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Catholic Pilgrimage: The Phenomenon of Medugorje

Boris Vukonić

Editor's note: On 24 June 1981, six children from Bijakovici, Bosnia, Yugoslavia, reported seeing a vision of the Virgin Mary in nearby Medugorje. They testified to the same spiritual encounter on 25 June, and on 26 June, 1,000 villagers joined the children. On 28 June some 15,000 people congregated in Medugorje for what, from the start, has been described as a daily appearance of the Virgin Mary to the children. To the present day, four of the original children, now grown, give reports of their daily visions of the Virgin Mary.

Medugorje is a small village, once unknown even in its own country, set in harsh landscape in the far south of Bosnia and Hercegovina, 30 kilometers southeast of Mostar. The [Catholic] parish of Medugorje dates back to 1599. Today, Medugorje is visited, like similar shrines all over Europe, by the sick who are seeking consolation and healing. However, healing is not the primary reason why believers make the trip. [It is, rather,] the Virgin Mary's visitations, translated daily into many languages. Witnesses say that the Virgin Mary has spoken on several occasions about great tensions in the world and that mankind is on the verge of catastrophe, but that faith will restore self-confidence, which is why the Virgin pleads for conversion. Masses celebrating the anniversary of the Virgin's first visitation are held in 13 languages. Through the history of the Roman Catholic Church, theologians have recorded all witnessings of visitations of the Virgin Mary, but it has never been recorded that the Virgin has appeared every day for years, and to the same group of children, as has been the case in Medugorje since 1981.

The Franciscans and the Catholic Hierarchy at Odds

In 1463 Bosnia fell to the Ottoman Empire, a date that marks the beginning of a long period of Turkish dominance in Bosnia and the spread of Islam, which was to dominate Bosnia for centuries. However, despite this new political and religious pressure, the Franciscans remained in Bosnia, managing to obtain a charter in 1463 from Mohammed II that guaranteed their freedom to carry out religious services. The Franciscans retained the role of being the only

Catholic force in Bosnia until the Austro-Hungarian occupation in 1878. In 1891, a Catholic church hierarchy was established in Bosnia and Hercegovina, with one archbishopric in Sarajevo and two bishoprics in Mostar and Baja Luka, thereby creating two competing Catholic movements in Bosnia and Hercegovina. The Franciscans insisted on the rights they felt they had achieved through their presence in the region over the centuries. In 1967 the Vatican ordered the Franciscans to give up some parishes to the diocesan clergy. One of the disputed parishes, which the Franciscans still maintain to date, is the parish of Medugorje. The Franciscans run this parish even though the rival Bishop of Mostar, Pavao Žanić, has obtained the full right to do so, and for this the Franciscans have to thank, above all, the visitation of the Virgin Mary.

Bishop Žanić has more than once challenged the authenticity of the visitations. In a *Newsweek* interview (July 1987), he stated that "the phenomenon of Medugorje will be the church's greatest shame in the twentieth century" and alleged that the Franciscans were deliberately using the visitations to discredit the episcopacy. In 1982 he punished two of the most active Franciscans in Medugorje by suspending them; the suspension is still in force. It is interesting to note that one of the witnesses claims that the Virgin has on many occasions ordered the bishop to end the suspension of the two Franciscans. One of the most eminent theologians among the bishops in Croatia, the Archbishop of the Split-Makarska region, Frane Franić, does not share the view of the Bishop of Mostar, but believes in visitations. This has heated the argument and roused interest in the Christian public in Bosnia and Hercegovina and abroad.

Both church dignitaries were interviewed in the Milan, Italy, Christian monthly magazine, *Jesus*, in May 1986. Asked about the authenticity of the visitations in Medugorje, Bishop Žanić replied, "I foresee disappointment, and I have so often suggested to the Franciscans, the priests, and the animators of the movement that they should say to the believers: 'Don't rush to conclusions, don't proselytize, but wait for the judgment of the Church.'" To the same

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question, Archbishop Franić replied, "It is known that my personal opinion is favorable, the main reason being the fruit of what I see. I am not just a theologian and scientist, I am a shepherd, and I see the good fruits of penitence, prayer and conversion. These signs tell me enough. You can tell the tree by its fruit."

Vatican Ambivalence

The Bishops Conference of former Yugoslavia established a special commission to undertake thorough research over a number of years to make a final judgment in the name of the church. Until that time, the decree of the Bishops Conference of former Yugoslavia (promulgated in October 1984) remains in force and recommends believers not go on pilgrimages to Medugorje and prohibits organized official visits. The same stand was repeated by the Vatican at the beginning of August 1990. The head of one of the highest Vatican bodies at the time, the Congregation for Religious Education (the successor to the former Inquisition), Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, expressed his opinion on the matter in a letter to Bishop Stimpfleu in Augsburg, where a very active organization, Medugorje Deutschland, has

been founded and organizes regular pilgrimages under the guidance of priests. In this letter, the "Iron Cardinal" warns that the Bishops Conference of former Yugoslavia has not yet passed judgment. [Nevertheless,] during the period of decay and disintegration of former Yugoslavia, and even during the war in Bosnia, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims came to Medugorje.

A Pilgrimage Boomtown

Enormous changes have taken place in only a few years in what used to be an almost anonymous village in a backward region. There has been a boom in the number of apartments, and the number of private houses has increased many times. A journalist has written that even though there has been a 10-year economic crisis in former Yugoslavia—especially a total lack of investment because of massive inflation, which was curbed only at the beginning of 1990—there was one place in the country, Medugorje, in which development is "in top gear" and is racing forward.

According to the Italian press, the value of Medugorje tourism to Italian operators exceeded \$10 billion (U.S.) by 1989. Because of the Madonna of Medugorje, the Italians bought new coaches, leased aircraft and ferryboats, formed specialized tourist agencies, set up special radio stations, and published brochures and books. Some of the newly founded tourist agencies have advertised trips to Medugorje as their specialty. A magazine entitled *Medugorje* is published in Milan; in 15 towns throughout Italy there is a telephone service that gives information about Medugorje; in Arcinasho d'Erbe, there is a radio station with a special program promoting Medugorje; as many as 36 societies or groups have been formed that promote Medugorje in Italy; on 20 September 1989 more than 10,000 people gathered in Verona in support of Medugorje. One result of all these activities or developments is that more than 400,000 Italians visited Medugorje in 1987.

However, the Italians are not alone in this. There are Medugorje societies in London, Vienna, Brussels, and Dublin, as well as in Boston and other towns in the United States. Special bulletins are issued, such as *Medugorje Monthly* in London, where the Virgin Mary's messages are published. Dozens of books and monographs about the Medugorje phenomenon have been published in former Yugoslavia and abroad. *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Corriere della Sera*, *Observatore Romano*, *Europa UNITA*, *Paris Match*, *Figaro*, and other magazines have published special reports on Medugorje. Special television programs on Medugorje have been made by former Yugoslav film and television crews and also by BBC, RAI, ABC, and the French television network, Antenne.

About one million visitors (and according to some estimates, two and a half million) visited Medugorje before the [Bosnian] war. It is estimated that more than 10 million visitors came to Medugorje between 1981 and 1988. In 1987, Yugo-tours published 200,000 copies of its annual package tour brochures

Polish Pilgrimages

Mark Elliott

The best-known Roman Catholic pilgrimage site in East Central Europe is the Monastery of Jasna Góra at Czestochowa in southern Poland, founded in the fourteenth century. It serves as the repository of the famous icon of the Black Madonna.

- In the nineteenth century, the number of pilgrims to Czestochowa ranged from 30,000 to 300,000 annually.
- During the Nazi occupation (1939–45), and for most of the Communist period, pilgrimage to Czestochowa slowed to a trickle. Karol Wojtyła, the future Pope John Paul II, was a secret pilgrim during World War II.
- The number of visitors to Czestochowa swelled in the 1980s, drawing four to five million pilgrims per year, equaling the popularity of Marian shrines at Lourdes (France) and Fátima (Portugal).
- Of the approximately 500 Roman Catholic pilgrimage centers in Poland today, 11 draw 100,000 or more visitors per year. After Czestochowa, the most popular destination is Warsaw (2,000,000 annual pilgrims), which is the site of the grave of Jerzy Popieluszko, a priest murdered by Communist police in 1984, and the grave of the revered Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, who died in 1981.

Source: Antoni Jackowski and Valene J. Smith, "Polish Pilgrim-Tourists," *Annals of Tourism Research* 19 (no. 1, 1992), 95–96, 98.

for the Italian market, listing Medugorje as the main attraction. The greatest number of pilgrims come from the United States (especially 1987–90), followed by Italy, Ireland, and other countries of Western and Eastern Europe.

Editor's note: According to the Press Bulletin, the Official Newsletter of the Information Center Mir in Medugorje (<http://www.medugorje.com>), the number of pilgrims (recipients of Holy Communion) in recent years is as follows: 579,420 (1994); 588,500 (1995); 869,000 (1996); 1,021,000 (1997); and 1,066,000 (1998).

Piety and Prosperity

In Medugorje, private accommodations have increased to 8,000 beds, and the price of land has reached astronomical heights. It is interesting to witness the variety of more or less improvised retail outlets and restaurants that have sprung up. Neighboring Citluk, the administrative center of the region, used to have two taxis, but 400 were on the official register by 1990. Before the visitation, no currency exchange office existed in the region, but in 1990, there were 18. In the five duty-free shops, German marks, U.S. dollars, and other foreign currencies are accepted. In 1988, six million dollars passed through these exchange offices, while at least twice as much was collected through direct payment to the private sector. From the outset—the first visitations of the Virgin Mary—improvised outlets sprang up around the church in the center of Medugorje. Now hundreds of stands operate day and night, selling fruit, cooked food, holy books, articles of clothing with pictures of the Virgin Mary and Medugorje, as well as rosaries, holy pictures, and all kinds of souvenirs. Great social change also is evident in the local population, of whom many have amassed fortunes from kitsch and poor service. This

commercialization has been one of the main arguments advanced by church authorities in refusing to accept the Medugorje visitation as a true event.

According to the local tourist office, the average length of stay of visitors in the Medugorje region has risen to 3.2 days. Visitors from the United States stay the longest (seven days), while those from Italy stay the shortest (two and a half days). These figures are impressive, at least in the context of Mediterranean tourism. Indeed, many well-established tourist resorts would wish to have such a performance. According to the local tourist authority, the majority of visitors are middle-aged or older, women predominate, and there is an exceptionally high proportion of handicapped and sick, of whom many are children accompanied by their parents.

It can be said that the Virgin Mary has become the prosperity trademark for Medugorje residents, so it is not surprising that the local population fully supports those who speak in favor of the visitation. It is easy to understand the worldly behavior of the local people, who for centuries knew only poverty and hard work on poor soil. The era of basic survival in poor houses roofed with straw, without windows and with only a hearth for heating and cooking, has been transformed into a time of real prosperity. The new ostentatious houses make it difficult to believe that there was once a time of hardship. It has been said that the people of Medugorje do not need the final judgment of the church on the visitation; they believe in the Virgin Mary, they pray to Her, and they cooperate with Her well and profitably.

It has been said that the people of Medugorje do not need the final judgement of the church on the visitation; they believe in the Virgin Mary, they pray to Her, and they cooperate with Her well and profitably.

Excerpt reprinted with permission from Boris Vukonić, Tourism and Religion (New York: Pergamon, 1996).

Budapest as Mission Headquarters

Barbara Kertai

Campus Crusade for Christ moved its East European headquarters from Kandern, Germany, to Budapest, Hungary, in 1994. The purpose was to coordinate better its activities in East Central Europe from a center in the region itself. Twenty office staff plus their families made the transition, first to the Budapest suburb of Diózd, and more recently to the suburb of Budaörs.

Prior to the fall of communism, Christian ministry offices for East Central Europe were located in the West, mainly in the U.S., Germany, the Netherlands, or Austria. Several mission organizations, such as the Evangelical Free Church Mission (EFCM), moved their offices to Budapest from West European bases. Other American ministries, such as the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and the Alliance for Saturation Church Planting, established their Budapest centers directly from the U.S.

Why Budapest?

As the case of Campus Crusade suggests, Budapest has become one of the most popular cities for missions headquarters because of its central location. Hungary is roughly halfway between the Baltic and Adriatic Seas. Almost all of East Central Europe and the Balkans are within a day's drive. Vienna, a major Western capital, is only three hours away by train or by toll road. At the same time, Budapest allows for easy access for ministries working in the war-torn areas of former Yugoslavia, such as Bosnia, Serbia, and Kosovo, without being located in the war theater itself. Christian and Missionary Alliance efforts in the Balkans, for example, are superintended from Budapest. In addition, some organizations have been attracted to the Hungarian capital because of the

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possibility of networking with missions already established there. King's Kids International, a ministry of Youth With A Mission, selected Budapest partly because YWAM already had a ministry in the city.

One of the major factors for missions relocating regional offices to Budapest has been the development of the International Christian School of Budapest, an accredited program (grades 1-12) with 150 students. Mission leaders involved in establishing the school chose the Budapest suburb of Diózd from three possible locations, the others being Warsaw and Prague.

Another decisive factor favoring Budapest has been a well-developed infrastructure that affords efficient working and living conditions. A new airport, superior rail and highway transportation, affordable Hungarian conference sites, and reliable communication services (mail, telephone, E-mail) all work in Budapest's favor. Ministries also appreciate the city's lower cost of living compared to the West and its reliable medical care. In this regard, ministries surveyed cited low operating and living expenses as Budapest's single most important advantage over West European locations. Quite a few missionaries and their ministries are purchasing homes and offices because property prices are quite attractive compared to rental rates.

Another significant advantage for many organizations, such as ACSI and Deaf Opportunity Out Reach (DOOR), is a reasonable tax system. While the value added tax (VAT) is higher in Hungary than in Britain or Germany, Hungarian income tax rates generally are lower than in Western Europe, depending on the tax bracket. While corruption is deep-seated, it is not as pervasive as in Bulgaria, Russia, or Ukraine. In addition, Hungary enjoys political and economic stability, accentuated by its recent acceptance into NATO, and a legal system amenable to the creation of non-profit organizations. Also, the country is relatively safe, and Hungarians are genuinely friendly to foreigners.

From the outset, ACSI and Grace Ministries each started their work in Europe with headquarters in Budapest. In other cases, Western ministries expanded

a Hungarian office in Budapest to serve as an East Central European regional office. The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention currently has a small representation in Budapest but is considering the Hungarian capital as the location for a regional office to replace its current one in Wiesbaden, Germany. Other groups with Budapest headquarters include the Association of Baptists for World Evangelization; Mission to Eastern Europe and its affiliated Christian Institute for Study and Training; Services, Helps, and Alternative Resources in Education (SHARE); the Free Methodist Church; Pioneers; Greater Europe Mission (Southeast Europe office); and United World Mission. It also should be noted that the Budapest-based Protestant Institute for Mission Studies, while increasingly an indigenous effort of the Reformed and Lutheran Churches, was founded and still is led by a Dutch Christian, Dr. Anne Marie Kool.

Some Budapest headquarters oversee efforts in the former Soviet Union as well as East Central Europe. This is true for the Alliance for Saturation Church Planting. Similarly, the Hungarian office of Campus Crusade covers not only East Central Europe, but also Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Georgia.

But Could the Trend Be Reversed?

The Central Europe Team (CET) of Operation Mobilization moved its office from Austria to Budapest, only to return to Austria after two years. In addition, Greater Europe Mission recently moved its Northeast Europe regional office from Budapest to Kandern, Germany, in the Black Forest. These transfers raise the question: Could Budapest lose its allure for Christian ministries if costs of doing business continue to rise and if residence permits become more restrictive for U.S. and West European citizens? The Hungarian language, one of the most difficult in the world to master, also could be a factor in reversing the trend towards Budapest as a missions headquarters. Finally, missions have learned that idiosyncrasies in the Hungarian accounting and reporting systems are much more difficult than in the European Union or the U.S.

Budapest has become one of the most popular cities for missions headquarters because of its central location.

Barbara Kertai, a native of Budapest, Hungary, earned a B.A. in journalism and religion from Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL.

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Sports Ministries in the Post-Soviet Era

Thomas Merchant and Joshua Snyder

While Christians in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union traditionally have frowned on athletic activity as a distraction or waste of time, a growing number are now using sports as a means of evangelistic outreach. In Kazan, Russia, Sergei Khitev and the Alpha Social Union teach the Bible during karate lessons. In Poland, former professional soccer player Zbigniew Masewicz, of Athletes in Action International, uses connections with the Polish Olympics Committee to share the Gospel with professional athletes. In Chisinau, Moldova, Boris Tcacenco of New Life meets with schoolchildren to play basketball and witness for Christ.

Defining Sports Ministry

A variety of methods turns sports or athletic events into platforms for Gospel presentations to athletes and spectators alike. Perhaps most often this happens informally: relationships built over games of volleyball or Frisbee provide opportunities for conversation about deeper matters, including religious convictions. More formally, organizations have been founded with the singular goal of ministry through sporting events. Christian Sports Outreach International (CSOI), for example, sends Christian athletic teams into Ukraine and the Czech Republic "as a platform to build relationships to share one-on-one." CSOI athletes present testimonies to spectators and cooperate with local churches to minister in orphanages, hospitals, and prisons. Hockey Ministries International is even more specific in its mission to the hockey world. Others, such as the International Bible Society (IBS), use sports as just one small segment of a much larger ministry. IBS, which focuses on scripture distribution, prints and distributes Christian literature of special interest to athletes.

Those Doing Sports Ministry

The most visible sports ministries in the former Soviet Union and East Central Europe are those with Western roots or Western funding. Athletes in Action (AIA), founded in the U.S. in 1967, is quite active in a number of former Soviet bloc countries, reaching out to professional as well as amateur athletes and spectators. Carl Dambman of AIA-Moscow points out that "bringing top athletes opens doors even to government officials." AIA-Moscow also hosts visiting teams, such as the Chicago or Charlotte Eagles Football [Soccer] Clubs, which play local teams. In Slovakia and Hungary, the athletic program Good Sports seeks "to allow every child the opportunity to learn baseball," regardless of gender, finances, or physical liabilities. According to director Terry Slobodian, "Sports itself cannot save a nation's children. But our athletic program does provide the

vehicle to do something that truly does make a difference: to empower children toward a better self-image through physical, emotional, and spiritual nourishment."

As well as structured international organizations, less visible, yet perhaps equally effective, ministries are springing up through local churches and Christians. As mentioned above, Sergei Khitev intersperses Bible teaching with karate lessons in Kazan, Russia. Vladislav Gomonovich, in the Krasnodar Region of Russia, offers daily wrestling and basketball for youth, in addition to Bible study groups, summer camps, and rock music outreaches. The Tae-kwon-do Federation of Moldova started as a sports club, but when director Ion Keptene became a Christian through a Bible study, his club became a Christian mission. The federation now has 60 Christian karate clubs and has seen more than 60 people accept Christ.

In Omsk, Siberia, Viktor Ekimov, a former professional athlete, shares his testimony with rinkball and hockey teams from across the country: "I meet athletes, since I used to be one, and introduce myself as a Christian," he notes. "I tell my testimony and give out booklets and New Testaments with the church address. I invite questions. Then I ask for permission to visit teams to share. They receive me because they know me."

An even more common variation of athletics ministry involves camping, which has a much more traditional role in churches in former Soviet bloc countries. Under communism, children and youth spent summers at Communist Pioneer Camps, and rests at "sanatoria" in forests, mountains, or beaches were common benefits at many places of employment. With communist camps closed and employers withholding even salary, not to mention benefits, churches are stepping in to provide camping opportunities as evangelistic outreaches. Renate Kurz, director of Little Lambs Ministry, Carol Stream, IL, began a summer camp ministry to orphans in Kyiv, Ukraine. "God has opened my eyes to see the big need for the orphans." Partnering with churches in the United States and Ukraine, her goal is to provide "the opportunity for orphans in Ukraine to accept Christ, to grow in their faith, and become self-sufficient and contributing members of society." Christian Camping International (CCI)-Russia, founded by Kingdom Venture in Canada, provides 12-day seminars, training hundreds of Christians in the former Soviet Union in camping ministry. It estimates that 4,000 Christian camping staff have used its materials and methods.

Why Sports Ministry?

A question may be raised regarding the value of sports ministry when seemingly much more urgent

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While Christians in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union traditionally have frowned on athletic activity as a distraction or waste of time, a growing number are now using sports as a means of evangelistic outreach.

Sports Ministry (cont. from page 5)

needs are pressing. Churches lack buildings, pastors are unpaid, theological training is in its beginning stages, and basic medicine and health care are lacking. So why invest in sports? Four reasons stand out. 1) Camps successfully teach and train large numbers of children. 2) Tours by visiting Christian teams encourage local churches and start or rejuvenate

existing ministries. 3) Sports matches demonstrate quality Christian commitment and build camaraderie, friendship, and respect. 4) Finally, the expense involved can be minimal. While large evangelistic campaigns are difficult undertakings for many national Christians, soccer games or karate lessons can be organized with relatively modest funding, even if Western support were to become unavailable. As expressed by Annette Miskevitch of the International Church of St. Petersburg, athletic ministries "serve the church and Christian ministries by developing community, passion, and discipleship through the unique avenue of sport."

Thomas Merchant, of the Chicago Eagles Soccer Club (Missionary Athletes International), is on loan to Athletes in Action, Moscow, Russia. Joshua Snyder works with the Institute of Chinese Studies, Colorado Springs, CO.

A Sampling of Sports and Camp Ministries in the Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe

Organization

Contact Information

Alpha Social Union (Kazan, Russia)

Church-based karate club that includes Bible teaching for children during karate sessions

Sergei Khitev
562510 Kazan
RUSSIA

Athletes in Action-Poland (Warsaw and Zdunska, Poland)

Works within the Polish professional sports community; led by a former professional soccer player

Zbyszek Masewicz, Director
Athletes in Action-Poland
ul. Polnej Rozy 1C
02-798 Warszawa, POLAND

Tel.: 48-22-648-9818
Fax: 48-22-648-9826
polandaia@zigzag.pl
http://www.aiaintl.org/

Athletes in Action-Eurasia (Russia [Daghestan, Tatarstan, Komi, Yakutia, Osetia], Kazakhstan, Georgia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan)

Provides evangelism and discipleship in sports schools, reform schools, and prisons, as well as evangelism at athletic events

Carl Dambman
New Life-Eurasia
kvartal 29-30 Novie Cheriomushki
ul. Namiotkina, korpus 5
117420 Moscow, RUSSIA

Tel.: 7-095-719-7779
Fax: 7-095-719-7789
carlaia@glasnet.ru
http://www.aiaintl.org/

Christian Camping International (Former Soviet Union)

Exists to equip, train, and resource Christian camping leaders in over 100 locations in the former Soviet Union

Dr. Aleksandr A. Kharitonov
Christian Camping Intl.-Russia/CIS
ul. Ordzhonokidze 35-1-3
196158 St. Petersburg, RUSSIA
Tel./fax: 7-812-127-1678
akharit@infopro.spb.su

Dan DeGroat, Director
Russia/CIS Ministries Office
24651 CR 448
Van, TX 75790
Tel.: 903-569-3482
Fax: 903-569-1521
ddegroat@aol.com

Christian Sports Outreach International (Ukraine, Czech Republic)

Uses sports as a platform to enter various segments of society, including orphanages, hospitals, prisons, and street outreach

Jack Isleib
Box 2823
Vero Beach, FL 32961-2823

Tel.: 561-778-0575
coihq@sprynet.com

Viktor Ekimov (Omsk, Russia)

Local church member using former sports career to reach other athletes for Christ

Viktor Ekimov
Toustuho 5-59
644059 Omsk, RUSSIA

Every Generation Ministries (Poland, Hungary)

Provides leadership training for church youth ministries, including camping ministry

Daniel Watts, President
Skr. Pocz. 1
30-960 Krakow 1, POLAND

Tel.: 48-12-13-2551
Fax: 48-12-13-2075
mpokolen@kki.krakow.pl

Good Sports (Slovakia, Hungary)

Uses baseball clinics to provide physical, emotional, and spiritual nourishment for children

Tom Johnson
Church of the Open Door
6421 45th Ave. N
Minneapolis, MN 55428-5299

Tel.: 612-537-4495
Tjohnson@thedoorg.org
Marc LiVecche
mlivecche@telebot.net

Tree of Eternal Life Association High School Evangelism Fellowship (Tambov, Voronezh, and Movshansk, Russia)

Provides camps, Bible clubs, and rallies for high school students

Donna Macomber
High School Evangelism Fellowship
Box 7, Bergenfield, NJ 07621
Tel.: 201-387-1750
Fax: 201-387-1348
hiba@carroll.com

Rick Kirschman
Russia Coordinator
Tree of Eternal Life Association
Box 9
392001 Tambov-01
RUSSIA
Tel.: 7-0752-51-70-42
Fax: 7-0752-73-33-86
telarick@mtts-tambov.ru

Sports and Camp Ministries (continued)

Organization	Contact Information	
Hockey Ministries International (Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Czech Republic) Hockey ministry to the hockey world	Don Lisemer, President Hockey Ministries International Box 36, Beaconsfield, QC Canada H9W 5T6	Tel.: 514-626-3000 Fax: 514-626-1976 hmi@ibm.net http://www.gospelcom.net/hmi/
International Bible Society (Majority of countries in Europe) Publishes Bibles and other materials for outreach, including literature for athletes	Joseph Panker IBS Europe Box 205 S-52423 Herrljunga, SWEDEN	Tel.: 46-513-21-930 Fax: 46-513-21-501 ibs.europe@eur.ibs.org
International Christian Church of St. Petersburg (St. Petersburg, Russia) Local church-based sport outreaches with Bible studies; camp ministry with street children	Annette Mitskevich ul. Voronezhskaya, 38 St. Petersburg, RUSSIA	Tel.: 7-812-167-1975 mitskevich@infopro.spb.su
International Messengers (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Latvia) Evangelistic English language camps including Bible studies and basketball	Darwin Anderson 110 Orchard Court Clear Lake, IA 50428	Tel.: 515-357-6700 Fax: 515-357-6791 imusa@netins.net
KEMPO Sport Club (Kazan, Russia) Karate club evangelizing children	Artem Barabanov Box 112 42016 Kazan, RUSSIA	Tel.: 7-8432-22-70-6134
Kingdom Ventures (Former Soviet Union) Youth camp leadership development with sports as a major component	Dave Loewen, President Box 18, Group 540 RR5 Winnipeg, MB R2C 2Z2, CANADA	Tel.: 204-224-4175 Fax: 204-222-2260 Kingdomventures@msn.com
Kovcheg Youth Center (Adagei Republic, Russia) Christian youth center using sports, camps, Bible studies and music for outreach	Vladislav Gomonovich ul. Shevgenova 17 Kozet, Takhtaniikaiskii district Krasnodar Region, RUSSIA	
Little Lambs Ministry (Ukraine) Orphan ministry partnering with local churches for the spiritual and physical needs of orphans	Renate Kurz Box 87463 Carol Stream, IL 60188	Tel.: 630-260-1947 Fax: 630-260-1991 Littlelambs1@juno.com
Missionary Athletes International (Russia, Czech Republic) Soccer ministry using tours, clinics, and Bible studies to reach soccer community and others with the Gospel	Tom Fite Missionary Athletes International 18485 Root Rd. Chagrin Falls, OH 44023 Tel.: 440-543-2428 Fax: 440-543-2410 tfite@aisint.org http://www.missionary.qpg.com/	Bill Galipault Fotbal Plus Hakenova 464/11 290 01 Podebrady, Czech Republic Tel./fax: 42-0-324-3801 101617.2563@compuserve.com
Nabat (Russia) Camps, clubs and outreaches, including sports, to children	Vladislav Vovk, Director Istra, Mosow Region, RUSSIA	Tel.: 7-09631-51654 Nabat@istra.ru
New Life-Moldova (Moldova) Campus Crusade ministry using sports to build relationships for evangelism and discipleship	Boris Tcacenco Blvd. Traian 23/1, apt. 454 2060 Chisinau, MOLDOVA	Tel./fax: 3732-77-4706 Newlife@ch.moldpac.md
Tae-kwon-do Federation of Moldova (Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Belarus, Moldova) Sport organization whose president uses facilities and staff for ministry	Ion Keptene, President M. Basarab 5/5-59 2045 Chisinau, MOLDOVA	Tel.: 3732-32-37-10 Fax: 3732-32-36-36 Keptene@ch.moldpac.md
Arkadii Tarusin (Kolomna and Voskresensk, Russia) Local church reaching out to athletes	Pastor Arkadii Tarusin ul. Makeeva 14-67 140407 Kolomna, RUSSIA	Tel: 7-0966-12-4904
United Sports Ministry (Russia) Uses hockey and wrestling to reach unreached people groups	John McIntosh, Director United Sports Ministry Kvartal 29-30 Novie Cheriomushki ul. Namiotkina, korpus 5 117420 Moscow, RUSSIA	Tel.: 7-095-719-7945 Fax: 7-095-719-7890 moscow9@hotmail.com
Unlimited Potential (Work in over 40 countries) Baseball tours and camps reaching professional athletes and children with Gospel	Tom Roy Box 1355 Warsaw, IN 46581	Tel.: 219-267-7988 Fax: 219-267-6190 upi@upi.org http://www.upi.org/

Russia's Occult Revival

Holly DeNio Stephens

Editor's Note: The East-West Church & Ministry Report seeks to assist Christians in countering the influence of religious systems that are antithetical to the Gospel. Our purpose in detailing the vast array of occult practices in Russia today is to better equip believers in Christ to identify and challenge teachings incompatible with Christianity.

A survey conducted in the early 1990s revealed that 40 percent of respondents were drawn to East Asian philosophies, 50 percent believed in astrology, 66 percent believed in ESP, and 70 percent believed in UFOs.

Many of the occult ideas popular in the Russia of the 1990s are based on [late nineteenth and early twentieth century] graftings of Oriental philosophies onto the Western occult. New mutations of Theosophy and Anthroposophy and a renaissance of turn-of-the-century spiritualism have given birth to extrasensitives and belief in energy vampirism. It is common to find on the streets of Moscow and St. Petersburg reprints of Madame Helena Blavatsky's theosophical classic, *The Secret Doctrine*, as well as other theosophical books by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbetter; tracts by the Anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner; *Agni-yoga* by Nikolai Rerikh (1874–1947) and his wife, Elena Shaposhnikova; and other works by admirers of the philosophies of India and Tibet, such as George Gurdjieff (born Georgii Ivanovich Gorgiades; 1873–1949) and Petr Demianovich Uspenskii (1878–1947). Small bookshops provide occult works, crystals, incense, and Western New Age recordings.

The Russian Occult in Infinite Variety

Reprints of prerevolutionary works that examine Russian mythology, sorcery, witchcraft, and folk belief, as well as new works examining pan-Slavic mythologies and the role of the shaman in all cultures, may be found in virtually every bookstore. Russian Gypsy fortune-telling cards and Russian versions of tarot decks are also for sale in many locations. Works have appeared on alchemy, the beneficial healing qualities of stones and crystals, Druidic astrology, the tarot, the Jewish Kabbala, the writings of Hermes Trismegistus, mystical Freemasonry, medieval alchemy, dream interpretation and chiromancy, as well as on psychic healing, magic, spiritualism, and astrology. Interest is high in UFOs, abominable snowmen, poltergeists, and Tibetan herbal medicine for attaining supraconsciousness. Healers and psychics frequently appear on talk shows and recount their visions and paranormal experiences. Psychics analyze guardian angels; popular museum exhibits focus on the shaman; and huge exhibitions of stones and crystals promote their [alleged] inherent healing, protective, and divinatory qualities.

Many messianic apocalyptic sects are also surfacing in the former Soviet Union. One such cult, which has lost much influence since 1994, is *Beloe Bratstvo* (White Brotherhood). Its apocalyptic and messianic message appealed to large numbers of people in

Russia and several other former republics. Its leaders staged large demonstrations and predicted that the apocalypse would occur in 1994. Its teachings were so popular and it controlled its members so completely that families were filing charges of kidnapping and brainwashing against the cult. When 1994 came and went with no apocalypse, the White Brotherhood lost many of its followers.

Curiosity about the occult pervades all elements of society. A survey conducted in the early 1990s revealed that 20 percent of respondents believed in Buddhism and the Hare Krishna movement, 40 percent were drawn to East Asian philosophies, 50 percent believed in astrology, 66 percent believed in ESP, and 70 percent believed in UFOs.

Theosophy

Events in the Soviet Union after 1985 revealed that occultism in general and Theosophy (and Anthroposophy) in particular had not disappeared from Russian consciousness. Russian Theosophists are once again holding meetings and giving lectures, and theosophical societies have officially opened their doors in both Moscow and St. Petersburg. Works of Blavatsky, Besant, and Steiner are readily available. Several specialized publishing ventures have emerged, such as the Yerevan-based *Noi* (Noah) publishing house, which plans to issue Steiner's complete works in its series, *Biblioteka Dukhovnoi Nauki* [Library of Spiritual Science]. Russian Theosophists have added their voices to the new dialogue about spiritual values. Like their prerevolutionary predecessors, Russian Theosophists today come from the intelligentsia, the professions, and the middle bureaucracy. They have joined forces with the growing Rerikh movement in an effort to achieve a larger, popular spiritual renewal of Russia through the combined potency of two touchstone names, Blavatsky and Rerikh.

Gurdjieff and Uspenskii

Books by George Gurdjieff and his disciple Petr Uspenskii also are being reprinted, but in lesser numbers than those of the Theosophists, Anthroposophists, and Rerikh. According to Gurdjieff, people basically are sleeping, helpless victims of circumstance. There are occasional moments of lucidity, when a person may perceive flashes of ultimate freedom and Truth, but these are ephemeral. Humans must be taught to see beyond the banality of the world and strive for objective consciousness.

The Rerikh Cult

During the 1920s and 1930s, Nikolai Konstantinovich Rerikh (a Theosophist and Nobel Prize nominee), together with his wife, Elena Ivanovna Shaposhnikova-Rerikh, wrote *Agni-yoga*, a 10-volume work on yogic philosophy allegedly

Occult Terminology

Editor's note: Definitions are provided for purposes of clarity, not endorsement.

alchemy (*alkhimiia*)—ancient chemistry-based magic aimed at the extraction of gold from baser metals, or the discovery of an elixir for immortality (Mather and Nichols)

anomalies (*anomolii*)—phenomena that deviate from what may be discerned empirically (*Webster's*)

Anthroposophy (*antroposofia*)—occult movement founded by Rudolf Steiner stressing liberation from egoism and the development of "higher capacities for knowledge and enlightenment" (Gaynor)

aura (*aura*)—energy field that is said to surround all living beings, not to be confused with aureoles, or halos, of saints used in iconography; biofield (Briggs; Carroll; Ozhegov)

biofield (*biopole*)—an invisible energy that is said to surround all organisms (Ozhegov)

biorhythm (*biorifma*)—physical, emotional, or intellectual cycle claimed to affect everyday lives (Carroll)

chiromancy (*kehiromantiia*)—Obtaining hidden knowledge by the study of the lines in the palm of the hand; palmistry; palm reading (Briggs)

extrasensitive (*ekstrasens*)—see psychic

kabbala (*kabbala*)—Jewish mystical tradition which interprets the Torah according to secret or hidden knowledge.

In Russian, the term also refers to Egyptian (Western) and Indian (Eastern) occultism (Mather and Nichols)

karma (*karma*)—doctrine common to Hinduism, Buddhism, and Theosophy that teaches that everything done is done for eternity with consequences for the transmigration of the soul (Spence; *Webster's*)

New Age (*dvizhenie "Niu eidzh"*)—contemporary religious orientation incorporating organic farming, environmentalism, meditation, "higher consciousness," and "alternative energy" (Shepard)

occultism (*okkultizm*)—belief in supernatural powers derived from secret or concealed truth available only to initiates (*Webster's*)

poltergeist (*poltergeist*)—a noisy, usually mischievous, ghost held responsible for unexplained noises (*Webster's*)

psychic (*ekstrasens*)—a person said to be sensitive to nonphysical forces who is an intermediary between the earthly world and the world of spirits; a medium; an extrasensitive (*Webster's*)

shaman (*shaman*)—Siberian tribal medicine man or magician (Gaynor)

Theosophy (*teosofia*)—spiritual philosophy stressing truths thought to be common to all religions based on the writings of

Helena Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott (Mather and Nichols)

vampirism, psychic or energy (*energeticheskii vampirizm*)—the practice of subsisting on the energy of others. Vampirism can also refer to a belief in dead bodies rising from the grave at night to prey on sleeping persons (Briggs; *Webster's*) See also aura and biofield.

yoga—Hindu philosophy teaching suppression of all activity of body, mind, and will in order that the self may attain liberation (*Webster's*)

Editor's note: Definitions adapted from R. Briggs, Briggs First Dictionary of Occult Terminology, <http://members.visi.net/~robinson/shadows/b1d/> (1996); Robert Todd Carroll, The Skeptic's Dictionary, <http://skeptdic.com/> (1994-99); Frank Gaynor, ed., Dictionary of Mysticism (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953); George A. Mather and Larry A. Nichols, eds., Dictionary of Cults, Sects, Religions and the Occult (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993); S.I. Ozhegov and I. Iu. Shvedova, Tolkovnyi slovar russkogo iazika, 2nd ed. (Moscow: AZ, 1995); Leslie A. Shepard, ed., Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology, 2nd ed., Vol. 2 (Detroit, MI: Gale, 1985); Lewis Spence, An Encyclopedia of Occultism (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1968); and Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, MA: Merriam Co., 1976).

received psychically from Mahatma Moria (who was, coincidentally, also Madame Blavatsky's personal teacher). *Agni-yoga* reflects many of the neo-Buddhist ideas of earlier theosophical writings. The Rerikhs emphasize Agni, the Hindu god of fire, who served as a mediator between mortals and the gods. According to the Rerikhs, "Realization and participation in a new era is possible for spiritually enlightened people who recognize the purifying cathartic elements of fire, which consumes the past and lights up the future." The Rerikh Society has gained international repute for its call for cosmopolitan brotherhood [and] its denunciation of war and human suffering.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Rerikh cult has gained immense popularity in Russia; it is now possible to find the Rerikhs' works

in all bookstores. In 1994 and 1995 lectures celebrating the Rerikhs' life and works and explicating their philosophy were quite common in both Moscow and St. Petersburg. Even during the period when the Rerikhs' writings were in official disfavor, Nikolai's paintings guaranteed him continued popularity in his native land. Their bright primary colors, their apocalyptic and religious themes, their exotic subject matter, and their stylized and often primitive manner of execution won him a loyal following that continues today. His art often engenders a desire to read and understand his ideas.

Extrasensitives (Psychics)

One of the most popular occult practices in Russia today is the traditional discipline of yoga (including

(continued on page 10)

Agni-yoga) to enhance one's psychic energies and abilities and especially to become an extrasensitive (*ekstrasens*) or healer (*tselitel*). Yoga and meditation have enjoyed considerable popularity among the Russian intelligentsia, not only in prerevolutionary society, but during the Soviet period as well. One of the most well-received and prolific authors on this subject is Yurii M. Ivanov, an extrasensitive who stresses the importance of the more conventional forms of yoga to achieve unification with the Absolute (*kundalini*). According to Ivanov, yoga enables a person to focus on others' biofields and to examine and interpret the colors of their auras, to develop the dormant psychic abilities necessary to become a healer. By a laying on of hands, the healer transfers to the patient his or her own psychic energy.

Two objects that are said to aid the extrasensitive are a pendulum and a sort of miniature divining rod (*ramka* or *ramochka*). A ring or needle suspended from a thread can function as a pendulum. When the extrasensitive is asked a question, the pendulum swings in one direction for a negative answer and in the opposite direction for an affirmative answer. The divining rod, used to find water and ore, buried treasure, lost items, or missing persons, can be used to diagnose a medical problem.

Evgeniia Iurashevna Davitashvili, Brezhnev's personal faith healer, conducted a series of experiments in Tbilisi, Georgia, as proof of her healing abilities in 1979. By far, the most famous psychic healer in Russia is Anatoly Kashpirovsky, who conducted mass psychic healings, filled stadiums with his followers, and hypnotized scores of people at a time. Kashpirovsky became a television personality when he "purified" cups of tea and coffee, glasses of water, and bottles of hand lotion on an early morning show using mesmeric passes. Viewers who used these "blessed" potions were reported to be promptly relieved of their afflictions. A minor scandal erupted, however, when people who believed themselves free of disease began to suffer symptoms again. Kashpirovsky's television show was canceled. Today, most Russians feel that he is indeed a charlatan, though some still claim that he did cure their maladies. He has been displaced in the world of the occult by scores of other healers, some well known, others not, but each with a following of believers.

Energy Vampirism (Psychic Attack)

Belief in energy vampirism (psychic attack or psychic vampirism) has become widespread. Discussions about energy vampirism may be heard in Russia on city streets, in cafes, in institutes and universities, and in private residences. "Energy vampire" has become a catchword for people with unappealing or exacting

personalities and is frequently followed by a long discourse concerning the negative aspects of that person's character. Methods of defense vary: a cold or contrasting shower, a rapid dance or coffee laced with black pepper.

An extremely popular pamphlet, *Kak izbezhat energeticheskogo vampirizma i samomu ne stat vampirom* [*How to Avoid Energy Vampirism and How Not to Become a Vampire Yourself*], published by the St. Petersburg School of Spiritual Development of the Personality (under the direction of A. Z. Gromokovskii) in 1992, offers a detailed explanation from a conservative religious and nationalist point of view. It is written collectively by teachers whose basic goal is to help people understand themselves and the system of the universe on the basis of Christian principles.

Astrology

Astrology is extremely popular in Russia today, as it is in the West. Six-month horoscopes include biorhythm charts and numerological values for the letters of the Cyrillic alphabet. Each planet also has a corresponding Pythagorean numerical value, and it is possible to determine one's personality and one's purpose for existence by the total number of letters in one's first name, patronymic, and last name. Numerological and astrological charts are popular among a broad range of the Russian population, even among people who profess to have no other occult interests.

Anomalies

The widespread fascination with UFOs in Russia is attested by two monthly newspapers, *Stalker-UFO* and *Anomalie*, which regularly report on UFO sightings, publish photographs of UFOs and conduct interviews with people who claim to have met extraterrestrials. Yurii Ivanov explains anomalies as beings that are able to traverse the boundaries between the physical and the astral worlds by controlling the vibrations of the bodies.

By Way of Explanation

Reactions to the dehumanizing effects of scientific doctrine, the overabundance of prescribed rational thought, and the proscription of alternative systems during the Soviet period have generated much of the energy directed toward the occult today. Many Russians are attempting to find new values and belief systems to replace those that have been jettisoned. The occult is seen as an attractive alternative, more consoling than the harsh reality imposed by the instability and chaos of the physical world. Intrinsically apolitical, occult systems serve as spiritual panaceas for the gravest and most trying conditions.

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Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from Holly DeNio Stephens, "The Occult in Russia Today," in Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, ed., The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 357-376.

The Occult in Christian Perspective

Nikolai Berdiaev

Editor's Note: Renowned Russian thinker Nikolai Berdiaev (1874–1948), exiled to the West by the Bolsheviks in 1922, provides insight on the occult that is as penetrating today as it was when first published in 1916.

Today, occultism, a secret subterranean river in world culture, has become popular, is attracting great superficial interest, and is in danger of becoming stylish. Theosophy, now approaching the wider masses, is popularizing occult doctrines, mostly those of the East. Indian occultism is the most acceptable. Materialistic Europe, having betrayed the faith of Christ, finds it easy to accept Eastern spiritualism. It is a strange and terrible thing to say, but Christianity is becoming more foreign and less acceptable to the modern mind of Christian Europe than Buddhism. The popularization of occult doctrines is of enormous symptomatic significance for our time. The way of positivism and rationalism, along which modern man has traveled, has already shown its terrible fruits, and man now yearns for a return to his secret and pristine sources. Theosophy wishes to bring modern man to mysticism and religion with no sacrifice. Theosophy is afraid of frightening modern man, drunk with the spirit of extreme self-assertion, having lost his capacity for sacrifice and renunciation.

Occultism: A Symptom of Decomposition and Atomization

Today, occultism, in its deepest manifestations (for example in Rudolf Steiner) is a grave symptom of decomposition and atomization. In occultism, there seems to be neither freedom nor meaning nor light at the beginning of the way. Man must proceed in

the dark, climb an endless darkened stairway on which no single merciful ray of light falls. Occult knowledge is somehow not an active process of giving meaning. For Steiner's occult science, the question remains finally without an answer—is there a meaning in the world process, and, if so, what is that meaning? Man does not stand against cosmic forces as a god-like substantial being, bringing meaning into the world process—man is the passive tool of cosmic forces, and ought to abandon himself to the atomizing cosmic wind. Occultism knows the mystery of the cosmos, but without the mystery of God or of Christ, without the Logos, and without primordial meaningfulness. God is very far off in occultism, more distant, even, than in churchly Christianity. There is no immediate revelation of God in the soul. The soul's wandering begins without God, without a religious revelation of meaning. Man is armed, he is given sword and shield, but he is not told for the sake of whom or what he should march into battle.

Darkness and Light

Through Christ the Redeemer naturalistic evolution of the soul in darkness is ended; the law of Karma is replaced by the free grace of love. In occultism, the soul is still unredeemed; its sufferings are without either grace or light. It is as though the way of occultism was made for some unloved stepchildren of God. And there is no end to the dark corridors and steep dark stairways.

Excerpt reprinted from Nicolas Berdiaev, The Meaning of the Creative Act (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), 310–14. Originally published as Smysl tvorchestva (Moscow: G. A. Lemand and S. I. Sakharova, 1916). See also <http://members.xoom.com/dirkk/berdiaev/>.

Nikon, Archimandrite, ed. Okkultizm v svete khristianskoi istiny [Occultism in the Light of Christian Truth]. Kyiv: Informatsionno-Izdatelskii Tsentri Ukrainskii Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi, 1998. Reviewed by Olga Loukmanova. 64 pp.

In the current climate of increased public interest in occultism and Eastern spirituality, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine has produced a booklet raising warnings against such phenomena. Subjects covered include hypnosis, extrasensory perception, parapsychology, UFOs, witchcraft, fortune telling, magic, bioenergy, reincarnation, and Karma. Concluding chapters give quite negative assessments of television and computer technologies as spiritually harmful, no matter how they are used. Most of the essays, however, are devoted to a description of

Theosophy, its doctrines, history, and development. The lives and views of theosophical leaders (M. Blavatsky, M. Steiner, A. Klizovskii) are also discussed at some length. A useful starting point for those unfamiliar with Theosophy, the book clearly outlines its main teachings, providing objections to them in light of the Bible. It also points out that Theosophy can take on the outward appearance of Christianity and may employ Christian language and symbols.

While the booklet provides biblical explanations for the incompatibility between theosophic, New Age spirituality and Christianity, it unfairly characterizes Baptists and Adventists as practitioners of the occult. Unfortunately, this helpful Orthodox treatment of occultism expresses unqualified hostility toward all non-Orthodox movements. The term *occultism* is used with insufficient precision.

It is a strange and terrible thing to say, but Christianity is becoming more foreign and less acceptable to the modern mind of Christian Europe than Buddhism.

Russian Religion Law: Reregistration Pressure and Court Challenges

The majority of religious organizations in Russia will be unable to meet the requirement of the October 1997 law specifying reregistration before 31 December 1999. According to Justice Department statistics of 1 September 1999, only 37 percent of religious centers had reregistered successfully on the federal level and a mere 20 percent on the local level. In the Khabarovsk region, 62 out of 65 applicants for reregistration have been denied. According to *Nezavisimaia gazeta—religiia* (27 October 1999), 355 cases of official denial of reregistration have been confirmed throughout the Russian Federation. A federal justice department proposal to extend the deadline until 31 December 2000 has been approved by the Committee on Religious Organizations but must still be approved by the State Duma.

Meanwhile, two challenges to the 1997 Russian law on religion are pending before the Russian Federation Constitutional Court, both concerning Article 27, Point 3, which limits rights of organizations that cannot prove 15 years of existence in Russia. According to Keston Institute Director Lawrence Uzzell, "The Constitutional Court is under pressure from the Kremlin to strike down the notorious 15-year rule. Even if that happens, however, we should remember that the law's most objectionable feature would remain intact: its distinction between so-called 'religious organizations' and 'religious groups.'"

Sources: Tatyana Titova, "Russian Constitutional Court to Hear Challenges to the 1997 Law on Religion," *Keston News Service*, 15 October 1999; Beverly Nickles, "Russia Proposes Extension of Registration Deadline," *Compass Direct*, 19 October 1999; E-mail from Lauren Homer, 8 November 1999. E-mail from Lawrence Uzzell, 10 November 1999; Ekaterina Stupina, "Sviashchenniki poshli v gosdumu," *Nezavisimaia gazeta—religiia*, 27 October 1999.



The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) recently awarded \$4.2 million to Holt International Children's Services (Eugene, OR) to assist children and families in Russia. The funds, which will be administered over three years, will enable Holt and Charities Aid Foundation of Russia to support programs designed to prevent abandonment and institutionalization of children. The program, "Assistance to Russian Orphans" (ARO), will target poor areas of Russia as well as the regions of Novgorod and Samara. The ARO program is designed to offer alternatives to institutions and to create sustainable, long-term child welfare services in Russia. It is aimed specifically at serving abandoned children from birth to four years old, those at risk of abandonment, disabled children, and older children in Russian government facilities about to enter society.



Grigorii Komendant, 53, European vice-president of the Baptist World Alliance and president of the All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, was elected vice-president of the European Baptist Federation (EBF) at its council meeting, 23–26 September 1999, in Hamburg, Germany. Following a two-year term, he will automatically become EBF president in Autumn 2001. Rev. Komendant studied in the ECB correspondence school in Moscow, 1971–73, and at the Theological Seminary of German Baptists in Hamburg, 1973–75. He served as

president of the U.S.S.R. Evangelical Christian-Baptist Union, 1990–94, and was president of the Euro-Asiatic Federation of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, 1994–96. The Ukrainian ECB currently reports 1,874 churches with 127,000 baptized members. Source: European Baptist Press Service, 30 September 1999.



Theodor Angelov, 60, of Bulgaria has assumed duties as the eighth general secretary of the European Baptist Federation.

Dr. Angelov holds a Ph.D. in biochemistry and was employed in the Academy of Sciences in Sofia, Institute of Microbiology, 1970–88, and the Institute of Biotechnology, 1988–92. He has published more than 60 articles in the fields of chemistry and biochemistry. Dr. Angelov served as pastor of the Sofia Baptist Church and president of the Baptist Union of Bulgaria, 1991–99. He was EBF president, 1995–97.

Source: European Baptist Press Service, 30 September 1999.



Dr. Sergei Sannikov, founding president of Odessa International Theological Seminary of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, accepted a position in Kyiv in June 1999 as Advisor for Theological Education to the President of the All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

The new head of the seminary, which celebrated its tenth anniversary in June 1999, is Vladimir Pavlovich Shemchishin, ECB senior presbyter of the Odessa Region. To date, 518 students have received academic diplomas or certificates from the seminary.

Source: European Baptist Press Service, 10 September 1999.



Missionaries in Smolensk Threatened

Michael and Mary Lou Bryan, missionaries with Calvary Chapel in Smolensk, Russia, began receiving threatening telephone calls and BB gun shots at their window on 18 October 1999, which continued for a week. On 26 October firecrackers were thrown into their church meeting place, and the Bryans received a note threatening harm to their four children unless a large sum of money was delivered to a nearby park. No money has been paid. Michael Bryan remains in Smolensk while his family temporarily is residing in Moscow.

Source: RIPnet News, 25 October and 3 November 1999.



Moscow Credit Card Fraud

PIN numbers of thousands of foreign credit cards in Moscow have been stolen, according to Agence France Presse, leaving credit card holders with money debited from accounts and credit cards as far away as Cyprus, Sweden, Israel, and the United States. It appears the fraud is linked to Moscow ATM machines, although the link has not been confirmed. Visa and Europay experts are investigating the problem.

Source: "Moscow Money Machines Steal Credit Card Code Numbers," Agence France Presse, 2 November 1999; postings to the "Gathering" 20 October 1999 and 30 October 1999.

WORTHWHILE WEB SITES

Sharyl Corrado and Maria Demeshkina, Compilers

The Bible Society in Russia

<http://www.bsr.ru> (in English and Russian-Win 1251)

Originally established in 1813 by imperial decree of Tsar Alexander I, the revived Russian Bible Society publishes full Bibles, illustrated Bibles for adults and children, and educational and reference books about the Bible. The site contains an online catalog, a price list, and online registration for a print catalog.



PROMT [PROject Machine Translation] Online Translators

<http://www.translate.ru/rus/> (in Russian and English)

PROMT online translators provide instant translation between Russian and English, German, and French. While machine translation has inherent problems due to the complexity of language, these user-friendly translators could be of immense assistance to those with little or no command of a foreign language. Also valuable is the simple system for encoding and decoding Cyrillic fonts, including KOI-8, Windows-1251, Macintosh, DOS-866, Quoted Printable, and the Latin alphabet. This online decoding device is invaluable for those experiencing difficulties sending or receiving E-mail in Cyrillic. Highly recommended.



Religion in Eastern Europe

<http://cis.georgefox.edu/ree/> (in English)

Religion in Eastern Europe, (formerly *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*) has been published bimonthly since 1981 by Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe (CAREE), an ecumenical association related to the National Council of Churches. *REE* covers such topics as Evangelical-Orthodox dialogue, religious life in Ukraine, mission activity in Albania, and evangelism and proselytism in Croatia. Available online both in html format and as a word processing document. Edited by Walter Sawatsky, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, with the help of assistant editors Charles West, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Sharon Linzey, George Fox University. See also *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 2 (Fall 1994): 3.



Resurse Crestine Romanesti (Romanian Christian Resources)

<http://www.rcrwebsite.com/> (in Romanian)

Four Romanian-based editors associated with Calvary Chapel offer a variety of resources for devotion and study, including poetry, Bible studies, spiritual guidance, doctrine, apologetics, and marriage and family issues. Three condensed books are also available online. The site would be especially helpful for new Christians, addressing the current religious situation in Romania.



SGM International—Central and Eastern Europe

<http://www.infocomp.torun.pl/sgm/> (in English)

Scripture Gift Mission—Central and Eastern Europe, with headquarters in Torun, Poland, produces and distributes Christian literature free of charge in 20 languages of East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. SGM strives to produce "contemporary, relevant booklets and leaflets for people to use in evangelism, teaching, and pastoring." Lists of booklets in various languages may be viewed and materials ordered online.

Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Raska and Prizren

<http://www.decani.yunet.com/> (in Serbian-Win 1251 and English)

Covering the area of Kosovo, Metohija, and Raska provinces, the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Raska and Prizren is one of the oldest in the Serbian Orthodox Church. The site provides a detailed history of the Serbian Orthodox Church, locations and contact information of monasteries and parishes, a variety of photographs, and links to a large number of Orthodox resources. The Web site currently highlights human rights abuses against Kosovo Serbs.



Slavophilia Slavic and East European Resource

<http://www.slavophilia.net> (in English)

Slavophilia is a wide-ranging guide to Internet resources on Russia and East Central Europe. The site provides categorized links similar to Yahoo for East Central Europe as a whole, as well as for individual countries. Categories include employment, entertainment, news and media, education and religion. Each category includes an extensive list of links. Russian religion links are most thorough, while those for other countries are helpful but limited. Current news for Russia and East Central Europe is available through several news agencies online, as well as under "News and Media" links, where live radio and TV broadcasts are available. Also available is a list of live chat sites in Slavic countries. The Web site is searchable. It is best viewed with Netscape 4.0/IE 4.0 or higher version. Highly recommended.



Theological Research Exchange Network [TREN]

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

The TREN database contains references to over 6,800 theological theses/dissertations and conference papers completed at over 65 theological institutions. The database can be searched online or downloaded for offline use. All dissertations and papers may be ordered online in either microfilm or print versions. Sample dissertations include: Sergei Nikolaev, "Developing a Biblical Model for Reaching Post-Totalitarian Russia Through the Ministry of the Temple of the Gospel Evangelistic Center, St. Petersburg" (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, D.Min., 1993); Ted C. Szymczak, "A Profile of Polish Urban Dwellers: Their Knowledge of and Attitude Towards the Gospel" (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, M.A., 1993); Ioan Ceuta, "The History of the Pentecostal Apostolic Church of God of Romania" (Columbia Biblical Seminary, D.Min., 1990); Beverly A. Lewis, "A Religious Profile of Father John of Kronstadt" (Regent College, M.C.S., 1993).



U.S. State Department Travel Warnings & Consular Information Sheets

http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html

Consular Information Sheets, available for every country of the world, include information on health conditions, political disturbances, unusual currency and entry regulations, and crime and security information. Travel Warnings are issued when the State Department recommends avoiding travel to a certain country. On 29 November 1999, travel warnings were issued for certain countries of the former Soviet Union regarding preparation for Y2K. *Editor's Note: Frequent travelers sometimes conclude that State Department travel advisories err on the side of caution.*

RESOURCES

Ghidul Rețelei Organizațiilor Creștine din România [Directory of the Network of Christian Ministries in Romania]. 2nd edition. Bucharest, Romania: OC International, 1999. In Romanian and English.

Published in cooperation with the Romanian Evangelical Alliance and Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, this extremely helpful directory includes 98 Christian organizations in Romania, up from 48 listed in the original 1998 edition. The purpose of the directory is "to facilitate contact and cooperation" among various Christian ministries working in Romania. It includes: 1) an in-depth description of each organization; 2) a list of Christian organizations by category; 3) a list of organizations by county (*judete*); and 4) a five-page summary of all organizations and contact information. Unfortunately, only ministries that submitted a form are included, perhaps explaining why no Orthodox organizations are listed. Nevertheless, the compilers are to be commended for their thorough research and effective presentation of the information available to them. The directory is an invaluable resource for every organization and church working in or on behalf of Romania. Contact: OC International, C.P. 57-93, Bucharest, Romania; tel./fax: 40-1-323-7710; E-mail: downessd@aol.com.



Hillier, Paul. Arvo Pärt. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Estonian by birth, Austrian by citizenship, and Russian Orthodox by faith, Berlin composer Arvo Pärt, much of whose music was banned in the Soviet Union, has been described as a "minimalist with a difference." According to reviewer William Edgar, professor of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, Pärt's music "suggests prayer, being in tune with eternity." See William Edgar, "Maximal Minimalism," *Books & Culture* 5 (September/October 1999), 14-15.



Dvorkin, Aleksandr. Vvedenie v sektovedenie [Introduction to Sectology]. Nizhnii Novgorod: Izdatelstvo Bratsva vo Imia Sviatogo Velikogo Kniazia Aleksandra Nevskogo, 1998. Reviewed by Maria Demeshkina. 457 pages.

Introduction to Sectology is based on a series of lectures given by Orthodox Professor Aleksandr Dvorkin to students at Moscow's St. Tikhon Orthodox Theological Institute in 1995-97, where the author, a U.S. citizen, is dean of the sectology department. The author also is vice-president of Dialogue Center, which researches modern sects. Typically, Dvorkin sharply attacks cults and various Protestant groups as sectarian, but in this booklet, for the most part, he does not include theological objections to the teachings of various groups. Instead, the author provides a classification of those outside the Orthodox Church, pointing out that while Protestants could be called heretics, they should not be confused with totalitarian sects. Borrowing from Andrei Kuraev (*Satanism for the Intelligentsia*), who defines a sect as any religious expression or activity outside the [Orthodox] Church and opposed to it, Dvorkin states that it is very hard to define who is in and who is outside the Church. He also points out that the ancient world religions of Hinduism and Buddhism are not sects.

The author focuses on what he refers to as totalitarian sects, characterized by: 1) the presence of a leader who is imitated by sect members; 2) a strong organizational structure; 3) an aggressive recruiting method; and 4) an "esoteric gap," meaning a withholding of a group's true beliefs from new recruits. Dvorkin dedicates a

chapter to each of the following groups: Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientology, the Unitarian Church (Moonies), Hare Krishna, Transcendental Meditation, The Family, Church of Christ (Boston Movement), Worldwide Church of God, Local Church (Witness Lee), Word of Life (Prosperity Theology), Mother of God Center (*Bogorodichnyi tseñtr*), White Brotherhood, Vissarion, Porfirii Ivanov and Ivanovtsy, and New Age. Recommended for pastors, theological students, and church members who wish to familiarize themselves with the core beliefs and recruiting methods of sects in Russia.



TROUSERS, the Tro(pical) U(ser-friendly) Se(minary) R(ecords) S(ystem), is a computer software program for IBM-compatible PCs which supports academic record-keeping for small-to-medium-sized Bible schools and seminaries, especially those ministering in developing countries. TROUSERS is written, distributed, and supported by Jim Crispin, a Wheaton, IL, computer business systems consultant. TROUSERS software and related support are available at no cost to schools that affirm the author's statement of faith. Originally created for Caribbean Graduate School of Theology/Jamaica Theological Seminary, Kingston, Jamaica, TROUSERS is now used by over 100 schools on six continents. For more information, view <http://www.trousers.org>, or contact Jim Crispin, 604 East Evergreen St., Wheaton, IL 60187; tel.: 630-462-0103; E-mail: trousers@compuserve.com.



Tikhonova, Alla, ed. Spravochnik bogoslovskie uchebnye zavedeniia v stranakh SNG i Baltii [Directory of Theological Institutions in the Commonwealth of Independent States and Baltic States]. Moscow: Association for Spiritual Renewal, 1999. Reviewed by Mark Elliott.

In 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power, the Soviet Union grudgingly tolerated eight Orthodox seminaries and academies, two Catholic seminaries, and one small Lutheran theological institute, all embattled and heavily circumscribed by state authorities. Today, as the present directory documents, 198 residential theological schools now operate on the territory of the former Soviet Union: 57 Orthodox, 138 Protestant, and four Catholic. Institutions in Russia number 115; in Ukraine, 42; in the Baltic states, 19; in Central Asia, 10; in the Caucasus, four; and in Moldova, three. Over half of the schools, for which founding dates are given, opened their doors between 1992 and 1995. Alla Tikhonova, a sociologist formerly on the staff of the Soviet Institute for the Study of the U.S.A. and Canada, is to be commended for her years of work, through multiple draft editions, to produce the present 132-page directory. The editor also received assistance from Irina Kargina, research project director for the Association for Spiritual Renewal, a Moscow-based evangelical parachurch association affiliated with Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, Wheaton, IL.

Each entry includes institutional name, denomination or confession, contact information, the director's name, plus, in many cases, a program description. This Russian-language reference work provides some material in English: title page, prefaces, and the same entry information as in Russian except for program description. The directory also includes helpful name, denomination/confession, and geographic indexes.

Relationals

Is there a solution to these legitimate concerns? While new problems will arise, and Satan will do everything in his power to disrupt ministries, every once in a while I observed foreign missionaries with a bond to the local people that many others lacked. I will call these relational or "R" missionaries. To be an R is not something that replaces E or P tendencies. Indeed, proper training can provide valuable insight, and there are legitimate reasons to feel strong emotions. The promises of Christ are exciting: forgiveness of sins and eternity in paradise, the Holy Spirit in our lives, victory over the Evil One! But neither emotion nor professionalism alone leads to success. Relationships over time bring about not only a change in beliefs, but also in values and priorities that spring from personal conviction rather than the expectations of others. It is in relationships, not lectures, sermons, or literature, that people make the connections between head and heart—between what they learn and how they live. It is in relationships that issues surface and can be addressed: fear, insecurity, sin, guilt, family struggles, poverty, addictions. It is in authentic relationships that lectures, sermons, and literature can be applied gently to the very real—not theoretical—issues of everyday life. I do not mean at all to downgrade theological education, biblically based preaching, or the production of culturally relevant, doctrinally sound literature. But these tasks must be based on relational knowledge of relevant issues, rather than a theoretical knowledge about the people or situation addressed.

One way to build relationships is to come in not as teachers, but as learners. While teachers are respected and even obeyed in many Slavic and East European cultures, they also are viewed as unapproachable and distant. This is evident in the shock and discomfort many Russians feel, for example, when asked by unassuming American teachers to call them by their first names and

to use the informal rather than formal form of "you" ("ty" rather than "vy"). Learners, on the other hand, are vulnerable, are to be cared for, and may be approached without fear. The result is a sharing of both problems and solutions, rather than a one-sided, teacher-pupil relationship. Nationals are more willing to address hindrances to ministry if they are asked regularly for advice about language, culture, and daily life. Their self-worth is reinforced when they are not simply recipients of Western expertise and charity, but contributors to the ministry with knowledge and experience that is valued.

Depending on situation and personality, this approach can take many shapes and forms. While there is no one correct method, I do believe we should allow personal relationships to humanize and to energize our emotional and professional approaches to the Great Commission.

Editor's Note: For a Czech perspective on the problems and mistakes of many foreign missionaries, see Dan Drápal, "Will We Survive Western Missionaries?" (Prague: 1997). Available from East-West Church & Ministry Report for \$8 (postage included). Excerpted in East-West Church & Ministry Report 5 (Fall 1997), 7-8; and 6 (Spring 1998), 8-10. For further reading on relationships and language learning, see E. Thomas Brewster and Elizabeth S. Brewster, Bonding and the Missionary Task (Pasadena, CA: Lingua House, 1982); E. Thomas Brewster and Elizabeth S. Brewster, "Language Learning Is Communication Is Ministry," International Bulletin of Missionary Research 6 (October 1982), 160-64; and other articles by the same authors. See also Duane Elmer, Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

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Lessons Learned

Editor: Can you give examples of ministry through relationship from your years in Russia?

Corrado: Lacking winter boots, I combined my minimal Russian with an improvised sign language to ask some young Christian girls for help buying some. While waiting for public transportation, they taught me the words to a popular Christian praise song from their church—I still remember them. This resulted in an invitation to visit their church, not as a teacher, but as an unobtrusive observer, which provided valuable insight into their values and traditions.

When preparing for an evangelistic effort, my poor Russian and lack of cultural understanding could have caused problems if I had gone alone knocking on doors, but an enthusiastic young Christian of two months was willing to help me out. We laugh about it now: He went to help me, while I went only because he would do the talking. That semester of praying together, preparing Bible studies together, and observing him reach out to his countrymen taught me as much as it taught him. He is now a leader in his church, and those who came to Christ through him that spring now lead their own ministries.

Using a relational approach has taught me a lot, and new Christians have learned in an informal, non-threatening way the same concepts of formal discipleship programs. I often long for

those days when my Russian was at the beginning stages. I can no longer ask a new Christian, "Would you lead Bible study next week? My Russian isn't good enough to lead a discussion. I'll help you prepare. Let's pray about it together."

Editor: But can a learner, or relational, perspective be evangelistic as well?

Corrado: Yes, a struggling alcoholic helped me take my cat to the veterinarian, leading to fascinating conversations in the waiting room. A young atheist showed me where to buy a train ticket in a new town. That conversation led to an invitation to a Bible study, and a few months later, he was preaching at his local church. Young students of English who helped me host international guests themselves took significant steps toward faith in Christ as a result of those visitors. Yet the foreigners were in the position of learners, not teachers, and learned as much as the nationals.

Three Approaches to Mission in Practice

Sharyl Corrado

It is in relationships, not lectures, sermons, or literature, that people make the connections between head and heart—between what they learn and how they live.

Emotionals

In three years of living in Russia, as well as traveling in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, it has been easy to view Christian missionaries on a continuum, from “emotionals” on one end to “professionals” on the other. When the Soviet bloc was just opening up, the majority of missionaries I met tended more toward the emotional end. These I refer to as “E’s.” E’s were the first to arrive and make their home in the newly opened countries. They were excited about the deep spiritual hunger and made the most of the unexpected opportunities. Desiring to follow the Lord’s call, they felt it was wrong to stay home when so many people longed for the Gospel. At their large, well-advertised, evangelistic events, thousands heard the Gospel for the first time.

While God used these E’s in mighty ways, patterns emerged over time causing trouble. Often, E’s had minimal theological training, little knowledge of language and culture, and few skills in cross-cultural adaptation. Often working alone, they lacked accountability and supervision. Some fell into unhealthy romantic relationships with recent converts. Observing their lives, nationals became disillusioned with, rather than drawn toward, the Gospel. Lack of theological training left new Christians confused, while cultural insensitivity led to Western-style churches with little hope for long-term sustainability under national leadership. E’s often burned out quickly or left their ministry for personal or financial reasons, leaving new Christians to fend for themselves.

Professionals

While this was going on—especially during those first few years after the Soviet bloc opened up—

respectable, traditional mission agencies were steadily preparing what I refer to as professional or “P” missionaries. These organizations had solid reputations in missiology and decades of experience sending missionaries worldwide. Their missionary candidates completed a rigorous training process, with years of theological education, formal language school, training in cross-cultural adaptation, and a lengthy period of deputation. Specialists helped them prepare budgets, allowing them to live comfortably, provide quality schooling for their children, rent or buy quality facilities and supplies for their ministry, and travel to necessary conferences and training opportunities, as well as periodic visits to family and supporting churches. Their budgets included valuable training materials, such as the *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, allowing them access to the latest developments and resources available and helping them form strategic partnerships in crucial areas. Seldom were they allowed to leave for their destination without full financial support pledged or even received. They often were sent in teams, providing fellowship and accountability. Once in country, “pastors to missionaries” visited, caring for their emotional and spiritual needs. These missionaries were indeed professionals, and while it took longer for them to arrive and get settled, it appeared that they were the answer to the problems posed by E’s.

Despite their training and knowledge, over time, problems have emerged in the lives and ministries of P’s as well. Often full agendas and strategic plans leave little time for relationships with neighbors or even church members. Language learning is put to the side or viewed as a necessary evil that takes time away from vital ministry. P’s sometime enroll in highly structured language courses taught by specialists from completely different cultural backgrounds, which results in frustration: While P’s feel their classes are poorly taught, the teachers do not understand why their students dislike their well-prepared lessons. It is not uncommon for P’s to spend their first year in language learning, beginning ministry later.

After struggling through the language-learning process, or giving up and working through a translator, P’s face another obstacle: determining what and how to teach nationals. Common complaints are that national Christians are not honest about their own needs, refuse to provide constructive feedback, and take little initiative in the ministry, preferring foreigners to remain in positions of leadership. I remember my own frustration when told by a young Christian, “Why should I lead a Bible study? I am a full-time student, hold a part-time job, and on weekends travel five hours each way to the family dacha to plant potatoes for the winter. You get paid by Christians in America to lead Bible studies!”

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