



# EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT

Summer 2007

Vol. 15, No. 3

## The Legacy of Boris Yeltsin: Father of Religious Freedom in Russia

Lauren B. Homer

### Contributing Editors

**Canon Michael Bourdeaux**  
Keston Institute, Oxford

**Dr. Anita Deyneka**  
Peter Deyneka Russian  
Ministries, Wheaton, Illinois

**Father Georgi Edelstein**  
Russian Orthodox Chuech,  
Kostroma Diocese

**Miss Sharon Mumper**  
Magazine Training Institute,  
Colorado Springs, Colorado

**Rev. Nick Nedelchev**  
Bulgarian Evangelical  
Theological Institute, Sofia

**Dr. Peter Penner**  
International Baptist  
Theological Seminary, Prague

**Dr. Walter Sawatsky**  
Associated Mennonite Biblical  
Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana

**Mrs. Katya Smyslova**  
Haggai Institute, Moscow

**Rev. Larry Thompson**  
Campus Crusade for Christ,  
International, Budapest

**Mr. Lawrence Uzzell**  
International Religious  
Freedom Watch, Fishersville,  
Virginia

**Dr. Alexander Zaichenko**  
Gazeta Protestant,  
Moscow

### Courageous Opponent of a Communist Resurgence

In August 1991 Soviet tanks poured into Moscow to suppress a small spontaneous protest against an attempted coup by Communist hardliners. Their intent was to oust reformer Mikhail Gorbachev from leadership and reassert Soviet totalitarian authority. It is hard for many today to recall the bold courage and conviction that led Boris Yeltsin to stand against those tanks. Even fainter is the memory of the euphoria that gripped the people of Russia and the world as it became increasingly clear that the authorities were not going to crush the demonstrators. In mere days, we watched and prayed as the feared KGB did nothing.

Yeltsin replaced Gorbachev as the national leader; the political, economic, and legal structure of the USSR collapsed; and constituent republics were set free with little bloodshed. Those who had fought long for political, religious, and other freedoms were stunned and thrilled by the speed and extent of their liberation. For people of faith, it was clear that these events could be explained only by supernatural intervention in human affairs. A brutal regime that had terrorized and repressed believers for over 70 years was eradicated overnight with almost no bloodshed or opposition from heavily armed security forces.

The mood in Moscow on 1 January 1992 was electric as it became clear that this was a genuine change, that people were truly free, and that they faced the exhilarating but daunting task of building a new and democratic state. Almost everyone was open to the ideas of faith, democracy, and creating a "normal" society. In the midst of a cold Russian winter, hope bloomed. Boris Yeltsin and his wife, Naina, personally attended Orthodox Christmas services and other Christian events in Moscow in January 1992. Many who knew them felt that they were truly interested, which was a stunning turn of events for lifelong party members. The process of democratization and conversion to a free market economy was later badly bungled, which has led to the reassertion of the strong arm of the state under Vladimir Putin. Nonetheless, Yeltsin's

courage and subsequent actions ushered in the greatest period of economic, political, press, and religious freedoms that Russia has ever known.

### Champion of Religious Freedom

One of Boris Yeltsin's key contributions was in the area of religious freedom. The collapse of the Soviet Union suddenly made a law on freedom of conscience and religious organizations enacted in 1990 the law of the land. In just a few years believers rebuilt ruined houses of worship; the state registered thousands of churches; and religious content reappeared in books, radio broadcasts, television, and other public venues. After decades of scientific atheism and ruthless repression of believers, Russians could decide whether or not to believe in God and how to express their religious beliefs. The Yeltsin administration was solicitous of religious freedom and worked hard to make Russia a tolerant nation at the highest levels. The Constitution President Yeltsin proposed in December 1993 contained notable provisions on religious freedom and other human rights.

Full religious freedom proved unacceptable to certain reactionary members of the Russian parliament. By 4 July 1993, opponents of religious liberty had introduced legislation to require closure of all but a handful of state-controlled, Soviet-era religious organizations. Yeltsin courageously vetoed this legislation, despite strong parliamentary support for the measure. This and other disputes with the Duma eventually led to the October 1993 siege of the Russian "White House." Amazingly, the only piece of legislation considered and adopted by those holed up in the White House was the same restrictive amendment to the law, "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations," that had been vetoed by Yeltsin earlier that year. The president's orders to storm the White House, dismiss the Duma, and order new elections invalidated that legislation. Despite the unfortunate circumstances, Yeltsin's actions had the positive result of sustaining new and fragile religious freedoms in Russia at a critical moment.

Again in 1997, the Duma adopted restrictive

*(continued on page 2)*

Without Yeltsin's personal intervention, Russia today would have only a handful of state-sanctioned religious associations.

## **Boris Yeltsin: Father of Religious Freedom in Russia** *(continued from page 1)*

legislation, but Yeltsin preserved religious freedoms by ordering his government to interpret the law in a more liberal manner than its written text. Despite some negative subsequent legal developments, the basic religious freedom still enjoyed by Russian citizens today is a lasting and significant legacy of his presidency. Without Yeltsin's personal intervention and courage, Russia today would have only a handful of state-

sanctioned religious associations. People of faith within and outside Russia owe Boris Yeltsin a huge debt of gratitude. ♦

**Lauren B. Homer**, *St. Louis, Missouri*, is an international lawyer and religious freedom activist who was deeply involved in the struggle for religious freedom in Russia in the 1990s.

## **The Russian YMCA Press: Preserver and Patron of Russian Orthodox Culture**

Matt Miller

*Editor's Note: In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the American Protestant YMCA made an exceptional contribution to the survival and perpetuation of Russian Orthodox thought and culture in exile. Through its Russian-language press and many other ventures, the YMCA helped to counter the effects of many dark decades of Soviet repression of religion. Its selfless and generous contributions to Russian Orthodox life abroad, personified in the imaginative and resourceful agency of "Y-man" Paul B. Anderson, amply justifies the comprehensive analysis provided in Matt Miller's 2006 dissertation, "American Philanthropy among Russians: The Work of the YMCA, 1900-1940."*

*In the early 1920s the YMCA made its share of mistakes, including Julius Hecker's ill-advised Soviet apologetics. But the Y more than compensated through a remarkable array of projects to assist Russians in the defense and further development of their spiritual heritage. Much can be learned both from YMCA miscues and its more typically strategic and beneficial aid to a people and culture at risk.*

*The excerpts from Matt Miller's dissertation published in this article come from Chapter Nine, "The Hunger for Books": Serving a Starving Readership."*

### **Accolades**

Natalia Solzhenitsyn praised the work of the Russian YMCA Press during a 1982 New York City press conference: "This publishing house for all these years has been giving to Russians living in Russia the real bread of life. I have to testify that the hunger for books is really a much greater hunger than the hunger for food. The greatest help that we can receive is precisely the kind of help that was given to us by [YMCA worker] Paul Anderson."<sup>1</sup>

Historian Robert H. Johnston also noted the unique role of the YMCA Press on behalf of Russian émigrés, hailing it as "the oldest, most important publisher of Russian books outside Russia," with benefits to Russians abroad that are "incalculable."<sup>2</sup> However, such evaluations usually do not credit the original Protestant

leadership that launched this remarkable Orthodox publishing house, the political impact of its avowedly non-political efforts, nor the recent activities of the YMCA Press in post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine.

### **Early Efforts**

During World War I, the American YMCA produced practical textbooks and Protestant writings for Russian citizens. Initially, Russian YMCA Press imprints included writings by such mainline Protestants as Harry Emerson Fosdick. However, within a few years its theological titles primarily featured works by Russian Orthodox authors such as Sergei Bulgakov for the benefit of Russian émigrés living in Western and Central Europe.

### **Paul B. Anderson**

The Press made its greatest contribution to the Russian Orthodox émigré community after the organization moved from Berlin to Paris in 1924. By actively investigating the needs and desires of the Russian diaspora, YMCA staffer Paul B. Anderson and his co-workers were able to assist in one of the areas of greatest need. Throughout his years in Paris, Anderson attempted to purchase every work on religious topics produced in the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> This study augmented his ability to cooperate intelligently and appropriately with Russian émigrés as they worked to preserve Orthodox culture.

Beginning in 1924 the Association's publishing focused primarily on the religious needs of the Russian émigré population in Europe. Several secretaries working among the émigrés noted a growing interest of the "homesick million" in literature that would satisfy their longing to read on traditional Orthodox themes.<sup>4</sup> However, few publishing houses in Europe were willing to print Russian religious literature, for the effort promised meager profit.<sup>5</sup>

By producing this type of literature, YMCA directors aimed to build character among youth, to study contemporary social challenges, and to preserve and develop Russian Christian culture.<sup>6</sup> With YMCA encouragement, émigré

## Russian YMCA Press

authors increasingly addressed social and moral problems, such as atheistic materialism and labor issues, from a distinctively Orthodox Christian perspective. To this end, early on, Anderson, working together with Russian advisors, decided to publish an historical biography of Saint Sergei of Radonezh. Boris Zaitsev, an accomplished novelist, was chosen to write the book, published in 1924. Émigrés eagerly purchased this work, which prompted the Press to continue publishing new lives of saints.<sup>7</sup>

### Nikolai Berdyaev

Also in 1924, the YMCA Press cooperated with renowned émigré intellectual, Nikolai Berdyaev, to publish *Problems of the Russian Religious Mind*, a collection of articles on contemporary issues in Russian religious philosophy. Anderson explained the significance of this publication: “This volume . . . made an impression on the Russian reading public showing that the YMCA was not a Protestant proselytizing organization, but one which held to the idea that its work must represent the indigenous thought and aspirations of the Russian people. It set the tone for our program. . . . The YMCA had thus identified itself with creative Orthodox doctrine.”<sup>8</sup> Berdyaev emerged as the leading Russian participant in the YMCA Press. As Press editor, he worked carefully and thoroughly, personally evaluating every proposed manuscript.<sup>9</sup> He also participated widely in the religious life of Paris and developed a network of friendships with Orthodox, Catholics, and Anglicans.<sup>10</sup>

Anderson established the organizational foundation for the YMCA Press, while Berdyaev provided its intellectual direction. Berdyaev’s literary productivity continued alongside his editorial and social activities: “Nine books in 15 years, besides scores of articles and countless lectures.”<sup>11</sup> The Press published virtually all of the Russian editions of Berdyaev’s books.

### YMCA Sponsorship of Russian Orthodox Journals

In 1925 Berdyaev discussed with Anderson the possibility of publishing a journal which could serve as a forum for the exchange of religious, philosophical, and literary ideas. With special funding from American YMCA leader John R. Mott, the journal *Put’ [The Way]* became an integral element of the YMCA Press program. Berdyaev served as sole editor for each of the journal’s 61 issues from 1925 until 1940, when the German invasion of France halted publication.<sup>12</sup> He allowed a variety of opinions to be published, refusing only “clearly obscurantist or malicious reactionary” authors.<sup>13</sup>

The Press published three journals: *Put’ [The Way]* (1925-1940), *Novyi grad [The New City]* (1934-1939), and *Pravoslavnaia mysl’ [Orthodox Thought]* (1928-1954). *Novyi grad*, edited by G. P. Fedotov, had more social-political content

than *Put’*, while *Pravoslavnaia mysl’* included articles written by professors from St. Sergius Theological Institute in Paris, another project supported by the American YMCA.<sup>14</sup>

A recent study by L. D. Ezova describes the breadth of *Put’*:

The variety of themes of the journal turned every issue into a true encyclopedia of Russian spiritual culture, and the quantity of themes and authors was so great that an analysis of all this intellectual richness would require research in more than one specialty. Here are the issues of church rapprochement, the ecumenical movement, the church life of other confessions, literature, art, ancient history, general church history, philosophy, psychology, the student youth movement, the spiritual formation of émigré youth, an evaluation of the condition of the Orthodox Church in Soviet Russia, the world crisis of culture, the councils of the early church, theological education, pilgrimages to the Holy Land, etc.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, not all welcomed *Put’* with open arms: It “was received with acclamation by some and sharp criticism by other reviewers.” Some claimed it was “too liberal” while others charged it was “too Orthodox.”<sup>16</sup>

### Orthodox Reservations Overcome

Despite the accomplishments of the American YMCA, conservative émigré Russian Orthodox leaders continued to distrust the Association, even after the YMCA Russian Press began to publish traditional Orthodox literature. In 1926, a group of influential émigré bishops declared that the YMCA was “anti-Christian” and forbade members of the Orthodox Church from organizing under the auspices of the Association. However, by 1939 most leaders of the émigré Russian Orthodox Church in Europe had granted their blessing to the YMCA’s work.<sup>17</sup>

### The Record of Achievements to 1939

Prior to World War II the American YMCA managed major accomplishments through its Russian YMCA Press. This unique publishing venture produced a collection of significant theological and philosophical literature which was widely used among émigré Russian Orthodox clergy and laity. The faculty of the St. Sergius Theological Institute was able to distribute its writings through the YMCA Press.<sup>18</sup> The Press also contributed to literary works of high quality for the entire Russian émigré community. And the Press assisted Berdyaev in publishing *Put’*, the world’s only intellectual journal grounded in Russian Orthodoxy.<sup>19</sup> As Anderson’s successor, D. A. Lowrie, explained, “The worth of such literature . . . can be calculated only against the dark background of the state presses of Communist Russia that pour out deluges of materialistic atheism.”<sup>20</sup>

Prior to World War II the Russian YMCA Press produced a collection of significant theological and philosophical literature which was widely used among émigré Russian Orthodox clergy and laity.

(continued on page 4)

## Russian YMCA Press (continued from page 3)

Remarkably, despite the Great Depression, Anderson managed to convince his superiors to actively support a publishing house producing religious-philosophical works that were very different from the practical Christian books preferred by American Protestants. In the interwar years the centerpiece of the Press was the journal *Put*, which historian Marc Raeff judged as the “most significant religious journal of Russia Abroad.” For the Y office in New York and other sponsors, Anderson promoted its “potential significance for a philosophical-religious revival in Soviet Russia in the future. It would seem, on the evidence of the illegal Berdiaevite group in Leningrad in the 1960s and the keen interest shown by some circles of the dissident Soviet intelligentsia, that this hope was not quite in vain.” *Put* clearly was not a tool of its capitalist benefactors, for it continued the pre-revolutionary tradition which criticized both revolutionary materialism and bourgeois capitalism: “They carried on and broadened the critique by former Marxists such as Struve [and] Bulgakov.”<sup>21</sup> ♦

*Editor’s Note: The second half of this article will be published in the next issue of the East-West Church & Ministry Report 15 (Fall 2007).*

*Edited excerpts published with permission from Matthew Lee Miller, “American Philanthropy among Russians: The Work of the YMCA, 1900-1940,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2006.*

**Matt Miller** works in Moscow with the Evangelical Free Church and teaches at the Russian-American Christian University, Moscow.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Paul B. Anderson, “No East or West: The Memoirs of Paul B. Anderson,” ed. Donald E. Davis, unpublished draft, preface.

<sup>2</sup> Robert H. Johnston, “New Mecca, New Babylon”: *Paris and the Russian Exiles, 1920-1945* (Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), 54.

<sup>3</sup> Paul B. Anderson, “Notes,” 17-18; Paul B. Anderson Papers, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Archives (hereafter, PBAP).

<sup>4</sup> Anderson, “No East or West,” 106.

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, “Russian Literature Service,” 2, PBAP.

<sup>6</sup> [Paul B. Anderson,] “Fundamentals of the Young Men’s Christian Association,” unpublished draft, 1929, 44, PBAP; Anderson, “Russian Literature Service,” 5-6, PBAP.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, “Russian Literature Service,” 118, PBAP.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 118-19.

<sup>9</sup> Donald A. Lowrie, *Rebellious Prophet: A Life of Nicolai Berdyaev* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), 201.

<sup>10</sup> Paul B. Anderson, “Administrative Report of Paul B. Anderson for 1939, Paris, France,” 25 January 1940, 5. Annual Reports 1933-49. Russian Work – Europe, Restricted, Budgets and Appropriations, Correspondence and Reports, 1950-, Financial Transactions. Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis (hereafter, KFYA).

<sup>11</sup> Lowrie, *Rebellious Prophet*, 192.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson, “No East or West,” 141-42. Antuan Arzhakovskii, *Zhurnal Put’ (1925-1940): Pokolenie russkikh religioznykh myslitelei v emigratsii* (Kiev: Feniks, 2000) is an in-depth (656 pp.) evaluation of the philosophical trends represented by the journal’s authors and the ideological evolution of the publication.

<sup>13</sup> Lowrie, *Rebellious Prophet*, 199.

<sup>14</sup> Paul B. Anderson, “A Brief History of YMCA Press,” February 1972, 10. Corr. and Reports 1950-. Russian Work, Restricted, Publications, YMCA Press in Paris. KFYA.

<sup>15</sup> L. D. Ezova, “Pereosmyslenie opyta russkoi dukhovnoi kul’tury parizhskim zhurnalom ‘Put,’” in *Rossiiskaia intelligentsiia na rodine i v zarubezh’e: Novye dokumenty i materialy*. Ed. Karen Zavenovich Akopian (Moscow: Ministerstvo Kul’tury Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Rossiiskii Institut Kul’turologii, 2001), 49-50, 63.

<sup>16</sup> Paul B. Anderson, “Russian Service in Europe, Annual Report for the Year 1925,” 8. Annual Reports, 1925-29. Russian Work – Europe, Restricted, Correspondence and Reports, 1920-29, Annual Reports, 1920-29. KFYA.

<sup>17</sup> Ethan T. Colton, *Forty Years with Russians* (New York: Association Press, 1940), 183-84, 134.

<sup>18</sup> Edward Kasinec, “Bibliographical Census: Russian Émigré Theologians and Philosophers in the Seminary Library Collection,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 16 (1972), 41.

<sup>19</sup> Lowrie, *Rebellious Prophet*, 199.

<sup>20</sup> Colton, *Forty Years*, 134.

<sup>21</sup> Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 144, 146.

In the interwar years the centerpiece of the Press was the journal *Put*, which historian Marc Raeff judged as the “most significant religious journal of Russia Abroad.”

## Ukrainian Music Ministry (continued from page 10)

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> The All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB) was founded on 27 October 1944, from two previously existing unions – the Union of Evangelical Christians and the Union of Baptists. The AUCECB existed until the breakup of the USSR in 1991, and was the parent organization of the AUAECB. The AUAECB was formally created during the 21<sup>st</sup> convention of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in Ukraine, 25-27 January 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Author’s interview with Hryhory Ivanovich Komendant, 9 June 2002, Irpin, Ukraine.

<sup>3</sup> Olga Dol’skaya-Ackerly, “Aesthetics and National Identity in Russian Sacred Choral Music: A Past in Tradition and Present in Ruins,” *Choral Music* 42 (December 2001), 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Komendant interview, 9 June 2002.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Lysenko composed *Bozhe Velikiy Yedinyi [Almighty Triune God]*, which is frequently performed in AUAECB churches and at secular performances whenever there is a religious, patriotic, or nationalistic theme.

<sup>7</sup> Composer of *Shchedryk*, also known as the *Carol of the Bells*, or *The Ukrainian Bell Carol*.

<sup>8</sup> Oleksandr Borisovich Kreshchuk to Stephen Benham, 19 December 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Kyiv: All-Ukrainian Union of Associations of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> The AUAECB is now dealing with problems of copyright infringement. Pirated copies of *Yevanhel’ski Pisni* appeared at the annual AUAECB convention held in 2002 in Kyiv. The publisher for the pirated copies was present at the convention, but denied any responsibility for the copyright violation since it was a member of the AUAECB that ordered the copies.

# An Open Door to Russian Prisons

Jeff Thompson

*Editor's note: In 1991 Dutch human rights activist Andre Ceelen contacted Jeff Thompson, executive director of East European Outreach (EEO), sharing with him a letter he had received from the Russian Red Cross requesting food for inmates in Russia's youth prisons. As a result, in December 1991, Jeff Thompson traveled to Moscow to meet with Yuri Zapadalov, president of the Russian Red Cross, and two colonels of the Russian Ministry of the Interior.*

---

## Successful Negotiations

Our meeting took place in Yuri Zapadalov's office, a small room with heavy burgundy curtains and a larger-than-life painting of Lenin. Everyone except me smoked, and the fumes hung oppressively in the air, creating a lazy haze against Soviet red walls. I introduced myself as we shook hands. No pleasantries were exchanged, and nobody offered small talk. Silently I prayed. I somehow had expected a warmer, friendlier reception.

"How can we help you," Mr. Zapadalov said in a matter-of-fact-voice, opening the conversation.

"I received your request for food, and I think we can help you. I don't know if you received my list of questions, but once we know how many prisons there are and where they are located, then we'll be able to develop a plan. We have concerns about how the food will be distributed. We will need full access to verify that the food shipments are indeed delivered to each prison. This is a primary condition of our agreement to help."

They were attentive and discussed the point of verification and providing access to the prisons. What was on my heart, however, was to offer spiritual food for the prisoners.

"We can help you with food for the body, but we would like to help you with another need as well - food for the soul."

They looked at me attentively, yet seemed puzzled.

"I would like to propose a type of spiritual rehabilitation program for your youth prisons. It would be based on biblical principles of ethics and morals that would help prisoners in their daily lives."

There was a long silence. I was uncomfortable and felt very out of place. It had only been 20 months since I had been allowed into Russia, and here I was proposing cooperation with the same police who had denied me entry for so many years.

Finally, one of the colonels said, "Okay, please give us your proposal." I continued to share my thoughts about how we could help, though nothing was written on paper.

When the meeting was over, one of the colonels handed me a letter. "Here are the

answers to your questions." I opened the envelope, and there was a typewritten list of all 59 youth prisons in the new Russian Federation. The document was the answer to my faxed list of questions, including prison addresses, telephone numbers, names of prison directors and their assistants, prison populations, ages of inmates, and the number of beds in each prison. I found out later that this information was considered secret, and they had never given this information out before. At the same time, they were going to consider my proposal, and pass it along to their superiors.

---

## Mapping Out a Strategy

I bought a map of Russia and highlighted each city with a youth prison, including those in Siberia, the Russian Far East, and the Urals. I began to analyze how we could distribute food to all these prisons. The task seemed impossible, yet exciting.

After Christmas, I sent a fax saying I would like to have a follow-up meeting, visit some prisons, and begin the rehabilitation program. In January, EEO recruited a team to preach in Russian prisons, and in April 1992, our group of 17 left for Moscow and Russian youth prisons.

There was a problem, however. I did not actually have permission to go into prisons yet. Mr. Zapadalov had not answered any of my faxes and his silence was something I had not expected. When people signed up to go, I informed them that we did not know if we would actually be allowed into prisons, that we were going on faith.

---

## More Negotiations

Upon arrival in Moscow, our translator called the Red Cross office and left messages. On the third day, I decided to go to the Red Cross office to try to see the director myself. As I turned the handle of the door to walk in from the street, I literally bumped into Mr. Zapadalov, who was on his way out. With surprise and embarrassment on his face, he accompanied me into his office and gave me the telephone number and name of the officer I should ask for at the Ministry of Interior. That was it. No small talk, no explanation.

The next day I called the Ministry of Interior and was given an appointment for 3:00 p.m. that very afternoon. Three o'clock came quickly. Nervously I climbed the stairs of the three-story building with my translator. An officer greeted us and led us into a large, well-appointed office. At the conference table, sitting erect and in uniform, were 11 generals and colonels from the Ministry of Interior. I felt like a lamb being led to the slaughter. I had no idea this was to be such a high level meeting. The chairman of the entire Russian prison system was there, with all the men who were in charge of the various regions and

I was proposing cooperation with the same police who had denied me entry for so many years.

(continued on page 6)

departments, including the colonel over the 59 youth prisons.

Yuri Ivanovich Kalinin, the prison department chairman who is today the Vice Minister of Justice, sat at the head of a long conference table. Not knowing what prior information they had, if any, I started from the beginning. I shared from the heart that we wanted to offer far more than just food, we wanted to offer food for the soul - a spiritual rehabilitation program for their youth prisons.

Mr. Kalinin was warm, articulate, and friendly. My previous proposal had already been discussed, and then he asked me, "Well, Mr. Thompson, when would you like to implement this program?"

---

### **Colonel Alexander Nikolayevich Dolgich**

He had no idea that we had a team waiting and praying for this very moment. "If it is possible, sir, this week. I have brought a group with me from America," I said. He looked me in the eye, as if to determine whether I could be trusted or not, then glanced at the director for the youth prisons, Alexander Nikolayevich Dolgich, and said, "Colonel Dolgich, what do you think?"

Dolgich said, "Well, it should be possible." Because I had plotted out all the youth prisons on the map at home, I knew which youth prisons were closest to Moscow. My plan was for our team to stay in Moscow, making day trips to each prison. I had already worked out our travel schedule on paper and had brought it with me. This was a Tuesday, and I said, "If it is possible, on Thursday, we'd like to go to the prison in Iksha."

The chairman looked at Colonel Dolgich, and he nodded, "Yes, it is possible."

Mr. Kalinin said, "OK, what else?"

"If possible, we would like to go to Mozhaisk on Friday."

The generals were looking at one another and half smiling, taking their cue from the chairman. He smiled and said, "Mr. Thompson, what is the rest of your plan?"

Forging ahead and sensing boldness from the Lord, I decided I should just give them the whole plan I had made up in California. "If possible, on Saturday we could go to Tula, and perhaps on Sunday we could go to Kaluga."

He looked at Colonel Dolgich again, who nodded affirmatively. Finally, Chairman Kalinin responded and said, "I'll let you two work out the schedule. You have my complete approval. I would like a report at the end of this time, and I want our representatives to accompany the group."

"We would like to perform small concerts and then teach the young men from the Bible. Is this acceptable?" They all nodded their agreement.

What I did not realize during the meeting was

that these were the generals who had authority over the entire Russian Federation. They had responsibility over hundreds of prisons and tens of thousands of prisoners. God had moved in a mighty way. Little did I know that in the next five years I would be meeting them all again under very different conditions: When there were hardships, when the Russian Orthodox Church was pressuring the Ministry of Interior to close prisons to foreigners, and for less serious times at birthday parties or celebrations as these men rose in rank and power.

EEO developed a track record with these men, and in later years we were able to continue ministry in Russian prisons while others were being barred by political pressure. I had absolutely no idea at that moment that God had thrown the prison doors wide open to us, as he had done for Paul and Silas in Philippi in Acts 16. But in our case, we were not getting out of prison, we were on our way in.

---

### **The Gospel in Youth Prisons**

With awe and humility, we boarded a bus two days later for the first youth prison in Iksha, a suburb of Moscow. That first meeting was a prototype of hundreds to come. Three hundred boys gathered in the prison auditorium, all 12 to 18 years of age. Guards stood quietly on the outskirts while we sang and gave testimonies of God's love. I gave a 30-minute message focusing on God's love and a relationship with Him. Since they were in prison, these boys were very aware of their sin. And they knew about church. But they had not heard of "a personal relationship with God through His son Jesus." This was a new concept and one that had to be explained. In that first meeting, about 50 boys came forward to express an interest in giving their lives to Christ.

The next day we traveled with Colonel Alexander Nikolayevich Dolgich, director of Russia's youth prisons. I felt completely unequipped to be dealing with colonels and generals in the Russian military. At the same time, however, it was evident the Holy Spirit was leading.

"Your group likes to sing. Let's hear them!" Dolgich commanded. I turned to the group and told them the colonel had given the order for us to sing. Within moments, God's presence was tangible as we began to worship. Dolgich did not understand the words, but he knew something different was happening. As we sat together and talked, I knew I liked this man. He was not anti-American, but he did have his preconceived ideas about America, its politics, and its desire for world domination.

In the message that day, I spoke of mankind's need for forgiveness. No one could argue with this concept. Even as an atheist, deep down in his heart the colonel knew he needed forgiveness, for

God had thrown the prison doors wide open to us, as he had done for Paul and Silas in Philippi in Acts 16. But in our case, we were not getting out of prison, we were on our way in.

## An Open Door to Russian Prisons

none of us is perfect. As I urged all those in the room – guards, administrators, and boys alike, to see if God’s Word and promises are true, over 200 young prisoners responded to the challenge. In addition, in the front row of the auditorium, stood Colonel Alexander Nikolayevich Dolgich, the highest-ranking official in the room, arm raised high, asking for forgiveness.

### Unparalleled Access

I did not realize it at the moment, but this was the beginning of a spiritual revolution in the Russian youth prison system. It became Colonel Dolgich’s mandate to make sure we shared this message of God’s love and forgiveness with every one of the 25,000 teenage inmates in 59 youth prisons under his authority. One prison director after another desired to speak with us concerning spiritual matters, and many of them put on wonderful dinner banquets in our honor. Long-time political enemies were now sharing meals and music together. It was time to celebrate.

Alexander Nikolayevich (as I referred to Colonel Dolgich in formal Russian), arranged a follow-up meeting with Chairman Kalinin at the end of our trip. At that meeting, we signed a protocol that authorized Colonel Dolgich to assist

us in our ministry in the prisons, including the distribution of food and supplies.

While Alexander Nikolayevich was already a believer in God, our ministry did re-awaken his interest in spiritual matters. Whether he became a born-again Christian that day or not, I cannot say. But I do know that he was God’s appointed man for that period in the 1990s when prison doors were opened wide for the ministry of EEO. By 1994, we had teams ministering in prisons regularly. I was making frequent trips to inspect our deliveries of food and supplies. From 1992 through 1998 we had unparalleled access to preach the gospel in Russian prisons, and this was all because of the man God had appointed over Russia’s youth prisons, Alexander Nikolayevich Dolgich.♦

*Editor’s Note: The conclusion of this article will be published in the next issue of the East-West Church & Ministry Report 15 (Fall 2007).*

**Jeff Thompson** is executive director of East European Outreach, Murrieta, California. Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from Jeff Thompson, *Leaving the American Sector* (Hemet, CA: Theatron Books, 2007).

It became Colonel Dolgich’s mandate to make sure we shared God’s love and forgiveness with every one of the 25,000 teenage inmates in 59 youth prisons under his authority.

## Magic and Healing in Contemporary Russia

Galina Lindquist

### Marketing Magic

While the occult, by definition, is a hidden knowledge, urban magic in [Russia’s] big cities is a conspicuously public phenomenon. As such, it is created by the media and upheld by the market as a thriving field of service and commodity exchange. According to estimates of Russian sociologists, in 1998 there were more than 50,000 officially registered “specialists in non-traditional healing methods” in Moscow alone (Pachenkov 2001). For the whole of Russia, *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (10 June 1996) gave an approximate number of “hundreds of thousands of ‘magi, sorcerers, and fortune tellers’ [magi, kolduny, predskazatek].” This figure seems to me rather arbitrary, since there are plenty of practitioners who never register nor advertise; there are also people who practice magic and healing in their free time, treating friends and relatives, and combining these activities with other professions that may have nothing to do with either medicine or magic.

Magic and healing services are broadly advertised in several specialized newspapers. The number of these newspapers varies depending on the financial conditions of the publishers – two or three such newspapers disappeared after the economic crash of 17 August 1998, the black day for Russian entrepreneurs and the incipient

middle class. Other similar newspapers, such as *Oracle and Hidden Power* [Tainiaia vlast’], survived the crisis and now circulate millions of copies. In addition, new ones crop up. These newspapers are a source of information about rediscovered and reinvented folk beliefs and practices, providing advice as to how to behave during fasts or how to use cards or coffee grounds to predict the future or to find a loved one. They also feature articles on the era of Aquarius (known as New Age in the West), astrology, the magic of numbers and names, paranormal and occult phenomena in everyday life, advice on how to acquire inner harmony, outer beauty, and material wealth.

### Russian Magi Inclined Toward Orthodoxy

Many magi, both those who claim folk or rural descent and those of the more syncretistic brand, consider themselves pious Russian Orthodox Christians. They go to church regularly, follow church holidays and prescriptions, fast according to the elaborate Orthodox schedule, wear a cross, surround themselves with church candles and icons, regularly acquire water blessed in the church, and make plentiful use of church paraphernalia in their rituals. As a standard part of their treatment of all kinds of complaints, many magi ask their patients to buy a popular brand of mineral water called Holy Spring [Svyatoi

Many magi consider themselves pious Russian Orthodox Christians.

(continued on page 8)

*istochnik*], bottled by the church as part of its thriving business activities, and blessed by the Patriarch himself (as the bottle labels inform the buyer). The magus then charges the water with her own energy and instructs patients to drink it at certain times of the day, and to wash their hands and face with it. Magi also serve as church missionaries in their dealings with clients, as many of them prescribe as part of their treatment going to confession and Communion, buying candles and icons, making pilgrimages to holy places, being baptized if they have not been so, or simply going to church for a liturgy, a prayer, or the blessing of water.

### **The Midwives' Movement: From Syncretism to Orthodoxy**

The Russian Orthodox Church has become a major source of moral guidance and authority in Russia, and magi are not the only people who look towards the church in their attempts to forge legitimacy for their activities. In her article on home birth in contemporary Russia, anthropologist Ekaterina Belousova (2002) describes transformations in the rhetoric and ideological moorings among the Russian home birth movement. In the end of the 1980s, their proponents presented themselves in broad terms of "basic spirituality" (familiar from the New Age paradigm), blending Russian Orthodoxy with Yoga, Zen Buddhism, and transpersonal psychology. In the end of the 1990s, however, ideologists of the movement were talking about the dangers of "alien" practices, casting them, instead, in the idiom of "Russian Orthodox mentality." Midwives' use of traditional folk remedies and other elements of folk magic presented for them no contradiction with their Russian Orthodox identity. Just like other areas of health-care practices that reemerged alongside bio-medical ones, home birth had to latch on to the Russian Orthodox Church to wield legitimacy. Clients of magi use symbols from the Russian Orthodox repertoire to express the perceived positive changes in their lives. In the case of home birth, these references seem innocuous because the church itself has no ideological objections to the practice per se. Nevertheless, for magi and their clients this reliance on the church can be rather dubious. The Russian Orthodox Church is the fiercest opponent of all sorts of healing and magic. Thus, one of the very few sociological analyses of magic and New Age movements in the Russian language is offered by a church ideologue, Deacon Andrei Kuraiev, who denounces all varieties of what he calls *Okkul'tizm v pravoslavii* [*Occultism in Russian Orthodoxy*] (Moscow: Fond "Blagovest," 1998).

### **Magi Marketing – With Orthodoxy in Tow**

Many healers (and magi) refer to God, faith, and religion, either in very direct terms, or, more

subtly, through using Russian Orthodox Church paraphernalia, in conjunction with legitimation through the "folk tradition," and in order to augment references to "roots." For example, a very concise advertisement introduces "a folk healer" who promises to "cure all diseases in one séance." Instead of lists of degrees and distinctions, references to scientific publications and license numbers, there is one single phrase: "Faith in God will heal you!" Advertisements feature an establishment referred to as "the Center of Russian Orthodox Religious Healing"; a healer who heals through "Russian Orthodox prayer from the church prayer books," and so forth. This kind of blend, however, is quite contentious, in view of the already mentioned deep resentment that the church has against all kinds of healing and magic (Lindquist 2000a).

### **Exorcism**

Scholars (Ryan 1999 and Ivanits 1989) agree that the main difference between Russian folk magic in pre-revolutionary times and Western witchcraft and sorcery was Russia's lack of a philosophically grounded demonology. However, demons and the devil were not at all absent from folk beliefs. One of the most frequently encountered terms in their lexicon was *nechistaia sila* (or *nechist'*), "unclean force(s)." This term was a designation of the devil, but it also referred to all potentially harmful spirits in general. Popular belief attributed to sorcerers and witches was the ability to send evil spirits to harm people. One form of this affliction was *klikushestvo*, a disease that affected women and was attributed to demonic possession. It manifested itself as hysterical or epileptic attacks or violent outbursts, or as spectacular public fits of obscene behavior (descriptions of *klikushestvo* and demonic possession remind one strongly of the symptoms of a psychoneurological disease called Tourette's syndrome; see Sacks 1995).

In today's Russia, *klikushestvo* is not as common as it was in the old days, but possession (*oderzhaniie*) does sometimes occur. It is tacitly agreed that magi are not powerful enough to deal with it. There are a small number of priests in the Russian Orthodox Church who are known to treat demonic possession. They usually live in monasteries and regularly offer services where they perform group exorcism. These services are reportedly highly crowded, dramatic, terrifying spectacles, believed to be dangerous for idle onlookers to witness, but visited by dozens of sufferers from all over Russia. Priests who can drive out demons are much in demand, and the church turns a blind eye to their activities. Even though healing from demonic possession is greatly discouraged by the church, the tacit understanding is that its rare and chosen representatives are the only experts who can deal with it.

Many healers (and magi) refer to God, faith, and religion, either in very direct terms, or, more subtly, through using Russian Orthodox Church paraphernalia.



## Magic and Healing in Contemporary Russia

### Icons Co-opted

Prayer books, candlesticks, and Russian Orthodox icons are always plentiful in magi's working rooms. This ubiquitous presence of icons was explained to me by a young, tough, and pointedly secularized healer who otherwise tried to forego all references to the church and confided that the roots of her practice lay in Reiki healing. [Editor's note: Reiki practice derives from Nikolai Roerich (1874-1947), painter, theosophical spiritualist, and peace activist.] "I don't care about Russian Orthodoxy," she said, pointing to the latter-day, kitschy creations on the walls of her small apartment, as if apologizing to me for their presence there. "People need images of love and kindness – things they can immediately relate to, and this is what icons are." ♦

*Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from Galina Lindquist, Conjuring Hope: Magic and Healing in Contemporary Russia (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006).*

**Galina Lindquist**, a native of Russia, teaches in the Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University, Sweden.

### Sources:

Belousova, Ekaterina. "The Preservation of National Childbirth Traditions in the Russian Homebirth Community." *The Journal of the Slavic and East European Folklore Association* 5 (No. 2, 2002): 50-77; www.virginia.edu/~slavic/seefa/fall02.pdf.

Ivanits, Linda J. *Russian Folk Belief*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1989.

Kuraiev, Andrei. *Okkultizm v Pravoslavii [Occultism in Russian Orthodoxy]*. Moscow: Blagovest, 1998.

Lindquist, Galina. "Not My Will but Thine be Done: Church Versus Magic in Contemporary Russia." *Culture and Religion* No. 2 (2000): 247-76.

Pachenkov, Oleg. "Ratsional'noie 'zakoldovyvaniie mira': sovremennyye rossiiskiiie 'magi' [Rational 'Reenchantment of the World': Contemporary 'Magi' in Russia]." In *Nevidimyye grani sotsial'noi real'nosti [The Unseen Facets of Social Reality]*, Vol. 9. St. Petersburg: Center for Independent Social Research, 2001. Pp. 96-109.

Ryan, W. F. *The Bathhouse at Midnight; Magic in Russia*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999.

Sacks, Oliver. *An Anthropologist on Mars*. London: Picador, 1995.

## Music Ministry in the Ukrainian Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church

Stephen John Benham

### Ukrainian Evangelical Growth

Beginning with *perestroika* (1987) and following Ukraine's secession from the USSR (1991), the All-Ukrainian Union of Associations of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUAECB) experienced a great spiritual awakening and dramatic growth.<sup>1</sup> During this period, the number of churches and church membership expanded at an astounding pace (54 percent since 1990) — this in spite of emigration that reached a staggering 95 percent in some areas, such as the Crimea. The AUAECB had 991 churches with 80,117 members in 1990, and 2,236 churches with 131,950 members in 2000. This made the AUAECB the second largest union in the European Baptist Federation. By May 2002 the AUAECB had surpassed Great Britain in reported church membership, with more than 146,000 members in 2,680 churches.

### The Prominence of Church Choirs

With the dramatic growth of the church since 1990 and the influx of Western ideas, changes are taking place in the organizational structure and the music ministry of larger Ukrainian churches. In the past, choirs might sing anywhere from three to six anthems during a service. In larger churches, there would be three or four services a week in which the choir performed.

A choir then might sing anywhere from 12 to 20 different anthems in a week. As a result, choirs in Ukrainian Baptist churches usually have had a standard repertoire of pieces that are more frequently repeated than in Western churches. Now, however, some congregations have two or even three choirs that participate regularly in services. This has eased the burden on pastors and musicians considerably.

### A Melancholy Strain

Ukrainian church worship is substantially more somber and solemn than in Western churches. Explanations include the repression and persecution experienced by the church, the very difficult manual labor required by many jobs in the former Soviet Union, the emphasis on minor tonality, a deep reverence for God that has its historical basis in the Orthodox Church, and a cultural view of God as the Almighty, Triune Creator.<sup>2</sup>

Hymns familiar to Westerners may be virtually unrecognizable as they are sung much more slowly than in the West. Ukrainians consider clapping and other demonstrations of praise found in Evangelical churches in the West to be inappropriate. Acceptable expressions of gratitude and praise would be such statements as "Slava Bohu Dyakuyemo [Praise God]" or "Blagadarim" [Thank You] (in Ukrainian and Russian).

*(continued on page 10)*

Beginning with *perestroika* Evangelical Christians-Baptists expanded at an astounding pace (54 percent since 1990) — this in spite of emigration that reached a staggering 95 percent in some areas.

### **The Influence of Orthodoxy**

The solemn and reverent nature of worship services in Ukraine (and Russia) has its origin in the practices of the Russian Orthodox Church and reflects what musicologist Olga Dolskaya-Ackerly calls *velichestvennost* or *torzhestvennost*, untranslatable terms that in English mean roughly uplifting, dignified, solemn, and intense spiritual elevation.<sup>3</sup> Orthodox churches and the extremely conservative wing of the AUAECB allow only *a cappella* singing during services, whereas the majority of AUAECB churches permit instrumental music and accompanied choral and congregational singing.<sup>4</sup>

### **Ukrainian- Versus Russian-Language Worship**

Choral music is performed in both Ukrainian and Russian with the specific proportion in each language determined by local preferences and the degree of state-imposed Russification in a given locale in the past. Many churches use both Russian and Ukrainian interchangeably throughout the service. This is true particularly in the central region of Ukraine where Russian and Ukrainian cultures intermingle. In Western Ukraine, some traditional hymns and choral anthems have been translated from Ukrainian into Russian. The opposite is true in Eastern Ukraine. Other former Soviet countries, such as Russia, Belarus, and Moldova, have also taken Ukrainian hymns and translated them into Russian.<sup>5</sup>

### **Orthodox Roots**

The choral repertoire of AUAECB churches has its roots in the Orthodox choral tradition. In the 18th to 20th centuries, Ukrainian composers such as Maxim Sozontovych Berezovs'kiy (1745–1777), Artem Luk'yanovich Vedel' (1767–1808), Dmytro Stepanovych Bortnyans'kiy (1751–1825), Mikhaylo Verbyts'kiy (1815–1870), Mykola Vytaliyovych Lysenko (1842–1912),<sup>6</sup> Mykola Dmytrovych Leontovych (1877–1921),<sup>7</sup> and Kyrill Hrihor'yevych Stetsenko (1882–1922) made substantial contributions to religious music. Although their compositions were intended primarily for the Orthodox Church, their works are also found in the contemporary choral music of the AUAECB. As Oleksandr Kreshchuk, director of music ministry for the AUAECB, explains,

Protestant churches of Ukraine use a variety of music during worship services, including traditional European hymns and our own musical compositions. But a significant portion of music, especially choral music, is taken from the Orthodox liturgy, especially fragments of the liturgy that were written by Ukrainian composers at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. These include the texts “Our Father,” “I Believe,” “Magnify the Name of the Lord,” and also choral cantatas which were written on

individual psalms or from portions of the books of the prophets (Isaiah, Amos, Jeremiah).<sup>8</sup>

### **Classical Influences**

Financial and government restrictions limited the availability of choral music during the Soviet period. In many churches, it is still typical to find choral collections that have been meticulously notated by hand. In addition to the Ukrainian composers mentioned above, these collections include standard works of other Slavic composers, such as Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka (1804–1857), Alexander Andreyevich Arkhangel'sky (1846–1924), and Mikhail Mikhaylovich Ippolitoiv-Ivanov (1859–1935). Many of these works were originally written for use in the Orthodox Church, but have been adapted for use in AUAECB churches.

### **Evangelical Composers**

Because of state-imposed educational restrictions, few trained composers emerged in Baptist ranks during the Soviet period. Nevertheless, a number of talented, typically self-taught composers produced works for use in AUAECB churches. Ukrainian composer A. F. Kazymyrs'kiy (1905–1975) wrote 95 works, including a number of choral cantatas. Sergey Andreyevich Batsuk (1910–1983) composed more than 400 works, including hymns, cantatas, and large choral arrangements. Odessa native Nikolay Ivanovich Visotskiy (1898–1988), who directed church choirs in Odessa, Kyiv, and Moscow, wrote many hymns and choral works which are still performed in AUAECB churches.

Restrictions placed on education during the Soviet era resulted in a lack of trained composers or composition teachers for students in the current era. In spite of this obstacle, the AUAECB is producing new choral music for church use. Two composers in particular, Pavlo Sidko in L'viv and Serhiy Khashchuk, now residing in Sacramento, California, have written music that is used in AUAECB churches. The Christian Music Academy of the AUAECB is making a concentrated effort to train a new generation of composers in order to continue the development of contemporary Ukrainian Protestant church music.

### **A Choral Collection**

Since 1991, the choral music department of the AUAECB, under the leadership of Oleksandr Kreshchuk, has published a number of choral music collections that are now widely used in AUAECB churches. The primary collection, *Khrista khay velichayut' vsi* [*Let Everyone Magnify Christ*], was published in 1998. It contains 25 choral arrangements taken from traditional Slavic church music, with additions from the European classical repertoire (Mendelssohn, Mozart, and Handel), and from traditional and modern composers from the West

The solemn and reverent nature of worship services in Ukraine (and Russia) has its origin in the Russian Orthodox Church.

## Ukrainian Music Ministry

(Phillip Bliss, William Bradbury, Andrae Crouch, Jack Hayford, Tom Fettke, Graham Kendrick, and John Peterson). The collection contains both Russian and Ukrainian arrangements, some with texts in both languages. A second volume, *Khvala Tobi, Nash Bozhe [Praise to You, Our God]*, was released in 1999. This collection contains an additional 36 hymns in styles similar to the first volume.

### Hymnal Publications

Since its formation the AUAECB has made a concerted effort to provide resources for congregational singing, including new hymnals, with music notation, in both the Ukrainian and Russian languages. Before 1991, the primary hymnbook in Ukraine and Russia was *Pesn' Vozrozhdeniya [Songs of Revival]*, based on the hymn collection, *Desyatisbornik*, produced in St. Petersburg by Ivan Prokhanov at the beginning of the twentieth century. *Pesn' Vozrozhdeniya* is still the standard hymnbook in many churches throughout Ukraine, Russia, other former Soviet republics, and Russian-speaking churches in the United States and Canada. The Russian-language *Pesn' Vozrozhdeniya* contains 1,640 hymns of Russian, Ukrainian, European, and American origin. The Western hymns were present in Russia before the 1917 Revolution, having been introduced by Baptist missionaries working in Russia and by Slavic Christians who had traveled to Europe prior to the closing of the borders. These songs remained part of the tradition of the church throughout the Soviet era and are still commonly sung. Examples include *Velikiy Bog [How Great Thou Art]*, *Tverdo ya veryu [Blessed Assurance]*, *Tikhaya noch', Divnaya noch' [Silent Night, Holy Night]*, *Snom pogrebnogo [Up from the Grave He Arose]*, *Pastyr dobriy, sterezhy nas [Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us]*, *Vsevishnemu slava! [To God be the Glory!]*, and *Vernost' velikuyu [Great Is Thy Faithfulness]*. The standard form of the hymnbook provides only text, although some editions include hymn tunes and tonality.

With Ukrainian independence in 1991, the AUAECB determined that a completely new hymnbook was needed for use in its churches. The editorial committee formed for this project attempted to coordinate and standardize the various versions of hymns which had developed in various regions of Ukraine during the Soviet period. It is interesting to note that the editorial committee consisted of musicians and pastors from churches in Ukraine and from Ukrainian immigrant churches abroad. The project, *Yevanhel's'ki Pisni [Gospel Songs]*, completed in 1997, contains 521 hymns in a contemporary Ukrainian translation.<sup>9</sup> The selection of hymns reflects the European heritage of the Evangelical

and Anabaptist movements, with additions from twentieth century Slavic composers and poets. This collection includes hymns drawn from Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, the Baltic states, the Caucasus, Germany, Sweden, Great Britain, Canada, and the United States. Churches and mission organizations in Europe and North America provided financial support for these hymnals which are widely used not only in Ukraine but in Ukrainian immigrant churches in North America.

Churches in Russian-speaking countries asked the AUAECB to produce an analogous Russian-language hymnbook. After the completion of the Ukrainian hymnbook, the AUAECB immediately began work on a new Russian hymnbook, *Evangel'skiye Gymni "Vozrozhdeniya" [Gospel Songs – The Revival]*, which was completed in 2000. As with the Ukrainian version, the editorial committee worked to unify and modernize practice and language usage. Other than listing the publisher as the AUAECB, *Evangel'skiye Gymni* contains no references to Ukraine or the Ukrainian language.

Since the initial run of 10,000 hymnbooks has been completely distributed, it would appear that the project has general church support.<sup>10</sup> Many churches use both the Russian-language *Pesn' Vozrozhdeniya* and the Ukrainian-language *Yevanhel's'ki Pisni*. This practice meets the needs of members of congregations who are familiar with the older hymnbook and those who prefer the new Ukrainian-language hymnbook. ♦

**Editor's note:** *The author has provided the following update, commenting on developments since the completion of his dissertation. "In the past five years, music ministry in Ukraine has undergone still more change. Four new volumes of praise songs, Pisnyi Khvali [Songs of Praise] (Irpın, Ukraine: Center for Christian Life, 1998, 2001, 2002, and 2005), are now widely used across the country. There are also many Western-style churches complete with PowerPoint, praise bands/teams, etc. It's hard to generalize anymore!"*

*Edited excerpt published with permission from Stephen John Benham, "Music Education as Identity Construction: An Investigation of the Church Music Schools of the All-Ukrainian Union of Associations of Evangelical Christian-Baptists," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 2004.*

**Stephen Benham** is associate professor of music at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

*Yevanhel's'ki Pisni [Gospel Songs]*, completed in 1997, includes hymns drawn from Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, the Baltic states, the Caucasus, Germany, Sweden, Great Britain, Canada, and the United States.

(continued on page 4)

# Religion and Politics in Central Asia Since 1991

Rafis Abazov

---

## Popular Islam

Religious practices in everyday life in Central Asia are largely shaped by popular Islamic customs, or “low Islam,” according to Ernest Gellner’s definition (*Postmodernism: Reason and Religion*, 1992). To a great degree, they reflect local traditions, communal rituals, numerous superstitions, and popular perceptions; to a much lesser degree, they reflect the letter of the divine law – the *Sharia*. In the post-Soviet era, Islam has regained some of its position in the everyday life of Central Asian states; yet the religious landscape in Central Asia still differs markedly from that of the Middle East. In general, most people still prefer liberal Western dress and are open-minded regarding forms of socialization and behavior. Many go to local fortune tellers and bring sacrifices to local saints; and if, for example, a family finds itself on the verge of breaking up, it may very well rush to witchcraft experts in the belief that its relationships have been affected by an ill-wisher’s spell.

---

## Official Islam

Official Islamic clergy, especially the older generation, tend to continue the Soviet-era practice of non-intervention in politics, though they work actively among the general population. For example, since independence in 1991, they have mobilized local communal, foreign, and some public funds for building and restoring mosques and *madrasas* [Muslim schools]. Mosques have been built or reopened in practically every town and city throughout the region, at an average rate of about three mosques a day. This rate was maintained throughout the 1990s, and the number of mosques skyrocketed from about 300 in 1990 to more than 10,000 in 2000. New Islamic schools were opened in almost all districts of the region. The number of people performing the *Hajj* [pilgrimage to Mecca] grew from a privileged 100 or so a year in the 1970s and 1980s to several thousand a year in the 1990s and early 2000s. However, there are small but rapidly growing groups of Islamic activists, usually religiously trained young people, who demand stricter observance of Islamic traditions and greater involvement of religion in political life.

Government responses to these debates and new demands have been quite uniform in all five Central Asian republics. When Central Asian governments introduced new constitutions in the early 1990s, they all included articles stating that “Religions and all cults shall be separated from the state”; that “formation of political parties on religious . . . grounds” should not be permitted; and that “No religious organizations shall pursue political goals and objectives.” (Article 8, Sections 3 and 4, Kyrgyz Republic

Constitution, Rafis Abazov, *Historical Dictionary of Kyrgyzstan* [Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004], 266.)

---

## Islam in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

Islamic resurgence has been relatively moderate in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Although a number of new mosques and *madrasas* were opened in both countries, their societies have remained highly secular. (For a detailed evaluation, see U.S. Department of State reports on international religious freedom in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/c12783.htm>.) Only about one percent of school children have been enrolled in *madrasas*, and a few hundred students have enrolled in Islamic universities at home and overseas. In the early 1990s, several activists attempted to create political groups that demanded a greater role for Islam in political and public life in both republics, but they did not get significant support and could not establish a visible presence or win seats in national parliaments.

---

## Islam in Tajikistan

Completely the opposite development occurred in Tajikistan. In the early 1990s, Islamic activists established the Islamic Party of Renaissance of Tajikistan (IPRT) and united with some democratic groups to challenge the political domination of the Communist Party of Tajikistan (CPT). The IPRT attempted to mobilize its supporters to defeat the CPT candidate in the presidential elections in 1991. After losing the election, the IPRT and its supporters declared that the elections were fraudulent and attempted to topple the Communist Party-led government. The political confrontation, complicated by regional clan-based rivalries, escalated into a devastating full-scale civil war that continued for five years. During this conflict, several small religious groups were forced to flee to Afghanistan, where they found refuge among radical Islamic groups. Only in 1997 did the rivals agree to establish a government of national reconciliation, in which Islamic parties and groups were granted up to 30 percent of seats. This established a precedent, being the first time an Islamic party in the territory of the former Soviet Union had become a member of a ruling parliamentary coalition.

---

## Islam in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan also experienced an Islamic resurgence in the post-Soviet era, although the government has kept very tight control over all religious communities and has banned political participation by any Islamic groups. In fact, it harshly persecuted any attempts at public participation by or criticism from religious groups. In this environment, a radical

The number of mosques skyrocketed from about 300 in 1990 to more than 10,000 in 2000.

## Religion and Politics

militant organization, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), emerged in the eastern provinces of the country. This movement grew into one of the most radical political organizations, not only in Uzbekistan, but in Central Asia generally, with its demands for the establishment of theocratic Islamic states throughout the region. Uzbeki security forces drove the IMU out of its base in Uzbekistan's part of the Ferghana Valley between 1999 and 2001. IMU activists first found refuge in neighboring Tajikistan and then escaped to Afghanistan, where they received support from the Taliban-led government. The Uzbek government blamed the IMU for bombings in Tashkent in 2004 and for political unrest in Andijan in 2005.

### Islam in Turkmenistan

In Turkmenistan the government has also implemented controversial policies towards Islamic activists. On the one hand, it uses Islamic symbols as an integral part of national ideology and national identity, sponsoring new and grander mosques, restoring old ones, and funding pilgrimages to Mecca. On the other hand, it has kept tight control over religious development and actively persecuted non-conformist representatives of the Islamic community.

The religious environment remains very dynamic and very diverse. New, radical organizations, such as *Hizb-Ut-Tahrir* and others, have become more active, while influential official Islamic clergy have consistently preferred not to be involved in political life. In most large cities, religious belief and level of commitment remain a private matter. In this environment, highly devoted women in *hijabs* [head and body coverings] may be seen walking calmly next to girls wearing the most extravagant Western-style miniskirts.

### Orthodox Christianity

Orthodox Christians represent the second-largest religious community in Central Asia, maintain a relatively high profile in all the republics, and work closely with the Moscow Patriarchate. Medieval chroniclers and travelers mentioned the existence of Christian churches and monasteries in Samarqand, Balasagun, and many other parts of the region throughout the medieval era. But practically all of them disappeared during the so-called Dark Ages in Central Asia between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Russian colonization brought significant changes in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian settlers established Orthodox Christian communities on newly colonized land and opened dozens of churches and Christian schools in all the major cities in the region. However, Orthodox priests traditionally preached exclusively among fellow Christians and rarely conducted any large-

scale campaigns to convert local populations to Christianity.

During the Soviet era, Christian communities in Central Asia experienced the same fate as Muslims. Bolsheviks punished Orthodox clergy for their support of the pro-monarchist movement and consequently either executed or exiled them to Siberia. Many priests chose to escape to other countries, including China, Turkey, and Australia. Many churches and monasteries were closed or destroyed. During World War II, the Orthodox Church was again allowed to practice under strict state control. As Soviet Communist ideology collapsed in the mid-1980s, Orthodox communities gained a new and powerful impetus. Most restrictions were removed, and many people turned to religion.

The independence of Central Asian republics has affected the region's Christian churches in contradictory ways. On the one hand, the Orthodox Church has been freed from strict state control and interference, and people have become free to practice their beliefs. On the other hand, Orthodox communities have begun facing a new and increasingly serious problem – out-migration of the Slavic population to Russia, Ukraine, and other countries. Between 1991 and 2007, nearly three-quarters of the Slavic population left Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, and almost half left Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. To a lesser degree, Slavs also left Kazakhstan. If these emigration trends continue, many Orthodox churches in the region will probably close their doors within the next 20 to 30 years.

### Other Christian Communities

Protestant and Catholic communities appeared in Central Asia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with the migration of Germans, Poles, and some others to the newly colonized areas. Their numbers increased rapidly during World War II as Volga Germans from Russia, as well as German prisoners of war, Poles, and other ethnic groups, were deported to Central Asia. In the post-World War II era, their contribution to the local population reached about 2.5 percent, with the total number exceeding between 1.1 and 1.2 million people by the mid-1980s. Since 1991, however, approximately one million ethnic Germans have migrated to Germany from Central Asia. Those who have remained try to keep their ministries active.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, other groups – Baptists, Adventists, and others – were active in the region, although they faced severe restrictions and persecution from Soviet authorities. In the 1990s, many legal restrictions were lifted, and these groups began expanding their work in local Central Asian communities. There were reports that small groups of Kyrgyzs, Kazakhs, and Uzbeks were baptized. However, local native

*(continued on page 14)*

Between 1991 and 2007, nearly three-quarters of the Slavic population left Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, and almost half left Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

## Religion and Politics (continued from page 13)

communities and community leaders actively resist and condemn such missionary activities among their groups.

### Islam in Central Asia after 9/11

The events of 9/11 caught Central Asians by surprise, as they found themselves on the frontline of the international war on terrorism and the immediate attack on the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan. Both Central Asian governments and ordinary people of the region strongly condemned the terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Center and on the Pentagon. Central Asian republics unanimously joined the U.S.-led coalition, playing a critical role in the decisive stages of the war against the Taliban in 2002-2003 by granting overflight permission to coalition air forces and providing infrastructure for logistic support of U.S. forces. (See Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States: Authoritarianism, Islamism and Washington's New Security Agenda* [New York: Zed Books, 2005].) From the beginning, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan even granted access to their territories for U.S. and NATO-operated military bases, although as of 2006 the United States maintains only one large military airbase in the region, in Kyrgyzstan.

The war in Iraq (2003-), however, has been quite a different matter. Most Central Asian officials and ordinary people were reluctant to support the U.S.-led "Coalition of the Willing," though they refrained from public opposition. In 2003, only Kyrgyzstan joined U.S.-led allies in the war against Saddam Hussein's regime and sent troops to Iraq.

Since the beginning of the U.S.-led war against international terrorism, Central Asian governments have toughened their positions toward the participation of Islamic organizations in political life. They have reinforced their secular policies and reconfirmed bans on participation in

political activities by any religious organizations. The governments' stances have hardened even further against supporters of the IMU, and they have also begun to persecute the underground movement *Hizb-Ut-Tahrir*. This organization claims that its sole purpose is peaceful education and social programs, but government officials have accused it of preparing the ground for political change, including the establishment of an Islamic state in the region. *Hizb-Ut-Tahrir* has always denied such allegations.

By and large, Central Asian societies remain deeply divided on the role of religion in social life. Evidence from various studies indicates that older believers who grew up and formed their views during the Soviet era largely support the status quo; they believe that religion should remain a private matter and that religious organizations should not participate in political life. In the meantime, the younger generation is divided between those who strongly support the secular nature of their countries and those who call for a return to Islamic roots and who demand a greater role for religion in public and political life. In between there is a large segment of the younger generation that is busy searching for jobs, and that is more concerned about everyday life than about political debates on the role of religion. ♦

**Rafis Abazov** is adjunct assistant professor, School of International and Public Affairs, Harriman Institute, Columbia University, New York, New York. He has written four books, including the *Historical Dictionary of Kyrgyzstan* and the *Historical Dictionary of Turkmenistan*.

*Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from Rafis Abazov, Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2007).*

## "Gospel Subjects," A Hermitage Museum CD-Rom

Reviewed by Nancy J. Sairsingh.

### The Return of the Prodigal Son

On viewing Rembrandt's "Return of the Prodigal Son" in the Hermitage Museum, Catholic theologian Henri J.M. Nouwen observed, "The more I spoke of the Prodigal Son, the more I came to see it as, somehow, my personal painting, the painting that contained not only the heart of the story that God wants to tell me, but also the heart of the story that I want to tell to God and God's people. The painting has become a mysterious window through which I can step into the Kingdom of God" (*The Return of the Prodigal Son* [New York: Doubleday, 1992]). Rembrandt's painting of the Prodigal Son

is one of many masterpieces in the Hermitage's European collections devoted to Christian themes. Nouwen's moving account of his encounter with this great work is vivid testimony to the special power of visual images to penetrate the spiritual depths of an engaged and probing viewer.

### A Collection of Religious Paintings

"The Return of the Prodigal Son" is included in the CD-Rom "Gospel Subjects," on sale at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. It is a helpful learning tool which enables one to become acquainted with the major West European paintings relating to Jesus and Mary

Older believers believe that religious organizations should not participate in political life. In the meantime, the younger generation is divided between those who strongly support the secular nature of their countries and those who call for a return to Islamic roots and who demand a greater role for religion in public and political life.

## “Gospel Subjects”

in the museum’s collection. By means of this CD-Rom, works executed between the 14th and 18th centuries, which are dispersed throughout the museum, are brought together in a fresh context. Rather than being seen beside works of the same artist or of the same period, 58 religious paintings can be closely scrutinized, compared, and contrasted in relationship to one another. This CD-Rom is also available for visitors to view in the museum’s Education and Technology Center. (The museum suggests that a thorough study of this educational program takes about 40 hours.)

The CD-Rom presents paintings in five sections: “The Main Characters of the New Testament,” introducing the theme of Christ Pantocrator (the Almighty One) and the Madonna and Child; the “Story of Mary;” the “Childhood of Christ;” the “Services [Ministry] of Christ;” and the “Passion of Christ.” Unfortunately, the English translation of the text is frequently awkward. Usually one can determine the intended meaning, but some mistakes are glaring, as in “Council of Efface,” for the historic Council of Ephesus in 431. Accompanying a set of images devoted to the theme of the Deposition from the Cross is a distasteful translation of a text from Chapter 15 in Mark’s Gospel; we read that Joseph of Arimathea “went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.” The errors in translation, particularly those of Scripture, are regrettable. On the other hand, although it is not clear whether the authors of the descriptions of the paintings themselves are believers or not, they are nonetheless very sympathetic in their presentation of the Gospel message. Since Christianity is a central theme in European painting, the Hermitage’s “Gospel Subjects” serves a useful purpose.

### **New Approaches to Understanding Religious Paintings**

On what bases, apart from artistic quality, do we make distinctions among works of religious art? Religious paintings, made to inspire or enhance faith, may be viewed as holy objects for veneration, such as the icon in the Orthodox tradition; they may have a primarily didactic function; or they may serve both functions. The museum setting, however, neutralizes images by presenting them in chronological sequence as the works of famous artists. In this case our focus is upon a narrative of human artistic achievement. In addition, religious art needs to be understood

in the context of history and theology, as, for example, in Hans Belting’s erudite study, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*. We have become accustomed to viewing images up until postmodernism, including religious works, in the context of the museum and through a particular lens created by accepted notions of what art is. New approaches which bring history, theology, and art together in creative and thoughtful interaction can shed fresh light on old masterpieces.

The “Gospel Subjects” CD-Rom is a step in the right direction. It may even serve as a means of evangelism for those with no knowledge of the Bible and/or for those not ready or disposed to appreciate the truth in the form of the written word. Such a format also offers a feast for the eyes for the weary Christian pilgrim visiting one of the great “sacred” sites of our time – the Hermitage in Russia. One regrets that this CD-Rom released by the Hermitage does not offer examples of Russian art, in particular icons, since, according to Orthodox theology, truth has priority over art in the making and veneration of icons. An historical study of religious images should take into account the original functions of these images.

This CD-Rom often provides eloquent formal descriptions of these works of art and much detailed information about Christian symbolism. Close-up shots of incidents in each painting accompanied by informative texts and a zooming function enable the viewer of the CD-Rom to take note of details in the paintings which would otherwise be missed. Sometimes, but not often enough, we are given information about who may have commissioned a particular work, and how it may have functioned in its own time. In some cases, as in Francois Boucher’s painting of “The Rest on the Flight into Egypt,” the religious depth and sincerity of a particular work is called into question. Occasional references to disputes over the proper treatment of religious themes, as in the case of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, are of great value. More information along these lines is needed so that a viewer can appreciate differences among works of art on Christian themes regarding religious authenticity as well as artistic quality. ♦

Religious art needs to be understood in the context of history and theology.

**Nancy J. Sairsingh** lives in Moscow and teaches art history at the Russian State University of the Humanities.

# Stoian Bukov's New Friends

Daniel Nalbantski

*The author describes a visit to his beloved former pastor, exiled to a remote Turkish village in Bulgaria. Stoian Bukov had led a thriving ministry and had pastored an influential church. Because he refused to tone down his evangelism, Communist leaders separated the pastor from his family and banished him to live among Muslim Turks in a village without electricity, running water, and roads. The author traveled to the village expecting to find his former pastor lonely and broken. Instead, he found just the opposite when Stoian told of his new Turkish friends. These Turks were also victims of a Communist agenda, forced to change their names to Bulgarian ones.*

A secret order was issued to chisel out the Turkish names from the gravestones and to engrave Bulgarian ones instead.

"Well," he [Stoian] said with a sad smile and sat down on the only chair in the room. "Don't be afraid. We talk openly about these things here. No one can hear us. There are few Communists in the village, except for the mayor and a few others.

"Then again, I am a victim of Communism as much as they are. In addition, I suffer because of my faith. So, this is one more thing that brings us together. To me, they are Turks, and I address them by their Turkish names. I openly state that I don't approve of what the Communists did to them. Besides, something happened that brought us even closer."

"What was it?" I asked, surprised that anything could happen at all in this forsaken village.

"The Communists changed the names, not only of the living Turks, but also of the dead ones. Once, when I went to report to the mayor, he asked me into his office. He was nice; he even offered me a cup of coffee and invited me to take a seat. Then he asked me to do a job. A secret order was issued to chisel out the Turkish names

from the gravestones and to engrave Bulgarian ones instead. Since very few Bulgarians lived in the village, he asked me to do the job."

"Really?" I said in amazement. "To replace even the names of the dead people!"

"Yes, I am not joking. They have rewritten all the archives, and changed the names of the deceased. However, they have to change them in the graveyard also."

"You declined to do this, didn't you?" I said in hope.

"Sure I did. I would never dream of doing it."

"What happened? Did they punish you?"

"No, what more could they do to me? The villagers heard about it though, and since then have showed even deeper respect to me. Is that food that you brought with you? Take it back, please. I am fine here. The villagers keep bringing me vegetables, fruits, chickens, bread, cheese, and milk. I am afraid I am going to grow fat. I have never eaten so much."

When we went out and headed for the car, the proprietor and his wife came out from the house carrying a linen bag and a bunch of flowers picked from the garden. "Take them in memory of us," he said. "I killed a chicken for you." His wife handed the flowers to my wife with a shy smile; she did not dare to look up.

"Why? You shouldn't do this," I said in amazement.

"Since you are Stoian's friends, you must be good people," said Murath, his hand on his chest. "I have three brothers and two sisters, but I don't have a friend like Stoian. I hope they'll set him free soon, but I'm going to miss him a lot."

We left profoundly moved, but at the same time reassured. As we drove away, I could see in my rear view mirror the diminishing silhouettes of Stoian and Murath standing together and waving goodbye until we disappeared from sight.

Now we knew that our pastor was not alone among enemies. ♦

**Daniel Nalbantski** is a Methodist pastor in Ruse, Bulgaria.

*Editor's note: This article was awarded first prize in the LITT-WORLD 2006 writing competition sponsored by Media Associates International, Bloomingdale, Illinois ([http://www.littworld.org/LW06/eng\\_article\\_1.htm](http://www.littworld.org/LW06/eng_article_1.htm)).*

*Published with permission of the author and Media Associates International, Carol Stream, Illinois.*

*EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT*, published quarterly, seeks to encourage Western Christian ministry in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that is effective, culturally relevant, and cooperative. It also serves as a forum for the exploration of a variety of issues relating to Christianity's presence in Europe's formerly Marxist states. Letters to the editor are welcomed. Subscription rates are \$44.95 per year. (U.S. and Canada); \$54.95 (international); and \$19.95 (E-mail). Reprint and photocopy policy: 1) Quantity photocopies or reprints of up to three articles from a single issue may be distributed or reprinted with no royalty charge, 2) Written permission is to be secured for each distribution or reprinting, 3) The following statement is to be carried on each photocopied article reproduced and each article reprinted: **Reproduced (or Reprinted) with permission of EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT.** Currently indexed by Christian Periodical Index, OCLC Public Affairs Information Service (formerly PAIS), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), and Zeller Dietrich (formerly Zeller Verlag).

Editor ..... Mark R. Elliott  
Editorial Assistant..... Billie Faye Harvey

**SOUTHERN  
WESLEYAN  
UNIVERSITY**

**EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT**  
Southern Wesleyan University  
Box 1020  
Central, SC 29630  
Tel: 864-644-5221  
Fax: 864-644-5902  
E-mail: melliott@swu.edu  
Website: www.eastwestreport.org

©2007

ISSN 1069-5644