rukovodstvo k molitve; Otveti [A Practical Handbook on Prayer; Answers]*. 2nd edition. Moscow: Fond im. Aleksandra Menia, 1995.
- Pravoslavnoe bogosluzhenie: tainstvo, slovo i obraz [Orthodox Worship: Mystery, Word, and Image]*. Moscow: Slovo, 1991. One of the few places Men is exclusively Orthodox. Well known and respected among Orthodox. The Slovo edition (1991) is enlarged and revised.
- Propovedi protoiereia Aleksandra Menia: Paskhalnyi tsikel [Sermons of Archpriest Aleksandr Men: Paschal Cycle]*. Moscow: RPTS Vneshtorgizdat, 1991. English translation: *Awake to Life!: Sermons from the Paschal (Easter) Cycle*. Torrance, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1996.
- Smertiu smert poprav [Having Conquered Death with Death]*. Minsk: Eridan, 1990.
- Svet vo tme svetit [The Light Shineth in the Darkness]*. Moscow: Vita-Tsentr, 1991. Translated into Ukrainian as *Svitlo v pitmi siaie*. Lviv: Svichado, 1995. A collection of sermons, tied to the sacred year, made shortly after Men's death.
- Syn chelovecheskii. [Son of Man]*. Moscow: Fond imeni Aleksandra Menia, 1997. Entire text available online at http://members.xoom.com/_XOOM/krotov/library/menn/ind_menn.html. English edition: *Son of Man*. Translated by Sam Brown. Torrance, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1998. Published in Italian as *Gesù maestro di Nazareth: la storia che sfida il tempo*. Roma: Città nuova, 1996. Also available in Portuguese, French, Czech, Armenian, and Bulgarian. Men's biography of Christ.
- Trudnii put k dialogu [The Difficult Path to Dialogue]*. Moscow: Raduga, 1992. A collection of essays and articles, including some fascinating musings on culture, politics, and religion.

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Yakov Krotov's
Aleksandr Men
Web site
contains the
most complete
bibliography of
Men's works.

Criticism and Defense (cont. from page 3)

mine once was called late at night by an irate Russian parishioner, who, looking for words to express his indignation, proclaimed, "You are a Yid-Mason!" While an oxymoron, the charge can be compared to the more gentrified epithets, "Nestorian-Manichaeism-Pelagian-Arian," for none of which is there any evidence in Father Men's work, which, instead, evidences a very strong Christology.

While the temptation for some is to impatiently push this tract aside, let us more seriously consider the "problem" which Father Men presents to many in the Orthodox Church. First of all, reading the book, one is reminded of C.S. Lewis's "Preface to *Paradise Lost*," which begins with a list of theological complaints against Milton and ends by showing that the listed items are either not in *Paradise Lost* or are not heretical. Such is the case with Men. The alleged Christological heresies are not there.

The authors also claim that Father Men believed in evolution (a discussion with a Creationist pastor, very respectful on both sides, is included in Men's *Christianity for the Twenty-First Century*), and that he believed in moderate biblical criticism as a useful tool for opening out the Holy Scriptures. In truth, here he is no different from the faculty of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary or Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Beyond this, people found that they could discuss many issues with him without fearing condemnation, so both simple and educated people by the thousands opened their hearts to him, and—much more important—to God.

You will look in vain for flying saucers, for example, as a theme of his works or thought, but he would not tell someone who raised the question that "they are demonic." It was not his way.

In viewing Father Men as a Jew, a Catholic, or a Protestant, the authors simply are employing labels to express their reaction. May I suggest a deeper problem? I suspect it is the question: what is Orthodoxy? If Orthodoxy is or partakes of universality, it must by definition not be sectarian. It must be "mere Christianity," Christianity itself, a unique bearer historically of this simplicity of truth and universality. No Church or Christian can be universal and sectarian at the same time, yet many wish to claim universality, while exhibiting a completely sectarian psychology. I state this in the context of the Eastern Orthodox tradition; however, Father Men's life ought to represent a challenge as well to Christians comfortable with being members of a denomination. How and why do they continue to accept not being universal? Yet the price of universality is to embrace your brother and sister, rather than remain separate and self-contained. The authors grope for words to describe Father Men, but the word they seek is right before them. Because of it, Father Men was in the truest sense Orthodox, because he was, in a word, simply Christian. ♦

Bishop Seraphim Sigrist of the Orthodox Church in America served for nearly 20 years as a missionary in Japan. Now residing in North America, Bishop Seraphim works closely with the Hosanna Community in Moscow. His recent book, *Theology of Wonder* (Torrance, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1999), is available for \$9.95. For an online review, consult: <http://praiseofglory.alabanza.com/seraphimwonder.htm>.

Selected Works (cont. from page 4)

Web sites

Sam Brown's Alexander Men Home Page

<http://www.bigfoot.com/~sambrown/amenpage.html> (in English)

Contains photos, a short bibliography, and links to articles on or by Men.

Aleksandr Men Foundation

<http://www.amen.org.ru/index.html> (in English, Russian, French, and German)

Contains complete Russian texts of many of Men's sermons and books, as well as an annotated bibliography and detailed biography of Men's life. Regularly updated.

St. Michael Russian Catholic Church (New York, NY) Alexander Men Web site

<http://praiseofglory.alabanza.com/stmichael.htm/framen.htm> (in English)

Contains English-language excerpts from *Son of Man* and other works of Men.

Yakov Krotov's Aleksandr Men Web site

http://members.xoom.com/_XOOM/krotov/menn/ind_menn.html (in Russian and English)

Contains complete Russian texts of letters and sermons, the entire text of *Syn chelovecheskii*, and a Bulgarian translation of an excerpt from *Pravoslavnoe bogoslužhenie: tainstvo, slovo i obraz*. Also contains the most complete bibliography of Men's works available, with references to over 200 works by Men arranged chronologically.

A Guide to Giving and Receiving Aid In Post-Communist Europe

Kathy Rogers and Tina-Joy Kinard

Continued from the East-West Church & Ministry Report 7 (Spring 1999): 1-4.

Christian Relief: Improving the Delivery

Westerners can play a significant role in helping nationals avoid or overcome problems associated with relief. Many missionaries were blessed by supplies of peanut butter, muesli, and other food products which nationals refused to eat. In some areas, grain products in particular had connotations of being food for animals. Not only did people not like certain foodstuffs, but also were personally offended by some of it. Show concern for hungry people: bring basic foodstuffs which can be incorporated into their own recipes, such as flour, sugar, oil, rice, etc.

1. Family Parcels

One of the best ways to curtail greed and envy is to make individual family parcels. This requires more effort on the part of relief groups but eliminates much of the misunderstanding, fighting, and bitterness within local churches. A parcel is easy to deliver. Family parcels not only help curb coveting, but also relieve stress and are enormously time-saving for national distributors who must sort, divide, assign, and deliver goods.

2. Distributor Parcels

Orphanage workers have been known to steal goods intended for the children or the institution. This problem can be curtailed simply by assuring that each worker receives a package. Their home needs may be as great as the needs of the orphans. Give the box to the workers personally, stating clearly which things are specifically designated for the orphans. If possible, give shoes and clothes directly to the children. The children will put them away with their own things, making it more difficult for a worker to take them home later.

3. Relationship Building

Preparing and training a national should consist of much more than just the technical aspects of distribution. Particularly when working with Christian brothers and sisters, Western Christians have a duty to warn the national about some of the temptations and difficulties involved in the work.

4. Accountability

One of the most important ways a Westerner can help nationals in charge of relief is by being accountable. Many temptations exist in relief work; compromises can be made without really thinking them through. A system of accountability that protects each other is important. If one national is key in the organization of distribution, he/she also needs to be accountable to someone.

5. Planning

Westerners should make contact ahead of time (preferably a month or more), set the delivery date, assure that storage is available, and arrive as planned. Reconfirm plans one week before the scheduled arrival.

6. Organizational Links

Many Western groups may desire their giving to enhance local Christian ministries already in existence. If so, they should consider working directly through the organizations of the nationals. Communicate with respective denominational unions. Most now have committees appointed for relief work.

7. Smaller Loads

Some believe that the best method for transporting smaller quantities is for groups to make use of families. A single family can often distribute up to two vanloads without undue hardship.

8. Advance Teams

Ideally, the Westerner should go in advance and establish contacts, taking the time to train and develop responsible people and share experiences others have had in doing relief work. Make suggestions; inquire regarding cultural preferences—food likes and dislikes, taboos, etc.; arrange some place to store the relief; then allow the contact time to think about his/her involvement.

9. Attitude

Whether the distributor is a national or a foreigner, the manner in which relief is given is important. It must be done in a way that doesn't offend the person's dignity. If the receiver needs to give in order to be free to receive—cultural reciprocity—then, by all means, receive his gift with grace and humility.

10. Relief Philosophy and Models

While aid helped many during the years since those momentous changes of 1989, 1990, and 1991, relief is only a temporary and partial solution. In some respects, the aid has been poured into a bottomless, black hole—a little like putting a Band-Aid over a cancerous tumor. Little remains. Real help is teaching someone how to obtain his daily bread, rather than just giving him enough bread for one year. After initial needs are met, investment capital is needed more than short-term aid, so that Christians in the receiving country can build structures to support themselves and their ministries. ♦

Excerpt reprinted with permission from Kathy Rogers and Tina-Joy Kinard, *Relief in Post-Communist Europe* (Bratislava, Slovakia: SEN, 1999). Available online for \$10 at <http://www.citygate.org/papers/papers.asp> or from: SEN, 3 Springfield Rd., Hinckley, Leics. LE10 1AN, England; tel.: 44-1455-476-899; fax: 44-1455-446-898; E-mail: senuk@citygate.org; SEN-USA, attn.: Ellen Anderson, Box 622, Hobart, IN 46342; tel./fax: 219-942-3151; E-mail: senusa@citygate.org; or SEN, Liptovská 10, 821, 09 Bratislava, Slovakia; tel.: 421-7-521-6293; fax: 421-7-521-6288; E-mail: sensk@citygate.org.

Real help is teaching someone how to obtain his daily bread, rather than just giving him enough bread for one year.

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Practical Advice for Western Missionaries

Boris Gontarev

Must I Love?

During the communist era, the word "must" was used extensively. Every day they told us: "You *must* believe in communism! You *must* love comrade Stalin (Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev, etc.). You *must* love the socialist motherland! You *must* not read any books or magazines printed in the bourgeois West! You *must* this . . . you *must* that. . ."

I am perplexed at the combination of the two words: "must love." The words are incompatible and mutually exclusive. You love somebody or something because you choose to love them or simply because it so happens that you love it. You *must* pay your debts, you *must* care for the elderly and the disabled, you *must* serve your country. But I certainly *must not* love my wife (my mother, my children, my country, etc.), because I love them anyway, without outside interference or coercion. If you *must* love somebody, it actually means that you don't want to, don't feel like doing it, but you have to do it nonetheless.

In Russia phrases such as "You *must* love Jesus" or "You *must* accept Him as your Lord and Savior" sound inappropriate. A Russian hears this and bristles: "Oh, no! Not that again! Please let me make my own choice. Please let me come to the decision myself without constraint, without *musts*. . ."

"Do You Have Children?"

Sometimes a good-natured American Christian comes to Russia and desires to make immediate friends with Russians. How does he do it? By asking the first question: "What's your name?" Then comes question two: "What do you do?" So far, so good. But when the foreigner asks the third question, "Do you have children?" he makes a mistake. According to the centuries-old Russian cultural tradition, intimate relations within one's family are exactly that: intimate. Don't be surprised when you receive unfriendly replies like "How does that concern you?" or even, "This is none of your business." In today's extremely difficult economic situation, many people in Russia simply cannot afford to have children, though they might love to. To have children in Russia is now an act of either enormous bravery or else utter irresponsibility. You must remember Russia's awful shortage of living space.

Despite one's motive, it is unwise to raise the issue of abortion with Russian women. You will hardly find support for your convictions. While Russian Christians might agree with you spiritually, on a practical level, there is little chance. I am aware of some other social problems where the evangelical community adamantly defends its stands: issues such as [opposition to] gay rights and pornography. My advice for Americans would be to stay away from these controversies. Right now people in Russia remain preoccupied with more pragmatic matters: how to provide for the family, how to move into

better apartments, where to find good clothes, and the like.

Reading the Bible

Believing old myths, Western Christians still believe that Russia needs more copies of the Bible than anything else. This is only partially true. In the larger cities, you now can get easily almost any religious publication. But receiving a Bible is only phase one of a long and laborious path. Phase two would be actually reading the Bible, and that would be a qualitative leap forward for the majority of Russians. I would not say that Russians do not read the Bible at all. But they usually read it just like any other book, for leisure, or spiritual enjoyment, or the interesting stories. The tradition of reading the Bible was not lost in Russia—it simply never existed. My suggestion is not to press this issue. Be understanding and patient, and give them time to acquire the habit. Phase three, incorporating the principles and ideas of the Bible into everyday life, is the most difficult, but the most rewarding, and could result in the greatest change in our nation.

The Power of a Word

A good knowledge of the Russian language unfortunately is not the strongest trait of the average American preacher. Even when the preacher uses the very best Russian interpreter, it is not the best solution. The result is that you are being evangelized primarily by the interpreter and not by the original preacher. We must find devoted Christians who are Russian nationals. Give them a fitting preparation for the job and let them evangelize. [To that end] knowledge of Russian Orthodoxy, its history, heritage, traditions, rituals, etc., is indispensable for informed evangelism to take place. It is my observation that much of what is [currently] going on in the name of evangelism is discouraging and confusing.

One of the problems is that nice, clean-cut Russian men and women graduate from short-term schools of evangelism, oriented in evangelical Christian theory and practice. But their newly acquired ability to play country-style chords on the guitar and sing the very inept Russian translations of English hymns will do them little good in evangelizing Russians in Russia. Frankly, I don't see a great future for this type of evangelism in Russia. ♦

Reprinted with permission from Sharon Linzey and Ken Kaisch, eds., *God in Russia: The Challenge of Freedom* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, forthcoming).

Boris Gontarev, Ph.D., is the founding president of the Moscow Academy of World Civilizations. In recent years, he has been associated closely with Campus Crusade for Christ. He currently is professor of general studies at Hope International University Center for International Education, Fullerton, California.

I am perplexed at the combination of the two words: "must love." . . . If you *must* love somebody, it actually means that you don't want to.

Russian Church-Based Alcoholism Treatment and Prevention

Mary Theresa Webb

Alcoholism, one of Russia's oldest and most widespread social ills, affects one in every three Russians. Scenarios such as the following are typical.

- Sergei grew up carrying anger and resentment against his abusive alcoholic father. Since he did not want to be a drunk like his father, he refused to drink any alcoholic beverages. In 1992, Sergei made a personal commitment to Christ, joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and soon became a deacon and a Sabbath-Day teacher. As lay pastor of his small congregation in Moscow, he chose to minister to alcoholics in a local hospital. However, he did not know how to begin.

- Volodia also grew up in an alcoholic family. In his teens, he started drinking vodka and smoking cigarettes. Soon he needed to drink more to feel good about himself. He began taking heroin to dull the pain during withdrawal from alcohol.

- Irina shares a two-room apartment with an uncle who indulges in periodic drinking sprees. She has ambivalent feelings towards him. She hates him drunk and calls the police to take him away to the drunk tank. Then she feels guilty and takes him back. She shames him and he ends up drinking more.

Vodka: Cheap and Costly

Vodka seduces and then suppresses the Russian spirit. One can buy potent bootleg vodka as cheaply as a loaf of bread in Moscow. Studies link drunkenness to 80 percent of Russian murders, half of all suicides, 60 percent of fires, 75 percent of worker absenteeism, and 50 percent of all auto accidents. According to recent statistics from the Russian Ministry of Health, 40 percent of Russian men and 17 percent of Russian women are addicted to alcohol (*London Times*, 13 August 1999). The current tottering government does not have the capacity to cope with the problems. Drunks are left to die on the streets and in subway stations. Pedestrians, subway riders, and local police shrug their shoulders and move on.

Roads to Recovery

Hope and help through the burgeoning 12-step spiritual program could check these problems. Since 1986 many pioneers have planted and nurtured the first Russian seedlings of 12-step Christian-based fellowships, including Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), and Al-Anon, a support group for families of alcoholics. Sergei, Irina, Volodia, and others join such programs on their spiritual path to recovery. Yurii Svenko, president of the Russian Association of Independent Psychiatrists, considers AA to be "a highly valuable movement in Russia." Two hundred such groups now exist in Russia, with about 30 in Moscow alone. Al-Anon, too, has grown

exponentially since its inception in 1991. Narcotics Anonymous began later and now includes about 15 groups in Russia.

OPORA

Many participants find God and seek to know more about Him through the church. As new Christians, they constitute the nucleus of the OPORA Christian Prevention and Training Program, based on 12-step recovery principles. OPORA, Russian for "support," provides a bridge between churches wanting to help suffering alcoholics and their family members and those who have joined 12-step fellowships. In 1997 American Presbyterian missionary Pam Brunson experienced a call to help Russians deal with the epidemic of alcoholism. A year later OPORA was born. Now a paid Russian staff of five, many volunteers, and a Russian/American Advisory Board make up the OPORA leadership. Pam Brunson and Irina Yakubova, director of the Moscow Alliance for Social and Cultural Progress, co-direct the Moscow-based program.

Russian professionals team-teach a 45-hour training seminar for church leaders based on the bio-psycho-social-spiritual disease model of chemical dependency. In September 1998 in a cramped auditorium of the Evangelical Christian (OMS) Seminary in Moscow, team members trained 71 church representatives. In January 1999, they trained 61 workers at Moscow's Korean Presbyterian Seminary. Since September 1998, Christian lay leaders from the Moscow region and other towns and cities such as Tula, Riazan, Vladimir, Voronezh, Ulianovsk, Tambov, Yaroslavl, and Izhevsk have attended OPORA seminars, with two more seminars planned for fall 1999. Following a 12-week practicum with 12-step support groups, 60 of the 132 Moscow seminar participants have now completed the program. These Christian prevention specialists are qualified to assist alcoholics and their families in church centers around Russia. In April 1999, the Russian Department of Education invited OPORA to start a prevention school to train its teachers.

An ecumenical group of Russian Christian leaders, staff, and volunteers meet weekly to study the Bible and to evaluate how the program should be amended or supplemented. They are reaching out to the general public through two special radio programs featuring 12 testimonies from Christians in recovery.

Rev. Oksana Petrova, pastor of Holy Trinity United Methodist Church in St. Petersburg and national director of the United Methodist Russian Initiative, sent a staff member to the January 1999

One can buy potent bootleg vodka as cheaply as a loaf of bread in Moscow.

Contacts and Russian Resources for Alcoholism Recovery

Alcoholics Anonymous—Russia

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Tel./fax: 7-095-185-40-00
E-mail: aarus@glasnet.ru

Al-Anon and Alateen—Russia

Tel.: 7-095-908-62-46 (Elena)
Tel.: 7-095-126-04-51
Fax: 7-095-310-70-76
E-mail: rbfrian@got.mmtel.ru

Nina Beliakova

Vstan [Stand Up]
Krasikova 11-87
117292 Moscow, Russia
Tel.: 7-095-125-60-63

NAN Resource Center/Library

Moscow, Russia
Sells and distributes all AA, NA, Al-Anon literature and other Russian books on recovery topics. Send for list of Russian titles and costs.
Tel.: 7-095-126-34-75

Fax: 7-095-310-70-76
E-mail: rbfrian@got.mmtel.ru

Narcotics Anonymous—Russia

Tel.: 7-095-126-55-24 (Marina)
Tel.: 7-095-126-04-51
Fax: 7-095-310-70-76
E-mail: rbfrian@got.mmtel.ru

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Terry Webb, Princeton, NJ
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St. Petersburg City Narcological Hospital, 10th Department

(under Christian leadership)
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Fax: 214-826-8473
E-mail: rbw101@aol.com
Rev. Oksana Petrova, Chair
Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program
Russia United Methodist Church
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193230 St. Petersburg, Russia
Tel./fax: 7-812-586-6609
E-mail: op@syr.usr.pu.ru

For English-language information on AA, Al-Anon, and NA worldwide, contact:

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services

Box 459
New York, NY 10163
Tel.: 212-870-3400
Web site: <http://www.aa.org/>

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters

1600 Corporate Landing Parkway
Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617
Tel.: 757-563-1600
Fax: 757-563-1655
E-mail: WSO@al-anon.org
Web site: <http://www.al-anon.org>

Narcotics Anonymous World Service Office

Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409
Tel.: 818-773-9999
Fax: 818-700-0700
E-mail: info@na.org
Web site: <http://www.na.org/>

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OPORA seminar in Moscow and plans an OPOPA-style prevention program in St. Petersburg. Methodists offer a 42-day recovery treatment program for addicts and their family members. Through an Adopt-a-Center concept, special OPOPA-trained Russian/American mission teams held seminars in church centers in Ufa, Tiumen, and Kazan in spring 1999. Seminars are scheduled for Tver, Vladimir, and Ekaterinburg. As a result of these seminars, OPOPA support groups now exist in

Izhevsk, Vladimir, Ulianovsk, Riazan, Serpukhov, Reutov, Pavlovo Pasad, Engels, Voronezh, Saransk, Moscow, and Kazan, with new groups beginning in other cities as well.

Salvation Army

Over the past six years, the Salvation Army has introduced in Russia its Christ-centered addiction prevention and treatment programs that have had

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OPORA sells the following Russian-language translations of English books:

Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Bariery [Boundaries: When to Say Yes, When to Say No to Take Control of Your Life]*,

OPORA *Posobiia [FREED Manual, Overcomers Outreach]* (for support group leaders)

Ron Ross, *Papa slishkom mnoga pil [When I Grow Up I Want To Be an Adult]* (for adult children of alcoholics)

Linda Sibley, *Chuvstvo [All My Feelings Are Okay]*; *Vybory [I Always, Always Have Choices]*; *Obshchenie [Let's Talk, Let's Listen Too]* (for parenting and prevention)

Anderson Spickard, *Strast k spirtnomu [Dying for a Drink: What You Should Know About Alcoholism]*

Terry Webb, *Derevo obnovennoi zhizni [Tree of Renewed Life]* (on the Christian roots of 12-step programs)

Alcoholism (cont. from page 9)

exceptional success in the West. In Rostov-na-Donu, teams of prevention specialists raise awareness about alcohol, drugs, and AIDS issues in schools and work places. Local AA group members refer those who need treatment to a *Most* (Bridge) Program, a Salvation Army one-on-one counseling service for both abusers and family members affected. Functioning since August 1997, *Most* is a Salvation Army outpatient drug and alcohol treatment program, differing from recovery programs in that it provides group therapy, Bible therapy, and transactional analysis. While not a 12-step program, *Most*, like AA, relies on the affected person having a close relationship with a "buddy" who meets with the abuser once a week to provide spiritual guidance. Recuperating addicts also can attend weekly eleventh step Bible studies, in which they seek "through prayer and meditation to improve conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will and the power to carry it out." Salvation Army Captain Joseph Smith directs a relapse prevention program in St. Petersburg that helps addicts develop alternative coping strategies, inner strength to resist temptations, and a supportive group of friends.

Mary Theresa (Terry) Webb is director of Theodosian Ministries, Princeton, New Jersey, and serves on the advisory councils of Christian Recovery International, Brea, California, and the British-based International Substance Abuse and Addiction Coalition.

Russian Orthodox Resistance

Many Russian Orthodox lay persons and some priests are involved in alcoholism recovery. However, the 12-step recovery movement has not been widely accepted by Russian Orthodoxy's conservative leadership. For example, Father Konstantin Ostrovskii, from Krasnogorsk, near Moscow, feels that people can recover from alcoholism by coming to church and not attending any group. The hierarchy often discredits Russian Orthodox who have combined Orthodox religious teachings with a recovery-oriented approach to treatment. In spite of this resistance, Dr. Evgenii Protsenko, a devout Russian Orthodox lay person who founded and directs the Old World Treatment Center, reports an 86 percent success rate for those who complete his recovery-based program. (Editor's note: See Dennis Bowen, "Christian Psychology in Russia," *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 6 (Spring 1998), 2-3.)

During a severe Russian economic crisis in August 1998, Ekaterina Savina, director of the Zebra Adolescent Treatment Center, noted that the only way she and her friends could cope was by following the 12-step spiritual path, by praying, and by surrendering to God's will and seeking God's guidance. By far the most successful Russian programs to help alcoholics are those that cooperate with 12-step recovery agencies or encourage the 12-step method. AA, NA, and Al-Anon fellowships appeal to the natural, collective spirit of Russians. They also are an amazing way to evangelize in a country hungry and hurting for a spiritual way of life. ♦

Editor's Notes: 1) For further reading, see Tatyana Titova, "Alcoholics Anonymous Controversial in Russia," *Keston News Service*, 9 February 1999; Nina Belyakova, "Supporting Families of Alcoholics," *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 6 (Winter 1998), 7.2) On 20-22 April 1999, Moscow's New Hope Church sponsored a conference on alcoholism and drug abuse led by alcoholism counselor and Assemblies of God pastor Jim Isom, of Budapest, Hungary. Pastor Isom regularly holds meetings in Moscow and St. Petersburg on alcoholism, substance abuse, codependency, and family dysfunction. For more information, contact Pastor Mark Currie, New Hope Church; tel./fax: 7-095-306-50-84; E-mail: newhope@glasnet.ru; or Pastor Jim Isom, Budapest, Hungary; E-mail: JimIsom@compuserve.com.

Children at Risk in Bulgaria

Steven Gertz

True religion is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:27

Following the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1990, the Protestant church in Bulgaria grew rapidly, at the rate of about 17 percent per year. In Sofia alone, the capital of Bulgaria, the church increased fivefold between 1990 and 1993. The long grip of Marxism had created a spiritual void, and with its demise, a new interest in religion spread across the country. The new spiritual hunger spread even to some of Bulgaria's ethnic minorities, including Turks and Gypsies, making up 11 percent and 4.6 percent of the population respectively. Pentecostal churches and the Church of God grew especially, with 45,000 members numbered between them within a few years.¹

Bulgaria's economy, never robust, suffered significantly after nearly 40 years of Communist controls. Following communism's collapse, it has continued to decline. Setting the poverty line in 1989, the government found that by 1994, approximately 80 percent of the population had fallen below it.² Thus, it quickly became apparent that the emphasis on evangelism needed to be followed with social and humanitarian relief. Christians initiated work especially among impoverished Gypsy communities who lived at the bottom of the social stratum and were largely illiterate and uneducated. Western aid from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany also helped to meet this growing need, but relief efforts by Bulgarian believers played a significant part in this response.

According to recent demographic data, Bulgaria has about 1.6 million children under age 16.³ With 80 percent of the population living below the poverty line, this effectively puts approximately 1.3 million children in some degree of risk. It is significant then that Christians in Bulgaria have begun responding to the needs of children through a range of programs bringing physical aid with the message of the gospel. These projects include feeding programs, housing, orphanage visitation, and many others.

In February 1999 Viva Network, an international association of Christian "children at risk" ministries, sent two staff members, Ursy Botting and Steve Gertz, to interview evangelical Christian ministries working with such children in Sofia. The team carried out research over eight days to identify which ministries were networking with each other. The research was conducted through interviews, and a search of literature on the condition of children in the country was done to verify information.

New Funding Strategies

Victor Virchev is head of the Pentecostal Union in

Bulgaria, a denomination originally made up of 35 churches before the democratic changes and now flourishing with 520 churches. The union has several projects seeking to alleviate the growing problem of both state institutionalization of children and children living on the streets. Pentecostals are helping to direct humanitarian aid shipments coming from abroad to state orphanages. Children and adults from local church families go with the shipments to see that they arrive safely, giving them an opportunity to share the gospel. The Union also has plans to erect a center in Sofia where street children can obtain food, clothing, and day care. It is working with city officials to obtain an abandoned building for this purpose. Lack of funding for the project continues to be a problem, as the Union is unable to support such a center wholly from its own finances.

The Pentecostal Union has developed creative strategies to address the financial obstacle. Aid from abroad continues to trickle in, but the Union also is considering establishing small businesses, such as importing farming equipment, with a percentage of revenues going to projects. The Union already has started a magazine that provides some funds for projects. In addition to this, some Pentecostal believers are able to contribute financially as they are gainfully employed. Rev. Virchev is hopeful about the denomination's financial outlook, as several of its members are professionals and have been able to hold on to their jobs, despite a Bulgarian economic downturn.

Children's Literature

Blaga Popova works for Scripture Union, an international Christian ministry with a Sofia branch that publishes children's literature. It is producing a manual of Bible games, a novel exploring relationships between children in the church and children at risk, and a literacy book for Gypsy children. Popova, however, is having difficulty finding outlets for her work, as many of the denominations have their own curriculum, and churches are becoming more selective about what they buy as Christian literature for children becomes more available. Furthermore, teachers are often sharing information in order to cut costs, and Western literature translated into Bulgarian undercuts the market altogether, as much of it is free. Popova also oversees several projects working directly with children at risk. She currently runs five teenagers' camps and one children's camp each year, with plans for a camp for families in the future.

Troubles with the State

Rev. Theodor Oprenov is pastor of Sofia Baptist Church and the founding director of the Good

With 80 percent of the population living below the poverty line, this effectively puts 1.3 million [Bulgarian] children in some degree of risk.

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Children at Risk (cont. from page 11)

Samaritan Foundation, which appeals to Western sister churches to bring humanitarian aid and building materials to renovate orphanages. Ten volunteers manage the foundation's work in five orphanages.

Not all is well with the foundation's work, however. From the very beginning, Rev. Oprenov met stiff resistance from the Orthodox Church, and in at least one case, has not been allowed to return to an orphanage his church renovated. Orthodox priests have allegedly told people to stay away from his "sect," and a pernicious rumor in the country continues to circulate that "evangelicals eat children for breakfast." Oprenov also is discouraged by new laws that make it difficult to import humanitarian aid into the country. He greets any suggestion of cooperation with governmental or international

secular agencies with a great deal of skepticism and is pessimistic of changing the public perception of evangelicals, at least in the near future. For five years, the Good Samaritan Foundation and the Bulgarian Baptist Union have been unable to receive permission to build a Christian orphanage in Sofia, which Oprenov believes is because they are Protestant, not Orthodox.

On the other hand, Oprenov is open, even enthusiastic, about networking with other evangelical Christian groups working with children at risk. He has worked already with one group to deliver boxes of food to orphanages, and he understands the need for partnerships on projects that may be too costly for his organization alone. He is looking for funds to expand the foundation's work with orphanages, and he agrees that some of these needs may best be met by linking with other Christians wanting to minister in similar ways.

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Serving the Least of These

Zhana Georgieva, a former Muslim and now committed Christian, runs an organization called Women of Virtue, which has two dynamic ministries to Gypsy street children in the heart of Sofia: one in the city's central station and one in the city park. She provides lunch for the children and has 70 children on file now who frequent her program. Georgieva has an intense spiritual burden for these children and has attracted 25 women to join her in the work, 10 in Sofia and 15 outside the city. She also has garnered support from the West for her ministry, and recently received coverage in the Christian press for her feeding program in Sofia.

Georgieva realizes, however, that soup kitchens are not enough. She wants to set up a drop-in center for these children and already has obtained a building for the work, though she lacks the funds for furnishings. She wants to provide a place where children will be provided with balanced meals, shower facilities, recreation, and educational and vocational courses which will jump-start the children's education and hopefully break the cycle of poverty in which they are trapped.

Visiting the Orphan

Liudmil Yatanski is the pastor of a moderately large evangelical church in the center of Sofia appealing especially to new and young Christians. His church has a lively worship group, and several of the young people in the church are involved in the church's ministry. One of these ministries is to an orphanage located about 50 miles outside Sofia. Twenty volunteers from the church have been visiting this orphanage on a monthly basis since 1994, bringing food, clothing, games, and more recently, gifts for children having birthdays. One volunteer has even been able to convince the orphanage's director to release a few of the children to be put up for adoption, though he is reluctant to do so, as it involves a good amount of paperwork.

But Yatanski also wants to start a residential home of his own, as several of the state orphanages are

closing down due to a lack of funds and consequently are leaving their children without homes. Churches in the United States and Austria have offered to help, and Yatanski is looking for a building for this purpose. Unfortunately, Bulgarian law has not been very favorable to such enterprises in the past, imposing strict controls that have discouraged people from setting up such homes. The Orthodox Church has opposed the project. Caritas, a Catholic charity, has been able to establish residential homes for orphans, however, which sets a positive precedent.

International Networking

Aneta Naydenova, wife of local Methodist minister Evgeniy Naydenov, works for an international Christian relief organization called Mission Without Borders that just recently established itself in Sofia. With a staff of only four people, she already has been able to bring a tremendous amount of humanitarian relief to Bulgaria through networking with churches and secular, nongovernmental organizations. Her ministry provides humanitarian relief to 25 orphanages throughout the country, including four homes for the handicapped. She oversees a mother care program, which advises Gypsy mothers on raising children, provides education, counsels those considering abortion, lobbies against drug use, and provides medical assistance. Mission Without Borders also runs a feeding program at a local church, serving up to 130 people per day.

As valuable as these programs are, Naydenova readily admits they are possible only through the cooperation of Christians and non-Christians alike who are working together. She has been able to build positive relationships with local government authorities and has established working relationships with Orthodox and Catholic churches as well. Volunteers from a local Orthodox seminary, for example, helped her mission hand out humanitarian relief and, on occasion, she has sent some parcels to the Catholics as well for them to distribute. Recently, her distribution project attracted television coverage that generated much goodwill.

The experience of Mission Without Borders contrasts sharply with that of the Baptist Union and raises several questions concerning how evangelical Christians can best approach broader society in their work of sharing the gospel in its totality. Through networking with other groups, it has been able to accomplish much more than it could possibly have dreamed of on its own and has built good relationships across confessional lines and with the government.

Assisting Through Education

Church of God minister Roumen Ivanov works for Mission Possible, an international Pentecostal parachurch ministry, which in the past few years has built a presence in Bulgaria as a leading Christian publishing house and educational organization, based in Sofia. Its primary goal is to assist local churches in their ministries through the literature and training

they provide. To achieve this aim, it is working on several projects, including a Christian magazine for teenagers, a magazine for Christian women, and more recently, a new edition of the Bulgarian Bible. It is also in the final stages of producing a literacy primer for Gypsy children, which it hopes to make available to Christians offering education to Gypsy communities. Also, parts of these primers have biblical text, which can be used for evangelistic outreach to Gypsy communities, as many of them tend to be atheistic, mystical, and in some cases, Muslim.

Ivanov is very concerned that evangelical Christians be willing to network with one another, especially as his organization is seeking to help the entire evangelical community through its services. The mission has participated in cross-denominational events (for example, a Christmas service for children in Sofia), and its staff attends several different churches in Sofia. But Ivanov is also realistic about the degree to which evangelical groups can cooperate, as many of them have particular goals and methods that do not necessarily dovetail. Disagreements on financial and logistical issues can get in the way of cooperation, as can theological differences.

Conclusion

Christians in Bulgaria engage in humanitarian work across the spectrum to bring the gospel to people who are physically and spiritually suffering. They carry on a remarkable ministry with limited resources, and, in several cases, work together to accomplish much more than they could separately. But several obstacles still remain, and they are in need of knowledgeable and informed people who can help them meet their objectives. Projects need new funding ideas, marketing strategies, political support, legal counsel, administrative expertise, and access to those with experience in networking. Even more, they need people to lift up their ministries in prayer and come alongside them to aid them in their work. Please pray for the church in Bulgaria, and for the people who are sacrificing themselves to see it grow through ministry to "children at risk." ♦

Editor's Note: Viva Network, Oxford, England, exists to "help children at risk around the world by linking and enhancing the Christian response." Viva Network has drawn together a variety of specialists to produce handbooks, training curriculum, and the journal *Reaching Children at Risk*. Its Web site, below, contains a directory of resources. Viva Network desires communication from individuals or organizations currently working with children at risk. Contact: Viva Network, Box 633, Oxford, England OX2 0XZ; tel.: 44-1865-450-800; fax: 44-1865-203-567; E-mail: helpdesk@viva.org; Web site: <http://www.viva.org>.

¹ Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: OM Publishing, 1993), 135.

² Theodora Ivanova Noncheva, *The Winding Road to the Market: Transition and the Situation of Children in Bulgaria* (Florence, Italy: UNICEF, 1995), 31.

³ *Ibid.*, 30.

Steven Gertz is a network researcher with Viva Network, Oxford, England.

Mission Without Borders has built good relationships across confessional lines and with the government.

RESOURCES

Moscow-based Freedom of Conscience Society, consisting of director Valerii Nikolskii, Petr Abrashkin, Lev Levenson, Lev Ponomarev, and Fr. Gleb Yakunin, produced a 55-page Russian-language "**Freedom of Conscience Society Report**" documenting regional legislation in Russia restricting religious freedom. Produced with the assistance of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the document details instances of discriminatory local legislation, refusal of registration, illegal demands for reregistration, state financing of the Moscow Patriarchate, refusal of accommodations for religious meetings, refusal to return church buildings, refusal of land for building, threats, violence, prison sentences for conscientious objection to military service, and discrimination against the "alternative Orthodox Church of Russia." It also details circumstances surrounding discrimination against Jehovah's Witnesses, visa limitations for foreign religious workers, and threats and expulsions of foreign religious workers. A revised edition of the report focusing on regions is in preparation. To receive a copy, contact Valerii Nikolskii, Director, Freedom of Conscience Society; tel./fax: 7-095-919-54-82; E-mail: glasnaroda@glasnet.ru.



The first *U.S. Department of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom* (September 1999) contains sections for each country on the status of freedom of religion, societal attitudes toward religious freedom, and U.S. government policy. The complete report, with coverage of each nation in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, is available online at http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/.



Dr. Galina M. Yemelianova, Research Fellow at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK, is the author of "**New Muftis, New Russians?**" *Prism* 15 (August 1999), Part 4, an informative six-page article **describing the history and current situation of Russia's 12 million Muslims**. To subscribe to *Prism*, contact: The Jamestown Foundation, 1528 18th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036; tel.: 202-483-8888; fax: 202-483-8337; Web site: <http://www.jamestown.org/hum/subscribers.htm>.



Youth With A Mission's Frontier Mission Centre, Haywards Heath, UK, has produced *Praying Along the Silk Road*, a 50-page **prayer guide highlighting Central Asia**, "one of the last areas of the world in which the Church is finally emerging after centuries of darkness." The booklet profiles the countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, the cities of Almaty, Shymkent, Bishkek, Dushanbe, Ashgabat, Tashkent, and Karakalpakstan, as well as the north Caucasus region of Russia, including Dagestan. Available for \$5 from: World Christian News & Books, Box 26439, Colorado Springs, CO 80963; tel: 719-380-0507; fax: 719-380-0936; E-mail: wcn30days@aol.com; Web site: <http://www.ywam.org/books>.



Obrovets, Galina, ed. *Rol khristianki v sovremennom obshchestve: Vserossiiskaia zhenskaia khristianskaia mezhdennominatsionnaia konferentsiia* [*The Role of the Christian Woman in Contemporary Society: The All-Russian Interdenominational Christian Women's*

Conference]. Moscow: Tsentr bibleiskogo prosveshcheniia, 1999. 103 pages.

This book contains papers given by 30 participants at the All-Russian Christian Women's Conference held in Moscow, 19–21 November 1998. It covers a wide range of issues relating to women's ministries, including the ministry of prayer, spiritual authority, children's ministry, and ministry to families of alcoholics and drug addicts. The volume is a sequel to an earlier work with a nearly identical title, *Rol khristianki v sovremennom obshchestve* [*The Role of the Christian Woman in Contemporary Society*], produced with material from an interdenominational women's conference in June 1997. (See Volume 6, Number 1, of the *East-West Church & Ministry Report*.) The 62-page *Bibleiskii kliuchi k razreshennuiu zhiznennykh problem* [*Biblical Keys to Solving Life Problems*], by June Hunt (Moscow: Tsentr bibleiskogo prosveshcheniia, 1999) is another product of the November 1998 conference. It contains short lessons on Christian coping with such issues as guilt, anger, forgiveness, depression, and loneliness.



Diedrich, H. C., G. Stricker, H. Tschoerner, eds. *Das Gute behaltet—Kirchen und religiöse Gemeinschaften in der Sowjetunion und ihren Nachfolgestaaten* [*Hold Fast What Is Good—Churches and Religious Communities in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States*]. Erlangen: Martin-Luther-Verlag, 1996; ISBN 3-87513-101-0. 335 pages. DM 34. (Russian edition in press 1999). Reviewed by Klaus Herrmanns.

This comprehensive survey of churches, denominations, and religious communities in the former Soviet Union focuses on various Protestant denominations and the Russian Orthodox Church. Shorter chapters cover the Catholic Church and Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist communities.

In nonacademic prose, the volume provides historical and doctrinal profiles of various churches to help readers identify possible partners for cooperation. The bibliography of some 200 relevant titles (most, but not all, in German) will be of interest primarily to academic specialists. The German publisher is affiliated with the Lutheran Church of Bavaria, which supports Lutheran minority churches in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Brazil.

The description and critical assessment of the teachings, strengths, and challenges of the various denominations clearly show the Lutheran background of the authors. Still, non-Lutheran readers will find the survey fair and balanced. The authors are knowledgeable and appreciate and respect the spiritual heritage of various churches.

The book may be obtained directly from the publisher: Martin-Luther-Verlag, Box 2669, D-91014 Erlangen, Germany; tel.: 49-9131-7870-0; fax: 49-9874-726. The Russian edition, published as *Khoroshego derzhites: tserkvi i religioznye obedineniia v rossiiskoi derzhave, sovetskom soiuzie i nezavisimykh gosudarstvakh, vznikshikh posle ego raspada* (Kharkov, Ukraine: Maidan, 1998), is currently out of print. A second edition is in preparation and may be ordered from Maidan, ul. Chepyshevskaiia 59, 310002 Kharkov, Ukraine.

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NEWS NOTES

Violent Persecution of Christians in the Caucasus

On 29 June 1999, after 230 days of captivity in southern Russia, American TEAM missionary Herb Gregg gained his freedom. Abducted 11 November 1998 in Dagestan, Greg's captors cut off one of his fingers at the second knuckle. Neither TEAM nor the U.S. government paid any ransom for his release.

While Gregg has been released, members of the Groznyi, Chechnia, Baptist Church continue to be taken captive. In early August 1999, abductors raped and murdered an 82-year-old widow identified only as "Zhenia." According to *Compass Direct* correspondent Barbara Baker, the widow was the only witness to the 12 March abduction of Baptist church leader Aleksandr Kulakov, whose severed head was found several weeks later in the Groznyi market. Also, the murder of Groznyi Baptist Church pastor Aleksei Sitnikov, taken captive in November 1998, now has been confirmed. In a separate incident, a 70-year-old woman was beaten to death in her home the first week of August. Church member Aleksandra Zaraniskaia also was kidnapped in early August, with captors asking \$4,000 for her release. Vitalii Korotun, a 23-year-old deacon, was kidnapped on 14 August. His captors reportedly demand \$10,000 to spare his life, and \$100,000 for his safe return. Korotun, who had succeeded the murdered Kulakov as pastor, had begun attending church only a year ago. He was one of only two men remaining in the church. According to Herb Gregg, Christians are executed at a "killing camp" in the mountains.

On 17 July 1999, an armed party abducted Heiromonk Zakhariia (Vasilii V. Yampolskii), rector of the Groznyi Orthodox Church of St. Michael the Archangel, together with the church's acting warden, 26-year-old Yakov V. Riashin, and another church worker. As many as eight Orthodox clergymen have fallen prey to criminal abductions in recent months. Not a single Orthodox priest is now at liberty in the Chechen Republic.

Sources: "The Brutal 'Evangelical Cleansing' in Chechnia Continues as Two More Christians Are Murdered and Another Two Kidnapped," Assist Communications, 24 August 1999; TEAM press releases of 29 June 9 July and 31 August 1999; "Chechen Kidnappers Demand Ransom for Baptist Deacon," *Compass Direct*, 15 September 1999; "Another Hijacking of Orthodox Church Workers in Chechnya," Communications Service of the Moscow Patriarchate, <http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/ne907261.htm>. See also *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 7 (Winter 1999), 13.



Russian Orthodox Bishop Deposed

On 19 July 1999, the Russian Orthodox Holy Synod removed from office Bishop Nikon (Oleg Mironov) of Ekaterinburg. Charges against Nikon reported to Patriarch Alexy II by Orthodox parishioners, clergy, and monks included homosexual advances against seminarians and monks, mishandling of diocesan funds, and inappropriate behavior during celebrations of the Divine Liturgy. In May 1998, Bishop Nikon ordered a book-burning in the courtyard of the Ekaterinburg Orthodox Seminary for allegedly heretical works found in students' possession written by Fr. Aleksandr Men, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, and Fr. John Meyendorff. Western as well as Russian press carried extensive coverage of critical reaction to the book-burning, in part because of the high regard in which many believers hold American Orthodox theologians Schmemmann and Meyendorff, and Fr. Aleksander Men, killed by an unknown assailant in September 1990.

Sources: Svetlana Dobrynina, "The Bishop on His Knees," *Nezavisimaia gazeta—religiia*, 1 September 1999; "Bol Tserkvi: Otkrytoe obrashchennii prikhozhan Ekaterinburgskoi eparkhii [The Church's Agony: Public Appeal of Parishioners in the Diocese of Ekaterinburg]," 9 May 1999, <http://www.chat.ru/~pravdolubov/Letter4.html>; "Who are You? I'm a Bishop!" *Russkaya mysl*, 29 April 1999; "Open Letter," *Vechernie vedemosti*, 20 April 1999. English translations of relevant articles are available on Paul Steeves' Religion in Russia Web site, <http://www.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews>. An excellent collection of related Russian-language documents and letters is available at <http://www.chat.ru/~pravdolubov/>.

Editor's Note: Widespread lay and clergy disapproval of the leadership style of Archbishop Spyridon of the U.S. Greek Orthodox Church also led to this heirarch's forced resignation in August 1999. It is unusual in the Orthodox Church, with its highly centralized structure, for protests from clergy or laity to lead to the removal of bishops, who traditionally hold lifetime appointments.



Protestant Institute for Mission Studies

Barbara Kertai

A main purpose of the four-year-old Protestant Institute for Mission Studies (PIMS), Budapest, Hungary, is to facilitate and improve missiological education and research, both in Protestant seminaries and in other forums in Hungary. The Protestant Institute's new library, dedicated 10 April 1999, serves as a regional center for missiological materials and resources. The collection includes over 3,000 books, 170 periodicals, and over 200 audiotapes. The majority of the documents are in English (65 percent), with additional materials in German and Hungarian.

Since the main purpose of the library is to encourage missions among Hungarian Christian youth, a missions conference followed the library dedication. By discussing issues such as young people's involvement in the church, the call of a Hungarian missionary, and cross-cultural mission fields in Hungary, the conference was a symbolic act of "passing on the baton to the next generation," in the words of Dr. Tibor Fabiny, head of the library project on the board of PIMS. At the conference, 15 mission agencies, both national and international, sponsored displays, a joint effort of PIMS and Magyar Mission Link, Hungary's mission networking organization.



Uzbek Churches Registered

The government of Uzbekistan recently registered five Baptist churches, bringing the total to 20, reports Pavel A. Peychev, president of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Central Asia. Churches in Chirchik and Almalik are among the most newly registered. Peychev says that the registration process has been going smoothly.

Source: European Baptist Press Service, 10 September 1999.



Dr. John Bennett, president of Overseas Council International, Indianapolis, Indiana, died of a heart attack on 25 August 1999 at age 47. Widely respected for his contribution to Christian leadership training worldwide, Dr. Bennett is succeeded on an interim basis by Dr. Charles Spicer, Overseas Council founding president.

Fr. Aleksandr Men: Christian Priest and Apologist

Yakov Krotov

Those charitably inclined toward Fr. Aleksandr Men see him as a symbol of nonaggressive, nonpoliticized, nonghettoized, nonfundamentalist Russian Orthodoxy.

Father Aleksandr Men (1935–1990) is a name that very quickly becomes known to every Westerner coming to Russia with some interest in religion. The problem is that the name is highly mythologized and evaluated differently in opposing circles of Russian society.

Fr. Men from his childhood possessed common sense, an inborn gift of attracting people, and a healthy outlook on life. He wanted to be a priest, but decided first to obtain a lay education. He was greatly fond of biology and studied it in an institute, but was expelled before graduation because it was discovered that he took part in the Orthodox Divine Liturgy. In 1958 he was ordained a deacon; in 1960, a priest. His Jewish origin and intellectual level were quite uncommon in the priesthood.

Evangelist to "Soviet" Man

The pastoral work of Fr. Aleksandr in different churches of the Moscow Region—starting in 1968 in the Church of Novaia Derevnia near Pushkino—did not echo loudly with political struggle as did the church services of Fr. Gleb Yakunin and Fr. Dmitrii Dudko. Men preached orally and in written form. He wrote more than 10 books, including a biography of Jesus, a six-volume history of ancient religions, a book on church rites, and a soon-to-be published multi-volume dictionary of the Bible. They were addressed to unbelievers and struggled first of all with the atheistic myths of Soviet propaganda. They were written in good Russian, with a profound knowledge of the psychology and superstitions of "Soviet" man.

Fr. Aleksandr took from the West the tradition of catechizing (previously absent in Russia), Bible reading, and prayer seminars. He advised reading the books of great Christian Russian thinkers—Solovev, Berdiaev, Bulgakov, and Catholic and Protestant books as well. His parishioners actively reprinted by clandestine methods Russian and Western theological literature.

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Slavery or Freedom in Christ?

Many priests today prefer to have a strict and constant control of the spiritual life of believers. Many people enjoy this sort of church slavery, seeking not the spiritual guidance of Christ so much as a kind of spiritual slavery to a priest. Moslems leave their shoes outside before entering a mosque; Christians often leave their will and their brains behind before entering the church. This tendency is especially tempting in Russia with its long tradition of ideological dictatorship. In contrast, the method of Fr. Men was to help a person find freedom in Christ.

Beginning in 1988, Fr. Aleksandr had the opportunity to preach to large masses of people in person and on television. On Saturday, September 8, 1990, he delivered a lecture on Christianity to more than 600 people in Moscow. This was the last in a series of lectures on the history of religions that Fr. Aleksandr gave in the spring of 1990. The next day, Sunday, at 6:30 a.m., an unknown assailant attacked Fr. Men near his home as he was leaving for church, killing him by means of an ax blow to the head. Practically everyone was sure it was a deed of the KGB and compared his murder with the police murder of Polish Catholic priest Jerzy Popieluszko. Undaunted, many of Fr. Men's former parishioners actively preach the Gospel. And his books continue to be published in large quantities.

Two circles of people know the details of Fr. Men's biography and have studied his books closely, but have directly opposite opinions of him. First is the circle of his former parishioners and friends. For them, Men is the symbol of a free-minded, open, ecumenical, reasoned Russian Orthodoxy, in which intellectuals can find a proper place for their creative abilities. In sharp contrast is the circle of conservative Russian Orthodox for whom Men is the symbol of Jewish/Masonic efforts to destroy Russian Orthodoxy from inside by means of Bible criticism. This circle tends to equate religion with rigid Church discipline. This fundamentalist circle often lies about the views of Fr. Men, depicting him as a destroyer of Russian Orthodox tradition.

In the Spirit of C. S. Lewis

Fr. Men, like C. S. Lewis, was a brilliant apologist who managed to explain the truth of Christianity in lively, simple, and clear language. His apologetics met the needs of intellectuals burdened with prejudices towards Christianity. It is no accident that many translations of Lewis into Russian were made by Natalia Trauberg, a parishioner of Fr. Aleksandr, at his initiative. Those charitably inclined toward Fr. Aleksandr Men see him as a symbol of nonaggressive, nonpoliticized, non-ghettoized, nonfundamentalist Russian Orthodoxy. ♦

Yakov Krotov is a Moscow-based church historian and journalist. This editorial is excerpted with permission from his Web site: <http://members.xoom.com/krotov/Engl/Myen.html>.