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Perceptions of a Great Country: Hunches and Pointers in Understanding Russia

Peter Lowman

How shall we understand Russia? Perhaps no one can; perhaps what God and history have created here is just too vast to comprehend aright. But it can help to have some starting points. The following are a few perceptions from someone who has ministered in Russia through the last decade. Perceptions here mean generalizations, with no claim to total accuracy—just hunches and pointers offered in the hope of provoking thought.

Not everything that greets the newcomer in Russia is strange, incomprehensible, or misleading. This is so, partly because we are all human beings, and partly because the vast resources of Western culture and advertising are anyway fueling the global spread of "McWorld." In any Russian city, one will encounter Western rock, cinema, fashion, and blue jeans. Yet much about Russia remains irreducibly unique. For the newcomer, the art of contextualization lies in recognizing both what East and West have in common, and where they are radically different.

A Vast Expanse

One of the first things one must grasp about Russia is its sheer enormity. Moscow may seem a long way from the West, yet in reality it is on Russia's western fringe. Novosibirsk is more the country's geographical center; and beyond that, Russia's eastward half extends across the depths of Siberia. Everything in Russia is on the grand scale: the geography, the history, the passions, the emotions, the tragedies. This vastness underlies, I believe, the Russian perception of God, highlighting His awe and His majesty; no other perception could have gained credibility in a country itself built on so grand a scale. ("Nostalgia for . . . vast, unlimited space" is the starting-point of Nicholas Arseniev's study titled *Russian Piety*.) Emotionally, too, everything here tends towards the grand scale. While Dostoevsky's characters sometimes appear monstrous, fantastic freaks to readers from the tamer Western context, the writer himself insisted that his depictions were true to reality. Few who have become involved with Russia will hasten to argue.

More Eastern or More Western?

Russia has a vast amount of history and is proud of that history. Her Christian tradition extends back long before America was even discovered. And there is an important messianic note to Russian self-perception. This was very visible in the days of Marxism, with the national confidence that Russia carried the truth. But it has a much longer history, embodied in the famous prophecy that Moscow had inherited the divine mission given to Rome, then Byzantium: "Two Romes have fallen, a third now is; a fourth shall never be." The wise newcomer, then, will cultivate heartfelt respect for Russia. Russians had to live through a terrible moment around 1990 when they discovered that their rulers had misled them enormously when it seemed that, on all counts that mattered, their longstanding enemies had been right, and they had been wrong. ("What I want here," a taximan told me on the eve of Gorbachev's referendum on the continuance of the Soviet Union, "is the United States of America." Surveys at that time showed most Moscow teenage girls wanting to marry a foreigner. The song "American Boy, Take Me Away" rode high in the charts. It is psychologically impossible to live like that for long, and the mid-1990s swing back to ardent nationalism was an inevitable reaction. A settled, healthy, non-xenophobic self-respect is what we should pray for Russia in the next decade; but respect must mark the newcomer too.

The Strength of Orthodoxy

Orthodoxy obviously is a major factor in Russia's heritage. It is not easy for Westerners to get a grip on Orthodoxy, partly because it derives from a Greek heritage in which what cannot be verbalized is more important than what can be, thus liturgy is closer to its heart than doctrinal beliefs. Again, it is important for foreigners to begin with an attitude of respect for something so ancient and central to the Russian heritage. Many Westerners will find that there is something for them to receive from the Orthodox

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tradition, even if they receive it mediated via the Evangelicalism that has developed within this environment. Particularly, perhaps, we may grasp a new sense of the greatness of God—a perception empowered, as we have suggested above, by the greatness of the land—and then, consequently, of the seriousness of relating to Him. To return from Russia to the trivialization (action choruses before communion) of many Western congregations is to feel a sense of shock and distaste. And in this tradition, particularly in view of the Russian tendency toward the emotional, there is far less danger of arid over-rationalism than in the West. Theology, to be meaningful, must always flow from and into worship. “The Protestants taught me to think,” a Russian colleague told me, “but the Orthodox taught me to feel.”

Orthodoxy in Danger

On the other hand, there are very important areas in Orthodoxy where biblically minded Evangelicals will have many questions: the basis of authority for doctrine, the meaning of the gospel itself in Orthodoxy, the place of the cross, and the nature of discipleship, the place of Bible reading, the place of personal prayer, the impact of faith on the world as distinct from monasticism, and the directness of relationship to Christ as opposed to Mary, saints, and angels. But there are wider cultural issues too. Many of the West's weaknesses may be related to what happens when Protestantism goes sour: excessive individualism, for example, or excessive rationalism. A similar pattern appears in Russia. The emphasis on the greatness of God can be enormously positive; but where it is coupled with lack of belief in a clear, profound step into new life that comes by repentance and faith, the result can be a sense of distance from God that can produce a spirituality marked by sadness and guilt, and overall, perhaps, a sense of grimness in the culture. During the Divine Liturgy, Orthodox constantly repeat “Lord, have mercy.” One is left wondering what has happened to the joyous assurance of forgiveness voiced by St. John: “I write these things to those of you who believe . . . so that you may know that you have eternal life!” (1 John 5:13). Where forgiveness is unsure and the almost unimaginable God comes to seem distant, the result can be a tragic approach to destiny that borders on fatalism and leads to a profound sense of hopelessness. We see it at the level of the despair of a poet like Andrei Biely; we see it all too often in the grim hopelessness of the everyday Russian individual.

The Difficulty of Dissent

There are social issues too. The enormous stress on unity in Orthodoxy, coupled with a downplaying of the individual compared to the community, can and sometimes does tend towards suppression of dissident thinking and hence to totalitarianism, rather than the

encouragement of individual decision. “We paved the way for Communism,” a radical Orthodox told me in 1990. “We trained people to give their souls away to the Church; and then when the State came and demanded their souls instead, they were used to it.” That same fundamental emphasis on unity can make it hard (and we see this among Protestants in this environment too) to face and handle disagreement, to affirm and love while disagreeing. One overt conflict can mean someone becomes quickly and lastingly marked as an enemy: either 100 percent friend or 100 percent foe. It did not help that Communism could not teach, as a democratic system must, that some primary principles are non-negotiable while other secondary issues may be disputed amicably. Unfortunately, the uncompromising style of thought this encouraged leads either to authoritarian demands for submission or to division and fragmentation. It seems to me also that, as in many Catholic cultures, lack of a doctrine of new birth as a profound step leading to a radically changed life (cf. 1 John 3:9) can result in a tolerance of imperfection that undermines public morality, the legal system, business ethics, and law enforcement. These problems, in turn, tend to paralyze economic growth.

What else might we say are the effects of 70 years of Communism? First, it seems to demonstrate the failure of the deified state. C. S. Lewis suggested that if we deify anything less than God, we not only rob ourselves of God, we destroy the idol we create. This surely is what Communism did to the entire public sphere. When I first arrived in Russia in 1990 it was striking to see how little interest or care there was for anything belonging to the public sector. Communist deification of the communal almost ended up destroying the communal.

Communism as Religion

Of course, Communism itself was a religion. Perhaps no system could have become so “total” without taking on a religious character. Russians are a deeply spiritual, emotional, intuitive people; Marxism could hijack or distort this spirituality, but it could not amputate it. I do not believe that a Russian could have written *Das Kapital*, with its monstrous, arid rationalism. Instead, Russians turned Marxism into a religion. “Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin shall live” ran the often-quoted words of the revolutionary poet Mayakovsky. Children's propaganda that still decorated schools in the 1990s presented Lenin as a bearded, gentle Christ-figure, kind to birds and little children. “He was my grandfather, they told me at kindergarten,” a friend said recently, “and I loved him. He was my god. He was everywhere.” And when Lenin died he was kept in Red Square as close as Communism could bring him to resurrection. It was that schizophrenia—trapped between the desperately inadequate materialism of Marxism, and the Russian soul's religious intuition of the real universe—that made Soviet Communism so impossibly self-contradictory. Russians are living with the resultant chaos of belief today.

The enormous stress on unity in Orthodoxy can and sometimes does tend towards suppression of dissident thinking.

A Legacy of Leadership Styles

We also should ask what leadership patterns Communism left behind. Perhaps, just as Westerners import other dangers reflecting their culture's leadership patterns—carnal managerialism, for example—leadership in Russia sometimes is marked by an authoritarianism that reflects the Communist past. Perhaps this explains why some pastors fail to affirm and encourage their flock. I recall attending a regional Baptist meeting in the early 1990s and

hearing a young Baptist say, as he looked at the seating and how things were set up, "It's exactly like the Communist Party." We all tend to copy the models of leadership we know. ♦

Editor's note: The conclusion of this article will be published in the next issue of the East-West Church & Ministry Report.

Peter Lowman holds a Ph.D. in English literature from University College, Cardiff, Wales. He has worked and lectured in Russia extensively since 1990.

CHRISTIAN PUBLISHING:

The Glasnost Era and Future Prospects

Editor's Note: Cook Communications Ministries International is to be commended for a superb theme issue on Eastern Europe in its international magazine of Christian publishing: Interlit 36 (December 1999). The East-West Church & Ministry Report wishes to thank editor Kim Pettit for permission to reprint excerpts

of seven articles from this issue. While supplies last, the cost of this theme issue is \$3 each, available from CCMi, 4050 Lee Vance View, Colorado Springs, CO 80918; tel.: 710-536-0100; fax: 719-536-3266; E-mail: ccmitl@ccmi.org; Web site: <http://www.ccmi.org/>.

Poland

Tadeusz Tolwinski

In the 1960s and early 1970s, Communist government regulations in Poland only allowed Evangelicals to publish five books per year. Each title could not exceed 3,000 copies. Instead of five different books, we often published 15,000 copies of one Bible. Until the late 1980s Evangelicals read almost every new Christian book published, in spite of their poor quality. There were no other Christian books available.

Late in 1989 political, economic, and social changes took place. Gradually, Evangelical believers became more active in publishing. They published material on the basis of their own preferences, without a clear strategy and without an attractive design. Now the content and quality of books must be good. It has become more difficult to interest Evangelical readers when they may have 40 to 50 new titles to choose from each year.

Poland has 40,000 Evangelical Christians in various denominations, which comprise around 0.1 percent of the total population. Most of the population is Catholic. Many are afraid to read something that is not published by a recognized Catholic publishing company. Some time ago, I asked a secular bookshop owner to consider selling a children's illustrated New Testament. At first he was

enthusiastic, but when he saw that the Evangelical Mission published it, he was no longer interested. "If I sell this book, I may lose other customers," he said.

Evangelical publishers offer mainly translations, which usually are alien to the Polish culture. When Catholics read these books they say, "It is a foreign religion. We Poles have Catholicism." How can Evangelical publishers approach this problem? They must recognize that Poland is not a country where the gospel needs to be proclaimed, but rather explained. For many, belief means being a member of the State Church. It does not mean having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Evangelicals must explain the gospel lovingly in good quality literature. Christian publishers should strategically look for and develop more national authors, and also find more alternative channels of distribution. Polish Evangelicals need to use every way possible to reach people, whether it involves selling books from a table on the street, through secular bookstores, on the Internet, or through direct mail. Poles need books in which biblical truth is explained. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from "Explain the Gospel," Interlit 36 (December 1999): 7.

Poland is not a country where the gospel needs to be proclaimed, but rather explained.

Tadeusz Tolwinski is pastor of Misja Ewangeliczna [Evangelical Mission] Church, Torun, Poland.

More on Poland

Piotr Waclawik

Big international companies carry on an almost unlimited media campaign promoting materialism in Poland. Christians feel this is spiritual warfare. Ten years ago in Warsaw, at a conference for Evangelical pastors, Pat Robertson said, "If you do not gain media for Christ in the next 10 years, Satan will use it to fight against God here in Poland." This was a prophecy.

Year by year, Polish churches are slowly emptying. In Catholic churches, Sunday visitors are down from 58 percent (1989) to 23 percent (1999). Even big ministries like Campus Crusade for Christ are experiencing crises. During the last two years, 90

percent of Evangelical Christian publishing houses in Poland were closed or have gone bankrupt! The success of Christian publishing in Poland does not ultimately depend on economic strategies. Sensible investment and management are valuable, but our success really depends on the spiritual development of the Church. Our market consists of readers who turn off the VCR or the TV set, study the Scriptures, and decide to follow Christ. They are God's gift—and need our prayers like never before. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from "Spiritual Warfare," Interlit 36 (December 1999): 7.

Piotr Waclawik is president of *Vocatio Publishing, Warsaw, Poland.*

Czech Republic

Tomas Dittrich

In the Czech Republic, Evangelicals are fewer than 0.5 percent of the population, which is even less than the proportion found in some countries of the 10/40 window. Only five percent of the Czech population attends church. The rest is atheistic or deliberately pagan. Even so, Evangelical churches are growing exceptionally, while other churches experience stagnation.

Christian publishing has grown very much since the revolution in 1989. Although most are denominational publishers, their products still reach many people. Two magazines have particularly helped Evangelicals. The first, *Struggle for the Soul (Zápas o duši)*, has a distribution of 10,000 copies and is free.

The second, *Life of Faith (Život víry)*, published by an interdenominational Christian mission society, has a circulation of 3,500 copies. In its nine years of existence, *Life of Faith* has helped Christians to overcome barriers by presenting information from the whole Czech Evangelical spectrum. *Life of Faith's* editorial board includes Charismatic, Pentecostal, and reformed Evangelicals. It is amazing to me that the small market of about 40,000 Evangelicals sustains this many editorial houses. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from "Towards Growth?" Interlit 36 (December 1999): 10.

Tomas Dittrich is editor-in-chief of *Život víry* magazine.

CHRISTIAN PUBLISHING WEB SITES

Association of Spiritual Renewal Library Catalog <http://www.asr.ru> (In Russian, 1251 Windows, and English)

The Moscow-based Association for Spiritual Renewal now has a catalog of its large library of Russian-language Christian and religious books available online. The Russian-language catalog contains 5,430 entries, searchable by author, title, subject, publisher, intended audience, original language, and Dewey Decimal number. Each entry also contains a short and extremely helpful summary of the book. Approximately 1,200 entries exist in English as well as Russian, also searchable in English, providing the same information about Russian-language books. While books from the library cannot be purchased online, this catalog is invaluable for those seeking information about books already in existence. The catalog is of special interest to those involved in the publication of Russian-language Christian literature and theological students and educators seeking books for a course or research project. Although the complexity of the search facility makes it slow and difficult to use, it is well worth the wait.

Protestant Publishing House

<http://protestant.euro.ru> (In Russian, 1251 Windows)

The newspaper *Protestant* was first published in 1988 in Moscow. Today the publishing house "Protestant" is one of the largest interdenominational publishers and distributors of Christian literature in the former Soviet Union. The publisher operates the bookstore "Christian Book" [Khristianskaya Kniga] and delivers books by mail. "Protestant" also provides a translation service for theological books. Customers can download a price list of over 2,400 books, videos, CDs, and other items. Contact: "Protestant," Mukomolny proyezd, dom 1, korpus 2, 123290 Moscow, Russia; tel.: 7-095-259-71-28; fax: 7-095-259-67-69; E-mail: christcenter@mtu-net.ru. The Web site is difficult to use on Netscape, but is easily viewable using Microsoft Explorer. The price list is also available at <http://members.tripod.com/protestant/pricelist/protestant.zip>.

Editor's note: In addition to the above sites, an increasing number of other publishers and distributors have an Internet presence. The Bratsk Christian Site maintains links to Web sites of Russian-language Christian publishers (<http://www.irnet.ru/inbratsk/www/links1.htm>). SEN, Slovakia, maintains links to Web sites of Christian publishers in Eastern and Central Europe (<http://www.citygate.org/links/links.asp?Category=publishers>).

Romania

Arpad M. Foszto

"Romanian history still affects the present state of Christian publishing because it created a mentality among Evangelicals of getting things for free. Most publishers, in terms of both book publishing and periodicals, are affected by this. They are not able to get back the money they invest," says Dănuț Mănăstireanu, a Baptist pastor working towards a doctorate from London Bible College.

One of the biggest Evangelical Christian printing houses in the country is the Romanian Mission Society (RMS), led by Iosif Ton, a Baptist pastor. Since 1991, RMS has printed 52 titles. Most are theological books. Some of them were printed in relatively large numbers for Romania—30,000—and are now in their third edition! Tomuta Nicoleta, a member of the financial department of the company, stated RMS sells mainly in state-owned bookstores, which have clients from all denominations. Some best-selling titles are Millard J. Erickson's *Christian Theology*, William Barclay's *Flesh and Spirit*, and Anthony A. Hoekema's *The Bible and the Future*.

Although there were a lot of Christian publishers after 1992, only those who receive funds from the West have survived. Another problem is that publishers in the West are producing materials in Romania and still distributing them for free, which

undermines local publishers.

"One important feature in Romania is the influence exercised by non-Evangelical literature. Orthodox publishers produce titles that compete with Evangelical publishing. Many of these books are of high quality, written by important authors, have solid theological content, and create an interest in theology," says Mănăstireanu. "People with university degrees are searching for good theological literature. Finding very little of this in Evangelical publishing, they resort to Orthodox and, lately, Catholic publishing."

Effective Evangelical publishing in Romania needs a larger base. This can't be done in strictly denominational publications. On the other hand, publications that "smell" ecumenical are not well received in the non-intellectual Evangelical environment. So those reaching a larger base risk losing Evangelicals. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from "Romanians Hunger for Spiritual Books," Interlit 36 (December 1999): 8.

Arpad M. Foszto is president of "Link Romania," Iasi, Romania, and is a member of the Brethren Church.

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Macedonia

Kosta and Nada Milkovi

When Macedonia was a part of Yugoslavia, Macedonian books were not published because the official language of the federation was Serbo-Croatian. When the federation broke up, Macedonia began to pay attention to the need for materials in the local language. This was an opportunity for Christians. Since then Macedonia got its first Old Testament translation and two translations of the New Testament have been republished, along with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

The Kosovo refugee crisis has made people more receptive to the message of the gospel. With the aid relief, Christians have been able to distribute tens of thousands of copies of New Testaments and other Christian material, but the need for locally written Christian literature is still great. There is not a single Evangelical title written by a Macedonian. There is a lack of capable, trained Christian writers. The Christian community is dependent on translations.

However, the choice and funding of books to be translated into Macedonian are often done by foreign agencies. "The initiative is usually from abroad. The Macedonians who do the work on a particular book are not the ones who run the project but are simply hired men working for foreigners who decide what

is best for our country," says Dr. Ivan Grozdanov, a Baptist pastor in Skopje. Even when a translation is published as a result of local initiative, the choice is usually a denominational title that hardly appeals to a wider audience.

The Student Evangelical Association of Macedonia (SEAM), which is affiliated with International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) worldwide, is a publisher determined to serve local needs through careful research in selecting books to be published. SEAM wants to encourage good Macedonian Christian writers to write books, articles for magazines, and booklets. Creative promotion of well-designed, high-quality books is a high priority. This includes visiting all churches and, when promoting books, explaining why those books have been chosen and how they will benefit Christians. People in the church have to learn to buy books and not expect everything for free. The challenges of publishing for Macedonia are big, way too big for us to deal with on our own. But we trust the Lord will give us patience, wisdom, and perseverance. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from "Macedonia, New Challenges," Interlit 36 (December 1999): 17.

Kosta and Nada Milkovi serve as national coordinators for the Student Evangelical Association of Macedonia.

A Decade of Deliverance

Bob Clark

Several mission organizations have severely reduced their East European funding in favor of more "exciting" mission projects around the world.

In Eastern Europe, after the first wave of Western "culture"—from Coca-Cola to *Playboy* magazine—literature flooded in from well-meaning Western Christian publishers' remainder lists. Most titles bore no relation to the needs of the infant church. Why send diet titles to families struggling to buy bread? However, recently there have been encouraging developments, particularly in the Czech Republic and in Hungary, where Western enterprises have brought initiative and creativity into industries in general and Christian publishing in particular.

Distribution

After 1989, prerevolutionary smuggling methods became legitimate distribution channels, and churches and retailers were able to obtain a limited selection of titles in their own language. Organizations such as Operation Mobilization (OM), Christian Literature Crusade (CLC), and Eurovangelism continue to function, only now with the acceptance, if not support, of the authorities. Some deliveries still never arrive and delays at border-posts are still common, but literature is getting into the country. Even where a title is translated, designed, and printed within national borders, getting the books to the retail point, be it church or store, can still be difficult. Officials need to be "appeased," roads can be washed away, delivery costs can escalate with overnight inflation, and customers that have ordered might be unable to pay.

Determination

In many East European countries, Communist rule over one or two generations resulted in complacency and an expectation that the State provides everything. Now, following the collapse of Communism, many people are lost as to where their income, job-prospects, indeed their own futures, are to come from. Enterprise and creativity are seen as "Western" traits and two prominent social streams have emerged over the last ten years. The first is the Church, realizing that there is a future and a hope in Christ and thus working and preparing for a mighty harvest

before He returns. The second is the black-market Mafia, driven by the desire to line its own pockets and create wealth by any means. Pornography and drugs are rife, targeting the younger, freedom-seeking generation.

Affordability

The major barrier in purchasing Christian literature is affordability. In the Czech Republic, parents do not buy books for their children. When they can afford to, adults buy teaching books, read them, and try to teach their children from them. Sunday school teachers buy books and then paraphrase them for their classes.

Development

In the West, the whole ethos of support for East European literature has changed since Prague's Velvet Revolution. As the need to smuggle literature has diminished, so the romantic and exciting element has dwindled. Several mission organizations have severely reduced their East European funding in favor of more "exciting" mission projects around the world. Therefore, now is the time to partner with publishers in these countries who are struggling to serve the Church under incredible conditions of sacrifice and frugality. The economic climate in these countries, particularly in Bulgaria, cannot sustain self-sufficient Christian publishing. There must be some support from Western Europe, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

Where publishers are taking risks to publish, we can and should partner with these courageous brothers and sisters. Many personnel from emerging Christian publishing houses in Eastern Europe have benefited from the training institutes of Cook Communications Ministries International, Christian Literature Crusade, Eastern Europe Literature Advisory Committee, and Media Associates International. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from "A Decade of Deliverance," Interlit 36 (December 1999): 11.

Bob Clark is Europe representative for Cook Communications Ministries International, Colorado Springs, CO.

Christian Publishing: Before and After the Communist Collapse

Gerry Davey

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent political, legal, economic, and social changes that swept across the Eastern Bloc and the former Soviet Union mark a major turning point in 20th century European history. The repercussions will roll well into the new millennium. Before 1989 Christian literature was usually published either secretly and illegally in the country or smuggled in. Since the situation varied from country to country, a few cameos might be helpful.

Romania

In Romania, every typewriter had to be registered with a local magistrate. Samples of letters typed on these machines had to be produced under the observation of the secret police so they could trace underground publishing activity. Newspapers were strictly censored. The state controlled all book publishers, distribution networks, 1,200 bookshops, radio, and television. There was no freedom of expression. Some material was laboriously produced by dissidents using typewriters and carbon paper. Through imaginative engineering and prayer, Christians eventually devised a successful vehicle system capable of delivering 40,000 books per visit.

Hungary, Poland, East Germany

In the years leading up to 1989, some amount of Christian publishing was allowed in Hungary, Poland, and East Germany. Catholic and long-established Protestant denominations were permitted to print small quantities—three to five titles each year. A few visionaries worked their way around these deterrents. Printers were found who would let their machines run past the stipulated print-run, so long as money was left to pay for the paper. Omnibus editions of several unrelated titles were produced and titles changed to bear no relationship to content. But such efforts could not satisfy demand. The majority of Christian titles came in from abroad, often poorly translated, frequently irrelevant, and distributed without charge. This practice met some needs then, but also sowed the seeds for problems today.

Bulgaria

Bulgarian titles could only be produced outside and the process was hazardous, expensive, and extremely time-consuming. In June 1984, at the request of national believers, a copy of John Stott's *Message of II Timothy* was smuggled in. A young man agreed to translate it but he was unexpectedly called up for military service. He had translated most of the book

but left it at home. His parents found it, decided it was too dangerous to keep, and destroyed it. Time passed and another enthusiastic person started over again but was arrested nine months later due to other Christian activities. The manuscript, again nearly completed, was discovered and presumably destroyed. Then in early 1990 a young Bulgarian pastor was able to finish a third translation. Finally, 5,000 copies were printed in Bulgaria in October 1991, nearly seven years after the project began.

Before the Berlin Wall came down, Christian publishing in Eastern Europe was difficult, frequently heartbreaking, accomplished at great personal and financial cost, often of poor textual quality, inefficient, often dangerous, but widely appreciated. Despite this, God used Christian publishing to preserve His Church during this difficult period of history.

Initial Responses to Change

The shackles of Communist control and oppression were broken [in 1989]. Anything and everything was possible to enthusiastic visionaries—including publishing. Christian periodicals sprang up in several countries almost overnight. By August 1991, 36 Christian periodicals had been launched in Romania alone. One of the first was *Alo*, a magazine for young people, which reached a peak circulation of 30,000. In March 1992, it was the last periodical to go out of business (it was later re-launched). All 36 failed. Editorial content was good, but business acumen and planning were poor or virtually non-existent. Copies were dispatched without invoicing or any other records being kept, in the naive hope that customers would pay. Funding promised from abroad failed to arrive or soon ran out as donors lost interest.

Christian periodical ministry has since been enormously helped by the Eastern European Magazine Training Institute, set up in 1993 by Sharon Mumper with her strong background and experience in journalism and publishing. Its conferences in many countries now train writers and editors in all aspects of periodical work, and comprehensive teaching manuals are being produced in several languages.

Print Runs, Permissions, and Pricing

Under Communism, print-runs of any approved titles tended to be huge. [After 1989] printers, most of whom were still state-controlled, were only interested in producing large print-runs. This, combined with local ministry enthusiasm and generous start-up funding from the West, predictably

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By August 1991, 36 Christian periodicals had been launched in Romania alone. All 36 failed.

Before and After (cont. from page 7)

resulted in huge print-runs of Christian titles, numbering in some instances up to 100,000 copies. Leftover stock of some titles still sits in depots and warehouses.

Prior to 1989, it had not been wise or even possible to secure copyright permission for translated titles. Inevitably, there was some duplication. At one point in Poland, there were six different editions of Ken Taylor's *Illustrated Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes*. None of these had copyright for either text or pictures. After 1989, publishers were required to negotiate proper contracts; not doing so led to difficulties and lessons learned the hard way. Today, publishers still continue to invest time and money in translations, only to find out that rights have already been granted elsewhere. [Instead], publishers must identify, train, and employ more national writers.

Another characteristic of early post-revolution Christian publishing was the lack of realistic pricing, due to a number of factors. The Communists were renowned for their use of literature. Books were produced for propaganda and hugely subsidized even below print cost. Over a period of several decades, this had the effect of lowering the perceived value of books. Additionally, in several countries the believers had grown used to receiving free Christian books brought in through supra-legal channels from the West. Most of the population expected cheap books, but Christians expected them for free. Most new publishers sold books far too cheaply, at levels that

could not sustain their activities unless they could attract continuing outside subsidy. Most could not and went out of business, hence also out of ministry. Well-intentioned but ill-thought-through missionary subsidy contributed to the problem. Stories abound of whole editions selling out in a few days at far below cost and then further funds being requested for reprints.

What of the Future?

If life is full of opportunities brilliantly disguised as problems, then our colleagues in Eastern Europe face a future bursting with opportunities! Many Evangelical communities continue to expect books to be sold at unrealistic prices. Distribution is also deterred in some countries by increasing hostility to Evangelicals from the religious establishment and by excessive denominationalism among Protestant groups.

Political and economic change has been so rapid in a few countries that the legal system lags behind. New tax laws have been hastily enacted without the repeal of existing legislation. In one country, the current total legal tax levy on businesses exceeds 100 percent of profits! In other words, no one can legally be in business if one makes a profit. This state of affairs naturally gives rise to all sorts of ethical grey areas, not to mention the opportunity for bureaucrats and criminals to demand bribes. Corruption and bribery are a problem within the region. The banking system in some countries has been penetrated by the Mafia.

(continued on page 9)

At one point in Poland there were six different editions of Ken Taylor's *Illustrated Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes*. None of these had copyright.

CHRISTIAN PIRATING?

Dear Friends,

We bring to your attention the following information: A book entitled *Litsom k litsu s rebenkom* [*Face to Face with Your Child*] by Ross Campbell, has been illegally published in Ukraine. It is a collection of three books by that author: *Kak po-nastoyashchemu lyubit svoego rebenka* [*How to Really Love Your Child*], *Kak lyubit svoego podrostka* [*How to Really Love Your Teenager*], and *Kak spravyatsya s gnevom rebenka* [*Kids in Danger*]. All three books were prepared for publication and published separately by Mirt on the basis of a contract with the publishers, Victor Books and Cook Communication Ministries. No one requested permission from Mirt to publish these books in Ukraine. Of the standard publication information only an ISBN number, belonging to Ivan Vladimirovich Slobodiannik, was included in the book *Face to Face with Your Child*. We have no further information about the publisher.

Our position is the following: We consider such activity unethical and unacceptable in the Christian sphere (and not

only in the Christian sphere) and view it as theft. We also feel that distribution of such books, as is done by some Christian organizations, is unethical and unacceptable. Mirt does not plan to take formal steps to hinder such "pirating," although we will use all means at our disposal to inform Christians about such cases. We believe that God's work must be done with clean hands.

May God bless you,

Roman Nosach, Director

Mirt Christian Center, St. Petersburg, Russia
office@mirt.ru

Editor's Note: Reprinted with permission from Mirt News, No. 10 (13 April 2000). To subscribe electronically to the Russian-language Mirt News, see <http://www.mirt.ru/newspaper.html>. A description of Mirt's Web site and a link to it may be found on the Global Center Web site at <http://www.samford.edu/groups/global/links/religion-ee.html>.

Despite these problems, the progress made by some national publishing houses is encouraging. Their distribution is slowly increasing, editorial standards remain high, cover design is improving, and market research is more sensitive and accurate. Print-runs and sales predictions now correspond more closely to distribution achieved. Advance is being made in financial management and forecasting, although there is still a ways to go.

Gerry Davey is director of the Eastern Europe Literature Advisory Committee.

A CALAMITY CLOAKED IN SILENCE:

Russian Christian Emigration

Alexander Valuiskey

Several families in Russia asked their church's blessing as they departed for America. The emigrants had tears in their eyes and feelings of guilt. Among those leaving were a pastor, a worship leader, and several musicians. Not a dry eye was to be seen in the church. A year later, this former pastor attended a Slavic immigrant church in the United States. Among its worshippers were more than 20 former pastors, now sitting in back pews during services. No wonder a couplet now circulates among Christians in Russia: "God opened the door for evangelization; Satan opened the door for emigration."

The same picture is seen in the field of theological education. Many students—nobody knows how many—from the former U.S.S.R. never return home after studying in North America. Others return temporarily, maintaining a permanent home in the West. They return to their homeland to teach, but as foreigners, despite their fluent Russian.

Recently I received a newspaper from relatives who had emigrated to the U.S. The Slavic newspaper, *Affishe plus*, (Portland, OR, 19 September 1999) celebrated "10 Years of Slavic Immigration." Articles claimed that because of God's mercy and the good will of former presidents Reagan, Bush, and Gorbachev, the blessed doors of immigration had opened. Slavic pastors praised God for filling their churches with immigrants, just as he had peopled the Promised Land following the Exodus. Pastors Bondaruk and Pekun contended that Slavic immigrants were to do more than enjoy their new life; they were to assist those left behind in the former U.S.S.R. and to serve God in their new homes.

The situation is complicated. Churches in the former U.S.S.R. are losing leaders, church members, and future theological educators. At the same time, to discourage this movement to the West would suggest indifference to economic hardship and lack of freedom.

The church under Communism was in a survival mode, inward looking and withdrawn into its own subculture. Christian publishers have a prophetic role in calling the church out of its ghetto. The church must live and proclaim a Gospel that is both attractive and relevant to the community around it. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from "Eastern Europe: Since the Fall of the Berlin Wall," Interlit 36 (December 1999): 4-6.

A Range of Motives

Many reasons exist for Russian emigration, including economics, crime and security, politics, socio-cultural factors, religious alienation, and apocalyptic theology. Low salaries, high prices, and dramatic unemployment rates especially among the intelligentsia contribute to flight abroad. It is common for people to work without receiving a salary for months on end. The fear is widespread that quitting would mean writing off back wages permanently. Corruption, bribery, and the Mafia are additional burdens Russians must bear. Increased crime and drug use make streets unsafe, especially at night. Living in such conditions is difficult for Christians and non-Christians alike. In addition, chaos in the Duma, struggles among politicians, political murders, and Mafia control dim hopes for a "Russian Revival." Some Russians dream of returning to the era of a strong U.S.S.R., while many, who hope the old system will be forgotten, believe it will take the passing of several generations. Only then, they think, will citizens be able to live in a democratic state that operates according to constitutional law. It is difficult to be "salt and light" against such a background.

Strangers in Their Own Land

Many Russian Evangelicals do not feel at home in their own country. Before perestroika, all Christians in the U.S.S.R. suffered at the hands of a hostile state. Russian Evangelicals shared the image of "suffering witnesses of Christ in the Communist environment, aliens and strangers in society." Despite Evangelicals' exemplary moral standards, government officials showed us no respect. Since the advent of perestroika, Russian society has maintained that all true Russians

(continued on page 10)

A couplet now circulates among Christians in Russia: "God opened the door for evangelization; Satan opened the door for emigration."

To combat the damage of emigration we must develop enthusiastic and optimistic Russian churches.

must be Orthodox Christians. In contrast, Russians typically regard Evangelicals as representatives of a "Western" faith. Russian Evangelicals are no longer suffering witnesses; instead, they have become "strangers" in their homeland—another motive for emigration.

One group of pastors from central Russia made numerous efforts to attract people to their churches, including building projects and various social ministries. All was in vain. Their conclusion: "Russians do not go to church. We are tired, our efforts are fruitless, and we will emigrate." This is a genuine reason for some, but for others it may be an excuse to leave.

Theology, Tradition, and Change

Opportunities for emigration are embraced as a gift from God. Increasingly, Bible prophecies have figured in motivations for Russian Evangelical emigration. Under persecution, Evangelicals speculated that Russia's future was foretold in the book of Revelation, in part due to one Western teaching that viewed Russia as the "beast" of chapter 13, and the Communist Party as the "prostitute" of chapter 17. As the leaders of the U.S.S.R. were in battle with the people of God, many images from the book of Revelation were interpreted in light of recent Russian history. When Gorbachev and Yeltsin overthrew Communist Party leadership, Christians feared this was only a temporary change. Evangelical apocalyptic sentiments were, and still are, widespread, especially among Pentecostals. Thus, new opportunities for emigration have been interpreted as the Exodus for God's people from Russia into the "Promised Land."

Troubling ethical dilemmas have been another factor behind emigration. Previously we viewed ourselves as morally pure compared to the Communist society in which we lived. Heaven was our real home and hymns celebrated our freedom from the vanities of this world. But with the fall of Communism, Christians realized that the people of God struggle with new freedoms and temptations in a corrupt society, as do atheists. Having appeared "holy" when deprived of choices, our concept of holiness was sorely tested under the new circumstances. For some Evangelicals, emigration appeared to be the solution. The West offered a new life in a democratic society relatively free of difficult daily ethical decisions.

Looking for Solutions

The only solution to Slavic Christian emigration is to strengthen national church structures and theological education, drawing not only the elderly and poor, but also the young, rich, and powerful. Well-educated ministers will produce strong churches. As qualified believers take positions of leadership in society, the situation will improve. Society members will be

better qualified to perform their civic duties responsibly as Christians. Not the church itself, but individual members of the church, should become involved in politics and economics, following the patterns of countries such as the U.S. where the church influences members' lives, while as a body it remains separate from the state.

Efforts by outsiders to evangelize Russia will never succeed. We appreciate their assistance. In fact, we need foreign assistance as we attempt to strengthen local churches and theological institutions. But long-term results have been minimal so far because foreign missionaries are strangers in our society and in our churches. Our need for strong churches that will influence Russian society can be answered by Western churches helping through genuine dialogue asking questions rather than making assumptions.

In the past, longstanding churches consisted of only a few families. Now that emigration has become a chain reaction, perhaps the majority of Evangelicals of the older generation will leave Russia. Our hope is in new churches with members from many families who lack the opportunity to emigrate. Thanks to Western missionary efforts, many new churches exist in Russia. Yet these churches are weak, despite large amounts of financial support. Foreign missionaries planted churches with local ministers, yet seldom gave them opportunities for full leadership. Allowing national leadership in these church plants is not easy, especially when finances are involved. Yet it is not only desirable, but necessary.

Another major issue is theological education in the former U.S.S.R. Again, due to the efforts of foreign missionaries we have many new Bible schools and colleges. Today Christians have opportunities to study in order to strengthen our churches. Yet success will come only as our national leaders and professors become dominant in these schools and Russian ownership develops. National leaders will have more authority and creativity within local conditions than do Western specialists. If this is an indigenous system, although developed with Western assistance, our people will not wish to leave. Emigration of Russian theological students is especially painful, since much money has been invested in them. The development of the Euro-Asian Accreditation Association (EAAA), fostering the development of national theological education, has been a step in the right direction. We have Bible schools and colleges; we now need to prepare national professors. Master's degree programs must be started in Russia so that students will not have to study overseas.

Strong national churches and theological institutions are the only hope for our Evangelical movement in Russia. To combat the damage of emigration we must develop enthusiastic and optimistic Russian churches. We appreciate the hard work and efforts of Western missions to strengthen our churches. However, success will come only as Russian Evangelicals are no longer Western-oriented. ♦

Alexander Valuisky
teaches at St. Petersburg
Christian University, St.
Petersburg, Russia.

For Better or Worse

Vyacheslav Tsvirinko

Tens of thousands of Evangelical Christians from the former Soviet Union have arrived in the United States. In the Sacramento, California, area alone, almost twenty thousand have settled during the last five to six years. This migration of Evangelicals has created a deficit in Russia of experienced, mature leaders and lay people in a time when they are desperately needed to disciple new converts. Also, emigration has created a sense of uncertainty among those who are left in Russia. Who is going to leave next? How sure can we be that this minister or that parishioner is not preparing to leave? How can we make long-lasting plans? These and other questions often preoccupy minds and weaken zeal to serve God sacrificially.

Emigration also has some positive sides. First, Evangelical émigrés coming to the West have an excellent opportunity to be immersed in Western culture, which sometimes softens sectarian, legalistic views about church life. Émigrés in turn transmit these changes back to those who remain in their homeland. They also try to develop financial support for their brothers and sisters in Christ in the republics of the former Soviet Union. Although most of the newcomers to the United States belong to low-income families and cannot raise a lot of money, their

help often is more effective than aid sent by the American government and charitable organizations. Émigrés know the real needs of the Russian people and they know whom they can trust and who can honestly deliver aid to really needy people.

Recent immigrants from Russia usually try to form their own ethnic churches. This fact also can be viewed as helpful for evangelism in their homeland because "ultimately they [immigrants] and their children are the most effective missionaries to the people in the former Soviet Union." (Christ's Work in Russia: Conference on Effective Ministry in the FSU, 27-28 January 1985, Sacramento, CA). Not many of them will go back. However, those who go back after being trained in the West will be able to make a significant impact on the Evangelical movement in the former U.S.S.R. In case the situation in Russia reverses from democracy to an authoritarian regime, which is quite possible, this newly established Slavic community could become a very important source of support for Evangelicals in their homeland. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from A Search for Theological Identity Among Russian Evangelicals, M.Div. thesis, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, CA, 1995.

Vyacheslav Tsvirinko
is admissions director and
teaches in the Bible
Department at Fresno
Pacific University,
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I am behind in my reading and just got to the Boris Gontarev article, "Practical Advice for Western Missionaries" (*East-West Church & Ministry Report* 7 (Summer 1999): 7). He has some good points but a huge, gaping blind spot. Gontarev's pen was pointed in the wrong direction. It should have been entitled "Practical Advice for Russian/Ukrainian Immigrants." There is a need for people like him to be here [in the former Soviet Union] and not there [in the U.S.] with a green card. The clean-cut students so sharply criticized should not be my students and those of my colleagues. They should be Gontarev's students.

If Russians who have an understanding of Russian culture and Orthodoxy would stay, or at least come back to help, we foreigners would not have to try to pick up where the emigrating population left off. Gontarev has given too harsh a critique to a group of good-hearted servants [missionaries] who are doing the best they can without much help from those who could be here leading them.

Unfortunately, we could count on one hand the number of native Russians/Ukrainians holding a church-related doctorate who are willing to live in their home culture. I and many others like myself have entered a Slavic culture to answer the call that has been coming from this area for decades. When we

arrived, we soon understood that we were salmon swimming against a stream of emigration: cab drivers with relatives in New York; churches abandoned by a shepherd who went on to greener pastures in Northern California; students seeking a relationship with short-term workers to gain a scholarship in the West. If they marry, you know the Russian proverb:

"American is not a nationality; it is a means of transportation."

We must mobilize the huge Russian/Ukrainian immigrant population to assist in pastoral work. The leadership vacuum will eventually stabilize. How long before they fully embrace the Russian soul? That depends on who disciples. It will not be soon if done by muddling missionaries. It could be now if done by nationals who dig in and, despite huge odds, stay and disciple.

Gregory L. Nichols

*Greater Europe Mission and Odessa Theological Seminary
Odessa, Ukraine*

What to Call "It"

Mark Elliott

As all students of international affairs are aware, designations for the former Communist countries of Europe and Central Asia can be confusing and controversial. The naming of the *East-West Church & Ministry Report* itself in late 1992 required considerable deliberation—and misgivings. The goal, as much as possible, was to refer to the region—or is it regions?—with language that was geographically accurate but politically neutral. To that end, the bottom of the first page of every issue of the *Report* has specified coverage of “the Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe.” But as editor of the *Report*, I have not been completely comfortable with these designations. And readers from time to time have shared as much. Seeking to address this issue, assistant editor Sharyl Corrado conducted a survey of E-mail subscribers in January 2000 to explore systematically reader preferences in nomenclature for the region(s) in question. The 94 replies, which represented a surprisingly high response rate of over 30 percent, identified first choices and last choices for various descriptors that have had some degree of currency in the press. (See chart.)

No consensus exists for what one respondent aptly called “the thicket of terminologies.”

The Consensus: “Central and Eastern Europe”

For the countries of Europe outside the Soviet Union that had Communist governments between the end of World War II and the demise of these regimes in 1989–91, the most favored designations were “Central and Eastern Europe” (39), “Eastern Europe” (14), and “Central/Eastern Europe” (13). In contrast, the least favored designations were “Former Soviet Satellite States” (50), “Former Soviet Bloc Countries” (10), and “Central Europe” (9). Among the 34 in-country respondents, “Central and Eastern Europe” received as many first choice votes (16) as all other designations combined. Like survey respondents as a whole, a majority of in-country subscribers also adamantly disapproved of “Former Soviet Satellite States” (20).

And “The Former Soviet Union”

Regarding the now-independent countries that formerly constituted the Soviet Union, respondents’ first preferences were “Former Soviet Union” (22), “Commonwealth of Independent States” (19), and “Eurasia” (13). The least favored designations were “Russia” (20), “Eurasia” (16), and “Newly Independent States” (13). In-country respondents closely paralleled overall responses, except that subscribers from the region rarely favored “Eurasia” (3) and frequently marked it as their last choice (7). Only “Russia” (8) received more last-choice votes from respondents in-country.

Survey Sampling

Survey comments suggest that, in the main, no consensus exists for what one respondent aptly called “the thicket of terminologies.” Note below a sampling of disparate and sometimes contradictory survey opinions.

- ◆ My hope is that we can move away from defining regions based on cold war categories, and that we will be able to embrace a broader historical and cultural perspective when we speak of regions.”
- ◆ “In general I dislike the ‘Former . . .’ labels because it is such a negative way of describing a region. Yet I did it even in this note! There are times when it seems the simplest way to get across what one means—but I don’t think it should be used as a consistent and broadly accepted label.”
- ◆ “I visit some of the ‘CIS’ countries frequently. I find this is a designation people are quite comfortable with; it is official and precise.”
- ◆ “We serve believers in the ‘CIS’ or the ‘former Soviet Union’ and it seems that we are forced to use terms that are not always well understood but do not offend. It has been our experience that those from ‘Ukraine’ and ‘former East Bloc countries’ are the most sensitive when there is any mention of ‘Russia’ or the ‘Lands of Russia.’”
- ◆ “For the ‘FSU countries’ I sometimes refer to ‘Eastern Europe,’ ‘the Caucasus,’ and ‘Central Asia.’ But it’s a bit of a mouthful. ‘Former Soviet Union’ is quickest and has higher recognition than ‘Post-Soviet Republics,’ though I prefer the latter.”
- ◆ “I think that ‘Ukraine, Belorussia, Latvia, Estonia,’ etc., should be called ‘Eastern Europe.’ ‘Russia’ and all east of Russia should be called ‘Eurasia’ because it spans the Urals. Therefore you would most likely be saying, ‘Eastern Europe and Eurasia’ to catch all the ‘former Soviet Union’ countries. This is geographically and ethnically acceptable to all I have asked here at the seminary.”
- ◆ “On the second group, there is no name that will not require explanation. I think ‘Eurasia’ is gaining usage as a geographically and politically neutral term.”
- ◆ “I really believe these things are still in flux and will likely change again with the growth of the European Union within the next two years or so.”

- ◆ "I found this difficult to answer. If talking only about the country of 'Russia,' then I prefer to say 'Russia.' If I'm referring to all of the area that once comprised the Soviet Union, then I say the 'Former Soviet Union.'"
- ◆ "We will certainly have to revise our vocabulary again within the next few years!"
- ◆ "I have traveled in several countries of 'Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania)' and find that most of the nationals refer to their area of Europe as 'Eastern Europe,' not 'Central Europe,' and definitely not any kind of 'former Soviet ...' or 'former Communist ...' whatever. So I go with them in calling their area 'Eastern Europe.' I think 'Central Europe' is just confusing. Where does 'central' begin and end?"

In conclusion, I often have lectured that the only safe generalization for the countries of this part of the world is that each, in one respect or another, is a significant exception to any attempt at regional generalization, and this because of intense, longstanding political and dynastic rivalries and extraordinary cultural diversity (ethnic, religious, and linguistic). The surprise, as a consequence, would have been if interested parties had agreed on what to call "it"—but they never have been able to and, I suspect, they will not be able to any time soon. For now, the consensus would appear to be "Central and Eastern Europe" and "the Former Soviet Union." We can hope that in time nomenclature in favor in the future will be less of a mouthful. ♦

Mark Elliott is editor of the East-West Church and Ministry Report.

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Survey Results (94 Responses)*

Designations for Region 1:	First Choice	Last Choice
Central and Eastern Europe	39	1
Eastern Europe	14	5
Central/Eastern Europe	13	0
Central Europe	6	9
Former Soviet Bloc Countries	5	10
East Central Europe	4	1
Former Soviet Satellite States	2	50
Former Eastern Bloc States	1	7

Designations for Region 1 from 34 In-Country Responses:	First Choice	Last Choice
Central and Eastern Europe	16	1
Eastern Europe	6	2
Central Europe	4	3
Central/Eastern Europe	3	0
East Central Europe	2	0
Former Eastern Bloc States	1	0
Former Soviet Satellite States	0	20
Former Soviet Bloc Countries	0	5

Designations for Region 2:	First Choice	Last Choice
Former Soviet Union	22	6
Commonwealth of Ind. States	19	3
Eurasia	13	16
Russia	9	20
Post-Soviet Republics	7	11
Newly Independent States	5	13
Other	4	1
Russian Republic	3	11

Designations for Region 2 from 34 In-Country Responses:	First Choice	Last Choice
Former Soviet Union	8	3
Commonwealth of Ind. States	7	1
Russia	5	8
Eurasia	3	7
Newly Independent States	2	6
Other	2	1
Post-Soviet Republics	1	3
Russian Republic	1	2

*All responses, whether returned from the region in question or the West, were provided by citizens of Western nations.

RESOURCES

Terray, László G. *He Could Not Do Otherwise: Bishop Lajos Ordass 1901–1978*. Translated from the German by Eric W. Gritsch. Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1997. 156 pp. Original German edition: *In Königlich Freiheit: Bischof Lajos Ordass 1901–1978* (Erlangen: Martin Luther Verlag, 1990). Reviewed by Anne-Marie Kool.

With the English translation of a 1990 German language biography of Hungarian Bishop Lajos Ordass (1901–1978), László G. Terray reveals the little-known story of the influence of Communism on a not-so-small Lutheran church in a relatively small country, Hungary, and the inspiring account of the resistance of one of its bishops. The life story of Lajos Ordass gives insight into the life of the Lutheran Church against the background of the complicated ethnic situation before and after World War I in Central Europe, and its contacts with the worldwide Church, especially in Sweden. Before World War II Ordass, actively involved in the Lutheran World Federation, spoke up time and time again against the rise of National Socialism. Following “liberation” by Russians in 1945 it became clear that Communists would increasingly curtail church freedom in Hungary. Ordass saw a crucial issue at stake: The Church could not accept the demands of the State without losing its own identity and Christian integrity. He protested, resulting in his imprisonment for 21 months, several of those months in solitary confinement. Even after his release he was considered *persona non grata*, lost his office, and for decades could do no more than write manuscripts “for the desk drawer.”

Terray used a variety of published and unpublished sources. The church historian finds it a pity that the author gave no detailed source references. The translator’s use of the term “religious schools” is misleading. They were in fact Hungary’s famous church-owned school system that Ordass supported.

Terray relates powerfully the story of Bishop Ordass. The questions remain, however, whether he had enough critical distance from his topic, and whether he managed to avoid the pitfall of heroism. One danger of hagiography is that the human aspect with its mistakes and weaknesses disappears. Bishop Ordass was one of many persecuted, but due to his position, his case eventually became known worldwide. Many others suffered under Communism in anonymity.

The title is well chosen, pointing to an often forgotten aspect of Christian pilgrimage. We find an explanation on the last page of the book in language reminiscent of Martin Luther’s stand at Worms: “His Savior has called him to serve. He could not betray his faith in Him. He would rather go to prison than hand over the life and service of the Church of Jesus Christ to a strange power. He could not do otherwise.” A prayer at the funeral of Bishop Ordass made reference to his steadfast character: “We give you thanks for the integrity in word and deed that you have granted him and that he has taught us” (154). For Ordass it was an essential part of following his Lord Jesus Christ: “When he stood in the pulpit for the last time, he cited at the end of his sermon the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:13: ‘But he who endures to the end will be saved.’ He became a witness to Christ for our time through his steadfastness” (156).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: RESPONSES TO “THE ROLE OF LUCK”

I think your editorial article in the *East-West Church & Ministry Report* (Sharyl Corrado, “The Role of Luck,” 8 (Winter 2000): 14, 16) is very good. There are really so many missionaries who refuse to get into the culture through a serious study of the language. This might be true generally, but it is definitely true in the case of Russia and Central and Eastern Europe. Modernistic over-emphasis on efficiency, strategic planning, and the illusive ability of showing statistical results is often extremely counter-productive. This might be one of the main reasons for Russian suspicion of Western missionaries.

Juraj Kusnierik
SEN (formerly Central European Fellowship)
Bratislava, Slovakia



I just wanted to say thanks for your article. I have not made language learning the priority it needs to be. The last few months I have studied harder than ever before and, thanks be to God, I have seen progress. But I am realizing more and more that, without language, I’ll never be able to do true discipleship and leadership development with a Russian student, no matter how good his English is. Your article was a good kick in the pants.

Brad Wathen
Moscow, Russia

Thank you for adding this voice to the world of Evangelicals interested in Russia. I long for the day when Western missionaries understand that a few hours spent with a student in a Russian dormitory talking about why I believe what I believe, or why Russia captivates me, can be immensely more productive than translated mass evangelism.

Jason Ferenczi
Overseas Council International



Nice going! Good article! Well said! My sentiments exactly! About time somebody said something!

Mary Raber
Mennonite Central Committee
Zaporizhzhie, Ukraine



I found your editorial on being “lucky” to know Russian encouraging. I often think people don’t think substantial—even if limited—knowledge of the language is important. Thanks for your part in putting out such a good report.

Steve Hoffman
Professor of Political Science
Taylor University

RESOURCES

He Could Not Do Otherwise gives valuable insight into the life of a minority church, the Lutheran Church of Hungary, in Central Europe in the middle of the twentieth century. It had just been awakened by a huge revival in the 1930s and 1940s, only to be gradually infiltrated by Communists and gradually subdued by means of so-called "salami tactics" that cut off the freedom of the church, one slice at a time. Bishop Ordass was one who resisted. His story undoubtedly contributes to our understanding of the struggles the historic churches in Central and Eastern Europe endured under

Communism. Without insight from the past, it is impossible to understand the present. This book is a must for all who seek to minister in the countries that some refer to as "post-Communist." It also is a moving story of what it means to suffer for Christ's sake. ♦

Dr. Anne-Marie Kool, director of the Protestant Institute for Mission Studies, Budapest, Hungary, is professor of missiology and head of the Department of Practical Theology and Missiology of the Reformed Theological Seminary, Papa, Hungary. A Dutch citizen, she has lived in Hungary for 13 years.

Protestant Publishing (cont. from page 16)

Free Books Undermining Indigenous Publishing

One reason a distribution infrastructure for Christian books has been slow to develop is that some Christian organizations are still distributing books in Russia at no charge. Gideons have donated 45 million New Testaments and Josh McDowell Ministry has given away 15 million books, the largest number of Christian books other than the Bible distributed by any one agency in Russia. Self-sustaining Christian book distribution will never develop as long as Christian literature is handed out free of charge or is heavily subsidized.

On the positive side, the Russian Bible Society, with the help of United Bible Societies, and a host of Western agencies have done excellent work in making the Bible available to Russian seekers and believers. Whereas from 1917 to 1986 the Soviet government sanctioned the import or printing of a mere 450,000 Bibles and New Testaments, printings and imports for 1987-88 ran to 1.3 million, and for 1989 in the order of six million. Quantities since 1990 would appear to have swelled beyond measure. Current Western leaders in Bible distribution include the Gideons, The Bible League, Revival Fires, and the German-based Bibel Mission.

A Nation That Loves to Read

Another plus for Christian publishers is that Russia has an extremely high literacy rate and Russians are passionate readers. I often observe Muscovites reading on the subway, and bookstores typically are crowded. And every Russian city has its omnipresent, open-air book kiosks. They underscore Russians' love of reading and the tremendous potential for Christian literature distribution. Despite the serious downturn in the economy, Russians still are prepared to spend money on quality books, including quality Christian books. Books that are valued entail careful editing, careful translation for foreign works, and durable paper and binding. Conversely, bare-bones editions of the Bible and Christian books are not a winsome witness in Russia today.

The collapse of Communism has left an ideological and spiritual void that could be filled by

Christianity. Former President Yeltsin even set up a government commission to search for a new undergirding idea to give Russia cohesion and purpose. Western ministries should do everything in their power to promote quality Christian literature that will foster a spiritually sound and humane Russian "idea" for the twenty-first century.

Promising Developments

In the last several years, not enough, but some, promising Christian book distributors have emerged in Russia. They include: The Russian Bible Society (Moscow); Bibles for Everyone (St. Petersburg); Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries/Association for Spiritual Renewal (Moscow and Wheaton, IL); MIRT (St. Petersburg); and The Bible League (South Holland, IL). Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries has seen a dramatic increase in its distribution capacities just in the past 12 months, with 300,000 books sold through 40 distributors. Russian Ministries also is exploring the possibility of establishing a chain of Christian book kiosks and bookstores in Russia, if capital can be raised to jumpstart this promising approach.

In closing, I would pose two questions for consideration. First, what can be done to promote an indigenous book market and local self-sufficiency in the distribution of Christian literature? Second, can Western Bible agencies partner with indigenous booksellers in the sale of quality Bibles and biblical reference works as a means of providing capital to undergird independent indigenous Christian literature distribution systems in the former Soviet Union and East Central Europe? Thinking long term, Western Bible societies can be of great service not only in the provision of scripture, but in support of sustainable infrastructures for distribution not only of the Bible, but also of all manner of Christian literature. Book sales hold promise for helping many indigenous Christian parachurch groups to become self-sustaining if Western groups abandon well intentioned but ultimately destructive free distribution. ♦

Mark Elliott is editor of the East-West Church and Ministry Report.

Is Self-Sustaining Protestant Publishing Possible?

Mark Elliott

One reason a distribution infrastructure for Christian books has been slow to develop is that some Christian organizations are still distributing books in Russia at no charge.

The basics for publishing in a market economy involve four essential tasks: the generation of saleable text, publication, marketing, and distribution. In the 1990s, the first post-Soviet decade, texts for Evangelical publishing overwhelmingly derived from the translation of Western works into Slavic and East European languages. With the many decades of Communist suppression of Christian cultural expression and wholesale exclusion of Christians from higher education, journalism, teaching, and publishing, it is no surprise that translations of Western Christian literature predominated. Reprints were the rule in the 1990s for Orthodox as well as Evangelicals as the prodigious reproduction of prerevolutionary and émigré Orthodox literature attests. However, the first decade of the twenty-first century should focus on the encouragement of indigenous Russian writers if Evangelical faith is to develop respect and speak to the heartfelt concerns of its own community and context.

Encouraging Indigenous Writing and Publishing

In one respect all of the one-hundred-plus new Protestant seminaries and Bible schools in the former Soviet Union founded since the advent of glasnost, and dozens more founded or revived in East Central Europe, are training students who will not only speak from the pulpit but who in years to come will write and publish their own understandings of faith for their own people. Not enough, but a few Western agencies have had the foresight to encourage indigenous writing and publishing: Cook Communications International, East European Magazine Training Institute, Media Associates

International, Overseas Council International, Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries/Association for Spiritual Renewal, and SEN (formerly Central European Fellowship).

In European states under Communist rule, the publication of Christian literature in any appreciable quantity was out of the question. Today, in contrast, Christian publishing in-country is quite common and cost efficient.

Marketing in Its Infancy

At present, marketing and distribution of Christian literature are in their infancy. Taking Russia as a case study, political, theological, economic, geographic, and administrative hurdles all thwart effective distribution. Growing anti-Western sentiment since the mid-1990s, and especially in the wake of NATO bombing of Serbia, has made it harder for Western Christian groups, in particular their representatives from NATO countries, to function as effectively as they did in the early 1990s. Theologically, some Orthodox still associate Bible and Christian book distribution with Protestant proselytism and therefore are wary of it. Economically, the most recent nosedive in the Russian economy, which began in August 1998, further stymied progress toward self-sustaining Bible and Christian book distribution. Also, the geography of the largest country in the world spanning 11 time zones, even without the fourteen other Soviet republics, is a formidable obstacle for distribution. But the biggest bottleneck, by far, appears to be administrative: Russia simply lacks a viable secular or Christian infrastructure for book distribution.

Dysfunctional Distribution

The former Soviet Union has thousands of existing churches and new church fellowships. But outside a few major cities, these churches do not have ready access to Christian literature. Distribution is so dysfunctional at present that it often amounts to a church delegating a member to travel to Moscow or St. Petersburg or Kyiv by train to purchase as many Christian titles as can physically be hauled home by one person. The bookstore in the Christian Ministry Center in Moscow, not much bigger in size than a typical street kiosk, carries 800 Christian titles; but most Russian believers across 11 time zones do not know of the existence of the majority of the titles, and would not have access to them if they did.

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