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Estonia's Finno-Ugric Mission: Developing a God-given Niche

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Family Ties

Some months ago I was in Russia visiting a small village church among the ethnic Mordva people, 400 miles southeast of Moscow. Knowing I was born in Canada, the local Lutheran pastor introduced me with, "Have you ever seen a real live American?" (This generalization I grudgingly tolerate.) With Russians in the nearest city, Saransk, this introduction had brought smiles of curiosity since I was the first North American they had met. But in an ethnic Mordva village, the response written across their faces was complete disinterest. I replied by saying that while I was born in Canada, I moved to Estonia more than a decade ago, my wife and children are Estonian, and my home now is Estonia. At this, Mordva faces lit up: "Estonia! We're related!"

Stories like this can be multiplied by any Estonian who travels among numerous ethnic groups inside Russia. In Udmurtia, 700 miles east of Moscow, an elderly Udmurt lady hugged me, saying, "We're family. We just haven't seen each other for 10,000 years." At that point I did not want to disappoint her by saying that actually it is my wife who is Estonian, not me.

These fraternal sentiments are very real and form the basis of an exceptional opportunity for missions. But to understand these feelings and the mission work that has sprung from them, a better understanding of the history of Finno-Ugric peoples is required.

The reason Estonians are welcomed as long-lost relatives among these people groups is that they are exactly that. Russian, Swedish, German, English, and Spanish are all part of the Indo-European family of languages. They are all related, however distantly. Estonian, however, together with Finnish, Hungarian, Mordva, Udmurt, and about ten additional language groups inside the Russian Federation are Finno-Ugric, a totally different family of languages. It is no exaggeration to say that Estonian and Udmurt have no more similarity with Russian than Cherokee has with English. That is to say, no connection whatsoever exists. Finno-Ugric is a family of languages all its own. This sense of being fundamentally different from large surrounding nations creates a strong sense of connection with anyone whose language is even remotely connected. The result is that Estonians are excited to meet Udmurts, and Udmurts are excited to meet Estonians.

With the exception of Estonia, Finland, and Hungary, most Finno-Ugric nations are indigenous

minorities inside the Russian Federation. Sadly, as with native Americans and the aborigines of Australia, indigenous ethnic minorities in Russia suffer from a wide range of problems that culminate in a sense of hopelessness.

In a recent visit to the Mari people, 500 miles east of Moscow, I witnessed a young lady crying during a Pentecostal cell group because "no one cares about us Maris. No one even knows we exist. We are dying, and no one cares." It was a privilege for me to share with this cell group that even if no one else has ever heard of the Mari, Estonians know them, and they care. I did something very simple in that cell group. I asked the Maris to count to ten in their language. When they said one, *ik*, I said it in Estonian, *iiks*. 2: *kok*, I said *kaks*, 3: *kum*, I said *kolm*. 4: *nel*, and I said *neli*, and so on up to ten. The similarities between the languages speak a loud and powerful message: "We are not alone."

We believe that God has given Estonia a special niche in missions, a niche 10,000 years in the making, that creates open doors to small ethnic groups that are unknown to the rest of the world. Estonian Christians, as members of a small ethnic group themselves, come with understanding, sympathy, and love to show their distant cousins that they are in fact the precious creation of God.

An Estonian Missions Movement

Our work from Estonia started in 2000 with summer mission teams from the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary. But what started as a seminary training program quickly grew as students returned with a passion and the rallying cry, "We have to get the churches involved." In 2004 we officially formed the Evangelism and Missions Workgroup under the umbrella of the Estonian Evangelical Alliance, with a goal of having Estonian Christians of all denominations involved in missions to their Finno-Ugric cousins. To date, we have sent 31 teams totaling 139 people from Estonia on short-term missions.

Our primary work concentrates on three Finno-Ugric groups, the Khanty, Udmurt, and Komi peoples. We cooperate with local Protestant Christians, providing encouragement and help in their evangelistic work to their own people. Our role is to support local Christians, often in the form of evangelistic music concerts, friendship evangelism in villages, and assisting in children's programs. Praise God that new church and cell groups are being formed, and people are turning to Jesus. Still, we believe the major responsibility for this is in the hands of local Christians.

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Beleaguered Minorities

Official Russian government numbers count the total Finno-Ugric population in Russia at 2.6 million. Specialists, however, estimate that the true number could be closer to five million. They inhabit the northwestern region of Russia, from the eastern foothills of the Ural Mountains, where the Khanty and Mansi peoples live, to Russia's extreme west: St. Petersburg and the border of Finland, traditional homes of the Veps and Karelians. However, even in their home regions they make up at most 30 percent of the population and, as a result, are a small and completely powerless minority. Several of these nationalities, specifically in the St. Petersburg region, the Votes and Izhorians, have dwindled to a few hundred and are listed by the United Nations as facing inevitable extinction.

The Last Pagan Nations in Europe

Finno-Ugric peoples have been, to varying degrees, influenced by the Russian Orthodox Church. The relationship, however, has been ambiguous. The pendulum has swung from positive missionary work, even translating parts of the Bible into their languages, to extreme Russian nationalism with the very Bible translations done by some Orthodox priests being burned by other Orthodox priests. As a result, Orthodoxy has had limited overall impact and the traditional pagan religion has never disappeared. While today some are Orthodox, others remain staunchly pagan. Among the Mari and Khanty, for example, traditional paganism remains the dominant religious force, with the shaman or pagan priest being not only more influential than the Orthodox priest, but actually able to limit Orthodox activities within villages. As a result, the Mari and Khanty have been called the last pagan nations in Europe.

Protestant Initiatives

After the fall of Communism, Protestants undertook missionary activity among all these peoples. Pentecostal, Lutheran, Baptist, and other Protestant churches were established. However, in almost all cases their Russian and Ukrainian pastors do not have knowledge of the unique language or sensitivity to the culture and social problems facing these indigenous peoples. Evangelism is focused on the dominant Russian culture without a conscious attempt to reach out to the ethnic minorities. In fact, in most churches the use of the indigenous language or culture is actively restricted due to a perception that it is tainted by paganism. In terms of percentages, the number of Protestant Christians varies from 0.02 percent among the Mordva to a high of 0.2 percent among the Udmurts, compared to an estimated 1.5 percent among Russians. Thus, Finno-Ugric peoples have been more than 15 times slower than ethnic Russians to respond to the Protestant message. At most, perhaps 20 native Finno-Ugric pastors inside Russia serve nearly five million people scattered over an area half the size of the continental United States. This shows that evangelistic methods used for the Russian majority

are not nearly as effective among the indigenous peoples.

Despite the overall bleak picture, positive work is being done. The Institute for Bible Translation in Finland coordinates translation teams; and in the last ten years Udmurts, Komis, Maris, Veps, and Erzya-Mordva have become the first to receive the New Testament in their languages. The Finnish Lutheran Church has helped to establish Lutheran congregations with a specific aim of using the local language and culture in worship and outreach. The Swedish organization Light for the Peoples provides support for local Finno-Ugric Christians who serve as missionaries to their own people.

Cultural Affirmation

From Estonia our primary approach may be called a cultural witness. On my first trip to Udmurtia we wore traditional Estonian folk costumes, explaining the symbolism and simply trying to show something beautiful in Estonian culture. The response was tremendous. The Udmurts, who suffer from terribly low self-esteem and a sense of shame over their heritage, suddenly realized that maybe their own culture possesses its own beauty. It certainly helped that my Estonian folk sweater has the exact pattern as found on the Udmurt flag.

We focus on Bible passages like Acts 17:26-28, where Paul refers to all nations as the special creation of God and the children of God. In this way we show people groups who are constantly made to feel inferior that they are precious to God, and that they are loved. Our work is very consciously and deliberately an "ethnic mission." We speak to these peoples as one small ethnic group to another, feeling their concern and even fear for the survival of their culture and the language they love. Believing that they are the special creation of God, we try to help them see the beauty that God has created in their culture, while not avoiding the reality of sin and the need for redemption.

Increasing Estonian Cooperation

Perhaps the most exciting development in Finno-Ugric missions is the growing cooperation among various Christian churches and organizations in reaching our common goal. In Estonia we have started the Time for Kindred Nations joint project of the Estonian Evangelical Alliance, the Estonian Bible Society, and the Missions Center of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, the largest denomination in Estonia. We publish a magazine and develop opportunities for encouraging Estonian Christians of all denominations to be involved in missions to the Finno-Ugric peoples. Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal, Lutheran, and Free Churches are all actively involved, making this a truly Protestant-wide mission project.

Current projects include developing a Sunday school curriculum to introduce this mission to Estonian children. Plans are also underway for a permanent exhibit that will travel to libraries and cultural centers across Estonia to raise awareness of the importance of Bible translation in preserving the

languages of the Finno-Ugric peoples.

Increasing International Cooperation

Internationally Estonia has also been instrumental in developing strategic cooperation with Finnish and Swedish mission organizations. We have co-organized a number of conferences to bring Finno-Ugric Christians together for encouragement and teaching. We launched an evangelistic Internet page (www.elupuu.org) with Christians in six Finno-Ugric groups, developing material both in Russian and native languages to reach the spiritual, social, and cultural needs of indigenous peoples.

Another major international project is a mission Bible school program. From 2008 through 2010, we are organizing eight two-week study sessions for 25 potential Finno-Ugric Christian leaders. In our classes Finno-Ugric students have the freedom to ask questions and discuss issues of particular relevance to their cultural situation. During my Bible survey class we had long discussions on Old Testament sacrifices. Neither American nor Russian students would have seen much relevance in our discussion. But since animal sacrifices are still practiced in their pagan religions, Leviticus has great importance in explaining Christian theology to Finno-Ugric peoples.

Taking Full Responsibility

When our work in Estonia was first developing, we had the inevitable discussion of how to find the necessary funding. As we started in the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary, which is heavily dependent upon American support, we questioned whether or not we would look to our American friends. The unanimous decision of our team was no. We believe that a country will never become a long-term missionary sending nation if it waits until funds arrive from somewhere else. If we

want the Estonian church to develop a sense of responsibility for missions, then that must include financial responsibility.

While our international joint projects, like the Internet site and the mission Bible school, are primarily funded by our Finnish and Swedish partners, active fund-raising is going on in Estonia, and we do contribute to the operating expenses. Smaller, purely Estonian projects, such as the summer mission teams, are funded by Estonian Christians, with each team member having responsibility to speak in churches to raise half the needed support, while we as an organization raise the other half.

In fall 2008 we arranged for a pastor from the Komi nation (800 miles northeast of Moscow) to come speak in Estonia. He shared how important it was for their ministry that sermons and worship were in the Komi language, how it opened hearts in a way that a foreign language never could. He then shared his church's plan for a weekly Komi-language Christian radio program. Permission had been given by a local radio station, and everything was arranged except the money. He asked the congregation to pray. Unknown to him, that service was carried live on Estonian Christian radio. Within a few weeks funds came in for the first six months of programs. The Estonian Church responded beyond our wildest imaginations because Estonians know what it means to be a small language group at the mercy of powerful and unsympathetic neighbors. They know what it is to fear for their very national survival. This, more than anything, motivates the Estonian Church to take responsibility to develop the special niche in world missions that God has given them. ♦

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Mother Serafima and the Restoration of Novodevichy Convent

Wallace L. Daniel

Editor's note: The first portion of this article was published in the previous issue of the East-West Church & Ministry Report 16 (Fall 2008): 3-5.

Service in Soviet Industry

Mother Serafima's professional career took place entirely within the Soviet period and was greatly shaped by the Soviet scientific establishment in which she rose to a prominent position. Born in St. Petersburg in 1914, she had no memory of her father who died on the front lines in the First World War. Both her father and her mother belonged to the Russian nobility; her father had worked in the Finnish legation under Nicholas II's Prime Minister Peter Stolypin.

In her later school years, she developed a passionate interest in chemistry. But after the Bolshevik Revolution, she knew she had little chance of gaining admission to a university with her aristocratic and clerical family background. Moscow State University remained for her just a dream. Instead, she studied in the Moscow Oil Chemistry Technical Institute, specializing in a subject in which there were then few applicants: higher molecular chemistry. It was a fortuitous

choice because it led her into rubber technology, which "few people at that time considered to be very important." During her years of study in the institute, she lived with her grandfather. It was at this time, after she had begun her studies, that he was arrested.

During World War II, the future Mother Serafima worked in a plant that produced rubber. She clearly recalled the enormous effort required in her factory to produce the material that the Soviet army required. Many nights "we would sleep only for two hours and sometimes not at all, and we simply went on working almost desperately to produce this material. During these years," she emphasized, "I tried to keep my faith inside me – in my soul."

Mother Serafima spent 45 years as a chemist and researcher in the field of rubber technology, charting a highly successful career in Soviet science and technology. She devoted her life to her work, gaining considerable professional standing among

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the Soviet technical elite. Her accomplishments and the high value in which she was regarded were recognized by the awarding of many prestigious state prizes in chemistry and her appointment as deputy director of her research institute in Moscow. Soviet officials wanted to appoint her director, but she never joined the Communist Party, a requirement for the position. In 1953, following the death of Stalin, Serafima's mother entered the Pyukhtitsa Dormition Nunnery at Iykhvi-Ukarty, Estonia, one of the three open convents and the largest in the Soviet Union. From the age of 70 until her death at 80 in 1963, she served in this well-known convent. "Once the Party administration learned that my mother lived in the convent, they didn't ask me again to join the Party."

Retrieving a Family Legacy

The death of her husband in 1983 left a large void in Serafima's life, she admitted, presenting her with a serious personal crisis. In addition, the political changes in Russia in the 1990s opened up religious opportunities that had been impossible for nearly half a century. After reading intensively in theological literature and consulting with priests who encouraged her, she decided to continue her search for the full story of her grandfather's past. She gathered his sermons, many of which had remained unpublished, and searched archives for his theological writings. This work moved forward, as she recalled, with great difficulty, as she sifted vigorously – and patiently – through collections that had been closed for many years. Eventually, she collected enough materials for two volumes, published under the title *Da budet voyat Tvoya [Let Thy Will Be Done]*. She issued the volumes under her grandfather's name rather than her own, adding a short biography of his life. At the same time she was being pulled in the vocational direction of her grandfather.

Taking the Veil

In 1986 Mother Serafima entered the service of the church, and in 1992 she took the veil.

My decision was quite natural to me.

As a scientist, I had many rewards; my biography, in terms of Soviet life, was without any shadow. I understood, of course, that I would have to answer for everything. I needed to give up my pride; I needed to discover my humility. I decided therefore, to go to work in the cathedral [of the prophet Elijah]. My job was to sell candles; it was the lowest level work in the cathedral, and I did it for more than two years. And I learned a great deal from the experience because all this time I talked with the people I met coming to the cathedral for the first time, people who knew nothing about religion. I had to explain everything to them. As a result, many days I only talked; I had no time to pray.

In an attempt to respond to this hunger, she organized a group that met to study religion, art, and

architecture and that traveled to many historical sites to examine these connections.

Abess of Novodevichy Convent

In 1994, when the government returned Novodevichy to the Moscow Patriarchate, Mother Serafima was chosen to lead its revival. At age 80 she had earned her retirement, but she chose another course. Her organizational skills, her experience as the assistant director of a scientific institute, and her own personal pilgrimage made her a logical choice to rebuild one of Russia's most historic religious communities.

From the outset the relationship between church and state was an extremely delicate one, fraught with many problems. Currently, at Novodevichy, the church controls only the Smolensk Cathedral, trying to live peacefully with the other parts of the monastery that the state operates as a museum. Several reasons account for the cooperation between these two tenants: the museum has more funds than the church and can preserve important art objects in the cathedral, whereas the church has not yet been able to afford specialists to restore buildings and murals. Novodevichy's struggle to reassert itself is also closely related to the problem of finances. In pre-revolutionary Russia, monasteries often had extensive agricultural and craft operations, whose sales sustained religious and social activities. But at monasteries like Novodevichy, these economic traditions had been suppressed.

Rehabilitating Lives

Mother Serafima also had to deal with family problems that confronted the monastery's nuns every day. A large number of women came to the monastery seeking to rebuild broken lives and broken spirits. "Many women come here asking for help and needing counsel," Mother Serafima said, "because they don't have the means to live or because their husband or son often gets drunk and treats them badly. Sometimes these women simply ask me to bless or pray for them – to give them strength to deal with their hardships."

Because government-sponsored social services crumbled in the 1990s, Novodevichy and other religious institutions are struggling to fill the gap, despite extremely limited funds. Seeking to revive handcraft sales, long since banned in Soviet times, Mother Serafima took as her models the Convent of the Dormition in Pyukhtitsa, Estonia, where her mother lived, and the convent in Moscow at Kolomenskoe, which produces porcelain and embroidered cloth. "We are going to develop such possibilities," she said emphatically. "Right now we are only in the initial stages, but we are going to work hard on these craft activities."

"Everything, physical and psychological, was nearly destroyed and needs to be restored," she told me in June 1997. "If I can contribute to this cause, it is primarily because I have 55 years of experience in organizational work." Her task involved not the rebuilding of physical structures but the reconstruction of memories, traditions,

At age 80 she had earned her retirement, but she chose another course.

and spiritual values that nourished a whole way of life. Mother Serafima understood that what had to be overcome was the Soviet-spawned atmosphere of fear and terror that had promoted isolation and indifference toward one's neighbors.

Unlike the stereotype of a Russian monastery, Novodevichy under Mother Serafima was not removed from the world, but instead accepted the most difficult social and psychological problems as its own. In the summer of 1997, the nuns of Novodevichy were helping one of the main children's hospitals in Moscow, caring for the elderly, and feeding the hungry. On 10 August 1997, the day of celebration of the Smolensk Mother of God Icon, Mother Serafima was preparing a dining table for 220 people in the refectory of the cathedral.

Such acts of compassion illustrate the revival of *miloserdie*, literally *dear-heartedness*, which evokes a whole range of Christian impulses: mercy, kindness, trust, and extension of the self to others. For Mother Serafima this giving spirit came directly in conflict with the aggressive consumerism that was evident everywhere. In entering the monastery, she turned her back on her worldly possessions, including her house in a village and her flat in Moscow. Nevertheless, she had few regrets. Mother Serafima's odyssey speaks profoundly to the struggle to keep the spirit of compassion and caring alive and to nurture, under the most difficult circumstances, the religious underpinnings of that spirit.

While Mother Serafima did not dispute the significance of Russia's economic reforms, she did not see them as the forces that would ultimately shape Russia's future identity. She believed that religion was the key to renewal, and the role that the church played would greatly influence Russia's political and social development. Whether the church supported the xenophobic nationalism that its past ideology had so often motivated it to do, or whether the church became a more open, tolerant, compassionate, and socially active institution would play a large part in determining the chances for evolving a democratic structure in Russia.

Mother Serafima's Gifts

In the time I spent with her, listening for hours as she recounted her experiences, Mother Serafima impressed me as a person of courage, conviction, and adaptability, who had united the private and public sides of her life. Her short physical stature belied the intensity with which she spoke, the

seriousness with which she conveyed the memories of her family and joined those memories to the present.

Kind, unpretentious, full of energy, Mother Serafima had become totally authentic in a way that she could not have realized earlier. And while she had experienced much of Russia's tragic 20th-century history, it was the inner resources she commanded that stood out most. A person of character, she reminds us that outward appearance often conceals a great deal of what lies within, powerful resources that have their own way of working themselves out.

Postscript

Mother Serafima's attempts to rehabilitate her grandfather, both in name and deed, took a dramatic turn in 1997. In February of that year, the bishops' council of the Russian Orthodox Church voted to canonize two major figures of the 20th-century, both of whom had perished in Stalin's labor camps: Metropolitans Petr Polianskii and Leonid Mikhailovich Chichagov. Venerated for his courageous actions and humility in his service to the church, Leonid Mikhailovich represented thousands of priests who had suffered greatly before state authorities. But the bishops' decision to canonize him also bore witness to the relentless efforts of his granddaughter and her determination to preserve his memory and spirit.

Mother Serafima died in December 1999. She was laid to rest near the main entrance to the Cathedral of the Assumption which she had served so effectively and where she had located her office. The black marble stone that marks her grave bears simply her name. Archbishop Gregory of Mozhaik, in writing Mother Serafima's obituary, noted that her sincerity and her ability to reach out to others, to the powerful and to the destitute, were among her special gifts. ♦

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Russia's Islamic Threat

Gordon M. Hahn

Editor's Note: The first portion of this article appeared in the previous issue of the East-West Church & Ministry Report 16 (Fall 2008): 7-10.

Constraints on the mobilization of an Islamic revolutionary movement consist of diverse cleavages which divide Russia's Muslim community. Geographically, most of Russia's Muslims are divided between the North Caucasus republics; Tatarstan and Bashkortostan in the Middle Volga and southern Urals areas; the Tatar communities spread across the Volga, Urals, and

Siberian Russia; and several large ethnic Muslim communities in Moscow (perhaps two million) and St. Petersburg (a half-million). This geographical dispersion presents coordination problems for the formation of a broad-based Islamic movement and has contributed to socio-economic, religious, and political differences among the populations. One constraint on the mobilization of Tatar and

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titular republics as compared to the destitute North Caucasian republics, which are plagued by difficult mountainous terrain and limited natural resources. Geography also shaped the nature of Islam in the Middle Volga and North Caucasus. It is generally accepted that in areas such as the North Caucasus that were originally Islamicized by Arab conquest, Islam assumed a more rigid, conservative tone, whereas in the Middle Volga, the southern Urals, western Siberia, and former Soviet Central Asia, which were Islamicized through penetration by Arab merchants and diplomatic missions by the Ottoman Empire, Islam took on slightly more flexible forms.¹

Geography shapes the two mega-regions' somewhat different geopolitical dispositions today as well. In the middle Volga area, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan lack external borders and are therefore less able readily to secede and less susceptible to illegal infiltration by radical Islamists and terrorists. The North Caucasus, on the other hand, has porous, mountainous external borders adjacent to countries harboring pro-terrorist sentiment in the Persian Gulf, southwest Asia, and the Middle East. It is twice the distance from the Persian Gulf to Kazan as it is from the gulf to Grozny.

Ethnic Constraints

Ethnically, Russia's Muslims are divided into some 40 traditionally Muslim groups. An example of the ethnic diversity within Russia's Muslim communities is Dagestan. Its population includes some 20 major Muslim nationalities. Its society and polity are so diverse that post-Soviet Dagestan instituted a consensus-based political system which included a joint rotating presidency and other institutional innovations to ensure the representation of the republic's 14 largest ethnic groups. Still, the republic has been marred by numerous antagonistic relationships among various Muslim nationalities. Equally important, ethnic Russians as well as perhaps members of other traditionally non-Muslim ethnic groups are converting to Islam in high numbers relative to the past, compounding the ethnic diversity of Russia's Muslim community.

Theological Constraints

Clan rivalries also compound ethnic cleavages among Russia's Muslims, especially in the Northeastern Caucasus republics of Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetiya.² Theologically, Russia's Muslims are broken up into Shiites, various schools of Sunni Islam, and Sufis, as well as the competing jadidist and Islamic revivals. The pattern of divisions is such that Islam in the North Caucasus is very different from Islam in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and other ethnic Muslim communities outside the Caucasus. Sunnis predominate in Russia.³ Shiites are a small minority to be found almost exclusively in the Caucasus, among Azeri Turks and the Azeri diaspora and a portion of Dagestan's small Muslim ethnic group,

the Lezgins.⁴ The small number of Shiites limits the importance of the Sunni-Shia rift in Russia, compared to its significance in most of the Muslim world. Russia's Muslims adhere to only two of the four main Sunni schools of jurisprudence, the Hanafi and Shafi *maskhabs*, eschewing the more strict and intolerant Hanbali and Maliki schools. The Hanafi school, founded by Abu Hanifa in Iraq in the eighth century, encompasses the majority of Russia's Muslims. Predominant among the influential Tatars, it is regarded as the most theologically flexible and the most tolerant with regard to other religions and local, including pagan, customs, as well as on issues such as emigration of Muslims to the non-Muslim world.⁵ The Hanafi school may also have had a moderating influence among Muslims in the Middle Volga, Urals, and West Siberian areas, and among several North Caucasus tribes that adopted it.

Rifts Within Islam

Organizationally, after the destruction of most of the country's mosques and religious clerics in the 1920s and 1930s, Soviet authorities established party-appointed, regionally based spiritual boards or administrations of Muslims (*Dukhovnyie Upravlenii Musulman* or DUMS) to control Russia's Muslims. Although underground Sufi brotherhoods and "apartment" mosques, dubbed "parallel" Islam, continued to function, Muslims in Russia saw all open autonomous forms of Islam disappear in favor of state-controlled "official Islam" subsumed under party-appointed DUMS. Today the rift between official and parallel Islam is compounded by openly autonomous Islamic structures and mosques which refuse to register with the authorities.

Moreover, the leading official Islamic organizations are often mutually antagonistic. These include the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims (*Tsentrnoe Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musulman* or TsDUM) of Russia and other European republics of the former Soviet Union, headed by mufti Sheik ul-Islam Talgat Tadzhuiddin, and the Council of Muftis of Russia (*Sovet Muftiev Rossii* or SMR), headed by mufti Ravil Gainutdin, and the Coordination Center of the Muslims of the North Caucasus (*Koordinatsionnoi Tsentr Musulman Severnogo Kavkaza* or KTMSK) led by Chairman of the DUM of the Karachaevo-Balkariya and Stavropol mufti Ismail Berdiyev. Although the SMR is ostensibly subordinated to the TsDUM, it competes with it in many regions, especially in Tatarstan and the Volga and Southern Urals, where Tatars are prevalent.⁶

Ideologically, the most obvious divide among Russia's Muslims is that between the pro-Russian DUMS and the revolutionary jihadists. Various ideological trends and political parties have contended to represent Muslims, and they have split both along the lines of competing political clans and of institutionalized political parties. The first

Islamic political parties emerged during *perestroika* and adopted fairly radical agendas. These included the Islamic Rebirth Party, strongly represented in Dagestan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, and later, under Yeltsin, “Nur” (Light) and the Party of the Muslims of Russia, which were dominated by Tatars. In 2003 Putin’s amendments to Russia’s electoral laws disallowed the registration of parties based on religion, ethnicity, and gender. In the December 2003 Duma elections, members of unregistered Muslim parties participated under the umbrella of the Party of True Patriots, which disguised its Muslim base and included prominent Muslim “Eurasianists.” In general, however, official political parties play a limited role in Russia’s Muslim politics, as indeed is the case overall in Russian politics.

Many among Russia’s official Muslim clergy ally themselves with Russian nationalists and increasing numbers of state officials and bureaucrats in the Eurasian movement led by Aleksandr Dugin and Aleksandr Panarin, who propose a “holy alliance” between the Christian Orthodox and Islamic (as well as, for some, the Sinese) civilizations against the globalizing, secular American and Western or “Atlantis” juggernaut.⁷ Their Eurasian Party includes Russian Orthodox, ethnic Russian Muslim, and traditional “ethnic Muslim” members. The symbiotic relationship between state authorities and official Islam’s top clerics has reinforced the latter’s conservatism in relation to the West. Leading Muslim clergy, such as the KTSMK executive director mufti Shafiq-Khadzhi Pshikhachen, and Muslim thinkers, such as Geidar Dzhamal and the ethnic Russian convert to Islam and chairman of the Union of Muslim Journalists (SMZh) Dr. Vyacheslav Polosin, frequently espouse Eurasianism’s anti-Western and often anti-Zionist ideas on the Dagestan DUM’s website, www.Islam.ru.

Conclusion

Russia’s Muslim challenge has grown since the Soviet collapse. The lack of economic development combined with a demographic explosion in its Muslim-populated regions is likely to create greater demands on the Russian state to heed the interests of its Muslim community, especially in terms of investment in the North Caucasus economy. If state-Muslim relations remain as they are, the Muslim demographic could transform the current slow narrow stream of young Muslims joining the North Caucasus jihad into a torrential river of jihadist volunteers by mid-century.

At the same time, like the former USSR, Russia has other problems that challenge its stability, and that could push it into the category of a failed state over time: a vast and diverse northern territory requiring enormous expenditures on defense, communications, and transport; a large and corrupt bureaucracy opposed to market mechanisms that might help provide the wealth to meet that

expenditure; a reliance on oil and gas revenues in place of structural reforms; the potential nationalist and secessionist aspirations of non-Muslim minorities in, for instance, Karelia, the Volga area, Siberia, and Kaliningrad; and an influx of hundreds of thousands of illegal Chinese immigrants threatening Moscow’s hold on Russia’s Far East.

At the same time, Putin’s counter-revolution is giving rise to more radical political demands. Increased politicization among Russia’s ethnic Muslims plays into the hands of domestic and foreign jihadists, who are already feeding on the Chechen quagmire, itself an increasing drain on Russian financial, human, and political resources.

On the other hand, divisions among Russia’s Muslims – geographical, ethnic, clan, theological, organizational, and political-ideological – may confound the rise of any mass Muslim or pan-Islamic movement. But constraints on the formation of a mass Islamic revolutionary movement may in part explain the emergence of what is to date a small, though growing and effective, underground jihadist terrorist network. ♦

Notes:

¹ Alexander Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 5.

² Robert Bruce Ware, Enver Kisriev, Werner J. Patzelt, and Ute Roericht, “Stability in the Caucasus: The Perspective from Dagestan,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 50 (March-April 2003), 15-17; and Igor Zhukov, “The Structure of Teyps and Clans,” *Yuzhnyy Reporter* (Rostov-on-Don), 28 November 2005, in Ralph Davis’s Chechnya Yahoo Group, 27 December 2005, AltChechnya@yahoo.com.

³ Sunnis believe that the leader of the Islamic world must be one who is a successor of the Prophet Mohammed, but that he should not be considered as a messenger of Allah. Shiites believe that only one of God’s special messengers (an imam) can assume the leadership of the Islamic umma.

⁴ Kobishchanov, “Musulmane Rossii, korennyie rossiiskie musulmane i russkie musulmane,” 62.

⁵ Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 51-53, and Peter Antes, “Islam v sovremennom mire,” in Iordan, Kuzeev, and Chervonnaya, eds., *Islam v Yevrazii*, 45-46.

⁶ Shireen Hunter, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 54-55 and 58-62.

⁷ See Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki* (Moscow, 1997) and A. S. Panarin, *Revansh istorii* (Moscow: Logos, 1998).

Edited excerpts reprinted with permission from Gordon M. Hahn, Russia’s Islamic Threat (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

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The lack of economic development combined with a demographic explosion in its Muslim-populated regions is likely to create greater demands on the Russian state to heed the interests of its Muslim community.

Russian Children at Risk

Mark R. Elliott

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Domestic Adoptions

Fortunately, while international adoptions are declining, domestic adoptions are on the rise. The shift towards less international and more domestic adoptions may be illustrated by the case of attorney Alexander Rodin. In the early 1990s this former St. Petersburg Duma representative enlisted the help of Baroness Caroline Cox, then head of the British branch of Christian Solidarity International, to document and publicize the widespread misdiagnosis of untold numbers of orphans as oligophrenic (mentally deficient).¹ Subsequently, Rodin worked for many years facilitating international adoptions. Presently, his new agency, Light of Love, "exists to help Russian Christian families adopt and foster orphans."²

Similarly, Galina Obrovets, an energetic advocate for Christian women's social concerns and editor of Moscow-based *Sestra* magazine, has organized a program to promote church support for domestic adoptions. In 2008 this effort led to the publication of a promotional booklet and the production of a 23-minute adoption documentary, "Boiya semya [God's Family]," for use in churches.³

The Russian government's preference for deinstitutionalization is also becoming more apparent. President Vladimir Putin's 2006 state-of-the-union address highlighted Russia's demographic crisis and proposed better child care as one of the requirements for reversing population decline. He specifically advocated a shift from orphanages to smaller group homes, foster care, and domestic adoptions.⁴

Foster Care

In addition, support for foster care families is becoming a government priority. Under Gorbachev and Yeltsin (1985-99) the state authorized and began to promote alternatives to large orphanages through "smaller, family-type homes" and foster care.⁵ As for NGOs, in 1990 Baroness Caroline Cox's "Our Family" appears to have been the first Western sponsor of a Russian foster-family home. In a pair of connected high-rise apartments, foster parents Serge and Irina Buchtoyarova assumed responsibility for 11 homeless children who otherwise would have been placed in orphanages.⁶

In another innovative experiment, Father Andrei, an Orthodox priest in the Kostroma Region, established a private orphanage at Kovalyovo organized on the basis of semi-independent family groups within the institution. Children are grouped in families led by long-term house parents. Here, orphans of various ages live, shop, and cook together, sharing house and farm chores as would any family.

Children's HopeChest (CHC), Colorado Springs, Colorado, launched a pilot foster care program in 1998 at Lakinsk, Vladimir Region, and separate family-style homes for boys and girls on the property of Lakinsk Orphanage. CHC greatly

benefited from Buckner International with its 75 years of experience in foster care. This agency even funded training for some CHC Russian staff in Texas. Buckner began its own foster care efforts in the Vladimir Region of Russia in 1995 and now sponsors a range of programs for orphans and orphan graduates in St. Petersburg.

As Children's HopeChest opened additional family-style group homes in the Vladimir and Kostroma Regions, it developed a reputation for innovative alternatives to institutionalization of children at risk. This good name, in turn, led to numerous opportunities to train social workers and ministry personnel in the administration of family-style group homes and foster family programs. In 2002 USAID selected CHC, along with Holt International Children's Services and Charities Aid Foundation, to support Assistance to Russian Orphans (ARO) in the awarding of dozens of grants in Russia to NGOs and ministries undertaking group home and foster care initiatives.⁷

Russian regional government programs favoring deinstitutionalization developed in tandem with NGO and Christian ministry alternatives to orphanages. The Samara Region seems to have pioneered the foster care movement in terms of state provision. In January 1999 "Samara had 500 of the 876 foster families in Russia."⁸ The Kaliningrad Region followed suit with assistance from UNICEF. By 2001 approximately 20 Russian regions had approved foster care legislation, including Moscow, Perm, and Altai, in addition to Samara and Kaliningrad.⁹

Physicist Maria Ternovskaya partnered with Baroness Caroline Cox in the founding stages of "Our Family" where I interviewed her in May 2001. By that point she had been researching best practices in care for at-risk children for a decade. Ternovskaya soon left

"Our Family" for Moscow Orphanage 19 where she inaugurated a path-breaking, multi-faceted approach to serving homeless children. As she explained, "We tried to follow the British and American models of foster placement, and actually the model we created is even better because we have all kinds of specialists gathered together in one place."¹⁰ Orphanage 19 is a well-kept facility near Baumanskaya Metro Station in Moscow. But of the 130 children in its charge, less than 20 are in residence, the rest having been placed in foster families. The orphanage itself doubles as a family social service hub with staff handling child placement, counseling, foster parent training, and legal issues. It all is a realization of Ternovskaya's philosophy: "The first thing is that a child should be in a family and not in an orphanage. When they leave [orphanages], they can't cope with normal life because they have no models for family life."¹¹ To date, Orphanage 19 has placed over 300 children in foster homes. Fortunately, failed placements are low (five to ten percent), while 25 percent of the children

Fortunately, while international adoptions are declining, domestic adoptions are on the rise.

eventually are adopted by their foster parents.¹²

Approximately 5,000 children have now been placed in foster homes in 40 of Russia's 89 regions. Still, many bureaucrats and orphanage directors resist the trend because it threatens the vested interest of thousands of staff employed in orphanages, many of whom would lose their positions if foster care and adoptions came to predominate.¹³ At the same time, to be fair, foster care is no panacea because of too-rapid deinstitutionalization and the trauma of unsuccessful adoption or foster family placements. Furthermore, reports do surface of some foster parents viewing foster children as a means of obtaining government stipends and "free" labor, underscoring the need for careful screening of prospective foster families.¹⁴

In April 2008 the Russian Duma passed legislation on orphan guardianship which has received mixed reviews from children-at-risk advocates. Some, such as staff of Baroness Caroline Cox's "Our Family," fear the new law may unduly restrict or curtail NGO and Christian ministry foster care and group home programs. Other specialists believe the new legislation does not pose such a threat and may benefit orphans through government stipends for guardianship placements. Nothing yet may be said with certainty regarding the effects of this new legislation. Much will depend upon its interpretation and implementation.¹⁵

Growing Russian Nationalism

A fifth trend affecting children at risk is a new wave of Russian nationalism and xenophobia. Positively, we can applaud Putin's assertion that Russia can take care of its own, as that translates into improved support for children at risk, programs to promote domestic adoption, and funding for properly administered foster care and family-style group homes.¹⁶ But re-emerging national pride is regrettable to the extent that it curtails adoption placements abroad and stymies international assistance for Russian children at risk. One longtime veteran of East European ministry believes that the West tends to underestimate the depth of humiliation Russians felt in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse. By way of contrast, this Christian leader states that, without reservation, "The driving force in Russia today is the reassertion of national pride."¹⁷ This not only translates into a decline in international adoption, but it also spells reduced international humanitarian assistance for orphans. One casualty has been the Samaritan's Purse Christmas Shoebox outreach. In 2005 this ministry distributed 600,000 Christmas gift boxes to Russian orphans.¹⁸ However, in 2006 and 2007 no Christmas shoeboxes cleared Russian customs. Widespread speculation points to national pride as a likely explanation.¹⁹ The blow such gifts deal to national self-esteem may best explain their abrupt end.

Russian leaders, including Vladimir Putin, increasingly regard Western NGOs as Trojan Horses smuggling suspect democratic notions into Russia, thereby threatening the Kremlin's hold on power.²⁰ Ukraine's Orange Revolution, bolstered by Western-funded, pro-democracy NGOs and religious

organizations, led directly to the Kremlin's decision to further restrict NGOs and Western ministries working in Russia. In 2006 Putin had the Russian Duma pass legislation that is now dramatically reducing the number of functioning NGOs. Putin is especially hostile toward those with major Western funding, which he has labeled "puppeteers from abroad."²¹

Russia has also been upset with Western involvement in Georgia, the proposed missile defense system in Eastern Europe, Ukraine's efforts to obtain NATO membership, U.S. support for an independent Kosovo, and U.S. criticism of Russia's handling of Chechnya. All of the above have led to greater scrutiny of Western NGOs and mission agencies. For example, in summer 2007, a regional police official, well disposed to the good work of Western Christian ministries, confided to an American friend that he was no longer in a position to approve Western camp ministries; team passports had to be vetted through Moscow. Americans slated to minister in that region were re-routed to Ukraine.²² At the same time, many other Western ministry teams did work with Russian orphans in 2007. Thus, as is often the case in Russia, restrictions may not be consistently enforced.

Visa Restrictions

As of October 2007 new Russian residency and visa regulations for non-citizens pose another major new impediment to Western ministry. Humanitarian, religious workers, and business visas, even if issued for one year, permit registration and residence in Russia for, at most, 90 days out of any 180-day period. Receiving a residence permit or a work visa has alleviated this difficulty for some. However, the time, effort, and bureaucratic hurdles involved in securing such documents may substantially curtail missionary service in Russia. Foreign worker quotas set separately for each of Russia's regions further complicate the picture.²³ Some Western missionaries already have gone home, others have moved to Ukraine, Georgia, and other former Soviet republics, while still others have opted to endure the disruption of 90 days in-90 days out, in hopes of a future, less restrictive visa regime.²⁴

The Growth of HIV/AIDS

A sixth trend regarding Russia's children at risk and one of the most troubling, is the increasingly rapid spread of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)/AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) among them. Sobering statistics underscore the threat.

- One percent of Russia's population (approximately 1.4 million) is HIV-infected, giving Russia the third highest number of cases among all countries outside Africa.²⁵
- Over 80 percent of Russia's HIV-infected population are youth ages 15

(continued on page 10)

Re-emerging national pride is regrettable to the extent that it curtails adoption placements abroad and stymies international assistance for Russian children at risk.

No room exists for either complacency or despair. A great deal still needs to be done. At the same time, Christian faith is a powerful source of hope, whatever the obstacles.

to 30, with orphans and street children among the most vulnerable groups.²⁶

- “In Russia, street children who have lived in orphanages are two times more likely to be HIV positive than those who grew up in homes.”²⁷ Susan Hillis of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) warns of the growing synergy between HIV/AIDS and Russia’s children at risk, meaning orphans and street children are fueling the country’s HIV epidemic while the epidemic, in turn, threatens to fuel an upsurge in the number of homeless children, as in Africa.²⁸ CDC projects an additional 500,000 Russian orphans in the next ten years as a result of parents dying of HIV.²⁹

After years of half measures, the Russian government is now taking the HIV/AIDS threat more seriously. State funding for HIV/AIDS and hepatitis programs rose from \$140 million in 2006 to \$300 million in 2007, with \$392 million pledged for 2009.³⁰ In the fight against the AIDS epidemic USAID, UNAIDS, and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) are all working closely with Russian authorities, with NGOs, and in some cases, with Christian ministries.³¹ Selected examples of projects to combat HIV/AIDS follow.

- 1) Doctors of the World is working with CDC, providing HIV testing, medical treatment, and counseling to St. Petersburg street children.³²
- 2) Russian Pentecostals sponsor a number of drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers, such as at Kingisepp (Leningrad Region), that treat HIV-infected clients.³³
- 3) The Russian Orthodox Church began addressing the AIDS issue in 2001, focusing on prevention, spiritual counseling and social support, and hospice care.³⁴
- 4) Campus Crusade for Christ and Children’s HopeChest have collaborated on a Crossroads curriculum designed to foster character development and healthy choices among Russian orphans to avoid HIV infection and drug and alcohol abuse.³⁵
- 5) Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries hosted a 2006 “HIV/AIDS Forum of Good Practice and Networking” in Moscow with the help of Britain’s Tearfund.³⁶
- 6) The HIV/AIDS Initiative of Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, California, under the leadership of Kay Warren, has hosted

three conferences, 2005-2007, on “AIDS and the Church,” with growing attention given to the spread of AIDS in Russia.³⁷

Under-Researched Aspects of Outreach to Russian Children at Risk

A great deal more research needs to be done to determine the breadth of Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant orphan outreach. Other phenomena, also insufficiently studied, involve assistance given by Western adopting families to the home orphanages of their newly adopted children and Christian ministry to Russian street children.

In the 1980s I compiled data on Western-based East European missions, discovering in the process that beyond the several hundred incorporated non-profits identified, additional myriad projects were afoot in Western Europe and the United States organized by local congregations, even by individuals and their extended families.³⁸ I labeled such initiatives “kitchen-table” organizations to emphasize their informality and their grassroots character. It now appears quite certain that the same phenomenon exists today as regards Western and indigenous Russian outreach to children at risk.

Much Accomplished; Much More to Do

In closing, two contrasting generalizations may be noted. 1) Much is being done, more than most observers realize, and perhaps more than will ever fully be known, to extend love and care to Russian orphans and street children. 2) Conversely, all efforts combined to date do not begin to meet the present need. Nor do current efforts appear to be capable of meeting the increasing future needs posed by Russia’s looming AIDS crisis and the orphaned children it will leave in its wake. Thus, no room exists for either complacency or despair. A great deal still needs to be done. At the same time, Christian faith is a powerful source of hope, whatever the obstacles. As we read in I Corinthians 16:9 “A great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.” St. Paul reminds us that obstacles are to be expected, but they are no excuse for surrender.

Notes

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² Cristi Hillis website: <http://cristihillis.com/go/adoption>. For a moving account of the adoption of eight Russian orphans by Brian and Susan Hillis, assisted by Alexander Rodin, see Kay Warren, *Dangerous Surrender; What Happens When You Say*

- Yes to God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 91-93.
- ³ Anita Deyneka interview, 4 April 2008; Galina Obrovets (*Sestra Magazine*), interview, 4 June 2008.
- ⁴ Bagila Bukharbayeva, "A Dark Secret Amid the Boom," *Moscow Times*, 30 August 2007, p.4; George Steiner (Children's HopeChest), interview, 3 January 2008.
- ⁵ Stephenson, "Abandoned," 188-89.
- ⁶ Boyd, *Baroness Cox*, 110. See also Kelly, *Children's World*, 594.
- ⁷ Assistance to Russian Orphans (ARO), "Early Intervention: Giving Russian Children a Chance," http://.aro.ru/gate/doc-files/early_intervent.pdf; George Steiner interview, 3 January 2008; S. Ivanov *et al.*, *In-Depth Analysis of the Situation of Working Street Children in Moscow* (Moscow: International Labor Office, 2001), 69; Analiz Gonzalez, "Buckner Takes Foster Care Expertise Around the Globe," 2008, <http://www.bucknet.org/enews-fostercreglobe.shtml>.
- ⁸ Stephenson, "Abandoned," 189; Svetlana Sidorenko-Stephenson, "Prostitution and Young People in Russia" in David Barrett, E. Barrett, and N. Mullenger, eds., *Youth Prostitution in the New Europe; The Growth in Sex Work* (London: Russell House, 2000), 124.
- ⁹ Stephenson, "Abandoned," 189; Svetlana Stephenson, "Street Children in Moscow; Using and Creating Social Capital," *The Sociological Review* 49 (No. 4, 2001), 530-47.
- ¹⁰ Maria Ternovskaya interview, 14 May 2001.
- ¹¹ Svetlana Osadchuk, "Little Sasha's Search for Love and Dinosaurs," *Moscow Times*, 2 March 2007.
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ Kevin O'Flynn, "An Orphanage is Fostering Change," *Christian Science Monitor*, 10 November 2005; Stephenson, "Abandoned," 190; Osadchuk, "Little Sasha's Search."
- ¹⁴ Nikolai Dimitriev interview, 22 June 2008.
- ¹⁵ Angela Baker interview, 4 June 2008; Zhanna Danilova interview, 2 June 2008.
- ¹⁶ Jeff Thompson (Eastern European Outreach), interview, 18 January 2008; Cristi Hillis (CoMission for Children at Risk), interview, 16 January 2008.
- ¹⁷ Anonymous, January 2008.
- ¹⁸ Karmen Friesen interview, 4 January 2008.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*; Jeff Thompson interview, 18 January 2008; Cristi Hillis interview, 16 January 2008.
- ²⁰ "FSB Says Foreign NGOs Help Terrorists," *Moscow Times*, 9 April 2008, p. 3.
- ²¹ Mike Eckel, "Rights Groups: Thousands of Russian NGOs Face Closure for Not Meeting Onerous Rules," Associated Press, 16 April 2008.
- ²² Jeff Thompson interview, 18 January 2008.
- ²³ "Foreigners Have to Go Home to Get Russian Visas," *BusinessNewsEurope.eu*, 24 January 2008; Fagan, "Russia: Visa Changes"; Conor Sweeney, "EU Slams Russia Over Visa Red Tape," *Moscow Times*, 9 April 2008, p. 3.
- ²⁴ Jeff Thompson interview, 18 January 2008.
- ²⁵ UNAIDS, *2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic* (New York; UNAIDS, 2006).
- ²⁶ Susan Hillis, 3 February 2008, cited in Cristi Hillis and Karmen Friesen, "Russia's Growing AIDS Epidemic," *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 16 (Spring 2008), 1; Davis, *Red Letters*, 82.
- ²⁷ Dmitry M. Kissin *et al.*, *HIV Zero-prevalence in Street Youth in St. Petersburg, Russia* (Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007); Hillis and Friesen, "Russia's Growing AIDS Epidemic," 1; Kathryn Utan, "Collateral Damage: HIV/AIDS Creates a Generation of Orphans and Vulnerable Children," *CommonHealth* (Spring 2005), 61.
- ²⁸ Hillis and Friesen, "Russia's Growing AIDS Epidemic," 1. See also Utan, "Collateral Damage," 62.
- ²⁹ Hoppe, "Bezprizorniki," 33; Mark R. Elliott, "I Will Not Leave You as Orphans. I Will Come to You," *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 8 (Summer 2000), 16; www.eastwestreport.org.
- ³⁰ Hillis and Friesen, "Russia's Growing AIDS Epidemic," 1; David Novak, "Russia 'Not Ready' for Tough HIV Measures," *Moscow Times*, 7 May 2008.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 2; Kissin, *HIV*.
- ³² Hillis and Friesen, "Russia's Growing AIDS Epidemic," 5.
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*; Matt Kavgian, "An HIV/AIDS Ministry Partnership in Eastern Europe and Russia," *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 15 (Fall 2007), 1-3; George Steiner interview, 3 January 2008; Angela Baker (CoMission for Children at Risk), interview, 4 June 2008. Dr. Beryl Hugen, Calvin College, is currently completing a two-and-a-half year evaluation of the effectiveness of the Crossroads curriculum in selected Russian orphanages. Beryl Hugen interview, 6 June 2008.
- ³⁵ Hillis and Friesen, "Russia's Growing AIDS Epidemic," 2.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*; Andrew Lossau (HIV/AIDS Initiative, Saddleback Church), interview, 30 April 2008.
- ³⁷ Mark R. Elliott, *East European Missions Directory* (Wheaton, IL: Institute for the Study of Christianity and Marxism, 1989).

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Collaboration Among Theological Librarians

Luba Zakharov

Theological Librarians' Conference

Moscow, Russia, was the venue for a conference, 30 April-3 May 2008, dealing with "Library Support for Educational Programs in Theological Schools." Organizers, intent on fostering greater collaboration among theological librarians, included Alexander Popov, Head Librarian, Moscow Theological Seminary of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (www.moscowseminary.org); Katharina Penner, Head Librarian, International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague (www.ibts.eu); and Dr. Sergei Sannikov, Director, Euro-Asian Accrediting Association (<http://www.e-aaa.org/>).

Participants and Purpose

Conference participants came from the Russian cities of Krasnodar, Moscow, Novosibirsk, Prochladny, and St. Petersburg; the Ukrainian cities of Kharkiv, Kremenchug, Kyiv, Odessa, and Zaporozhe; Chisinau, Moldova; and Minsk, Belarus. Others in attendance traveled from Prague, Rome, and from Holland, Michigan, and Durham, North Carolina, in the United States. Denominational affiliations included Baptist, Catholic, Christian Reformed, Orthodox, and Pentecostal.

The purpose of the conference was to provide an opportunity for librarians from the former Soviet Union and from abroad to network, exchange ideas, and present new scholarship. A unique feature of the gathering was that not only librarians, but deans, rectors, faculty, and information professionals from universities, seminaries, Bible colleges, associations, and non-profit organizations were in attendance. This diverse assemblage of educators gathered to collaborate on ways to strengthen the theological training. St. Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute (<http://www.standrews.ru>) enriched the conference by making available for purchase its Russian translations of Western biblical and theological texts.

Workshops and Speakers

All who presented workshops stressed the value of the library to the theological enterprise and stated the importance of the mission of the library to the larger mission of their institutions. Katharina Penner opened the conference by emphasizing this point, encouraging participants to find ways to connect the mission of the library to the larger educational mission of parent institutions. She suggested that this shared vision should be the foundation for all decisions in collection development in support of theological education.

Evgeni Borisovich Rashkowski, a guest from Moscow's Library of Foreign Literature (www/libfl.org), addressed the issue of re-collecting religious materials that were destroyed after the Revolutions of 1917. His comments underscored the importance of the librarians' role as stewards of the texts that carry the faith tradition.

As both a faculty member and an administrator, Dr. Meri MacLeod, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, Michigan (<http://www.westernsem.edu/>), explored the role of the library in distance education,

encouraging librarians present to be pioneers in establishing good working relationships with faculty. Her presentation gave attendees an opportunity to consider long-term strategies for distance learning, not only through the purchase of necessary software, but also through the creation of a vision for this new means of delivering theological education.

Librarian Tatyana Pavlenko, from Kharkov Medical University in Ukraine (www.ksmu.kharkov.us/), gave a thorough and detailed presentation on cataloguing, stressing the importance of a comprehensive classification system capable of opening up to students the richness of the collection. Father Marek Rostkowski from the Pontifical Institute in Rome (www.urbe.it) introduced attendees to the library of the Pontifical Institute and its new open network. In addition, he discussed the Institute's intention of working with the International Federation of Library Associations (www.ifla.org) to create a uniform international scheme of cataloguing rules.

Dr. Victor Titarchuk represented ServanTek (<http://servantek.org>), a faith-based, non-profit organization, and Koha, its open source software. Dr. Titarchuk proposed that conference participants consider the integration of their library catalogs which could be accomplished with Koha software. Throughout the conference, he expressed interest in facilitating the creation of a library consortium for theological libraries in the former Soviet Union.

Katharina Penner gave a second presentation at the conference on information literacy and the important function of librarians as educators. Particularly as technology changes the landscape of the library, the work of theological librarians will entail not only their personal navigation of new systems, but training faculty and students in their use.

Luba Zakharov, reference and serials librarian at Duke University Divinity School Library, Durham, North Carolina (<http://library.duke.edu/divinity/>), gave a presentation exploring the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) and the kinds of technologies that are beginning to shape such catalogs in the United States. In addressing the growing impact of technology upon the library catalog, she described services such as Amazon.com and Google.com that are becoming embedded in the catalog, thus expanding its role as an inventory system to include its use as a new discovery tool. Although the role of the catalog as an inventory system will continue, it will be enhanced and reshaped to accommodate technologically savvy users and online digital repositories.

Following a second session on distance learning by Dr. Meri MacLeod, Andrei Gorbachenko, also from ServanTek (<http://servantek.org>), gave an overview of Moodle and Greenstone2, open source software products that facilitate distance education. In her second presentation, Luba Zakharov spoke to the issue of "Managing Change in a Changing Technological Profession," encouraging librarians to give further thought to their goals for their libraries

Moscow, Russia, was the venue for a conference, 30 April-3 May 2008, dealing with "Library Support for Educational Programs in Theological Schools."

leading to the development of more comprehensive library mission statements. In closing, Alexander Popov, head librarian at Moscow Theological Seminary, gave a presentation on “Creating a Library Website,” demonstrating the types of choices required in website development and explaining the value of websites to faculty and students.

Next Steps

The conference’s final open forum addressed possible next steps for the support of collaboration among librarians at a distance. Participants agreed 1) to formalize an association of Euro-Asian librarians (yet to be named); 2) to continue discussions on a newly formed listserv; and 3) to explore the possibility of a follow-up conference in

Ukraine in 2009. All in all, the collaborative work begun at this conference established a community of theological librarians whose underlying goal is to strengthen the work of theological schools in the former Soviet Union. ♦

Editor’s note: *Conference presentations are available in Russian at <http://www.moscowseminary.org>.*

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The Attendants

Ruben Gallego

Editor’s note: Ruben Gallego was born in Moscow in 1968. His mother, a student, was the daughter of the general secretary of the Communist Party of Spain. Born with cerebral palsy, Gallego at age one was abandoned to the Soviet orphanage system by his grandfather, who told his daughter that her hospitalized son had died.

Gallego miraculously survived a child-care regime that was described as “shocking [for its] level of cruelty and neglect” in a 1998 Human Rights Watch report (Abandoned to the State: Cruelty and Neglect in Russian Orphanages, <http://www.hrw.org/reports98/russia2/>). At age 15 he “graduated” from a children’s home to a retirement home where the severely disabled typically died for lack of care and food, frequently within a matter of weeks or months.

*Against all odds, Gallego cheated death, escaped his institutional confinement, married, and fathered two children. Donated American technology came to his rescue in the form of a motorized wheelchair and a computer which he mastered with the use of his left index finger. In 2000 Gallego was reunited with his mother, with whom he now lives in Germany. Gallego’s largely autobiographical *White on Black* won the Russian Booker Prize for best novel in 2003.*

A Few Good Attendants

There were very few of them. Genuine *nyanyas* – caring attendants, full of kindness and concern. I don’t remember their names, or rather, I don’t remember the names of all the good-hearted ones. Among ourselves we divided them up into “evil” and “good.” For a long time I’ve tried – unsuccessfully – to shake the bad children’s-home habit of dividing all people into good and evil. The good attendants believed in God. All of them. There, I’ve gone and divided people up into categories again. I can’t seem to get away from it.

Believing Attendants

Believing in God was forbidden. They told us there was no God. Atheism was the norm. Nowadays hardly anyone would credit this, but that’s how it was. I don’t know whether any of the teachers were believers. They probably were. The teachers were forbidden to talk to us about that. Making the sign of the cross or dying an Easter egg could get a teacher fired, but not an attendant. An attendant’s wages were low, and there was a lot of work. There weren’t many people eager to wash floors and change children’s pants. The bosses simply turned a blind eye to the believing attendants. And they did believe. They believed no matter what. They prayed for a long time on night duty, lighting a candle they’d brought along. They made the sign of the cross over us at night. At Easter they brought us dyed eggs and blini [pancakes]. It was forbidden to bring food into the children’s home, but what could the strict bosses do to these illiterate women?

An Attendant’s Story

There were just a few good attendants. I remember them all. Right now I’ll try to tell a story about one of them. This is a real story, told to me by an attendant. I’ll try to retell what my childish memory retained, as accurately as I can.

“I’ve been working here a long time. When I arrived, I looked, and there were little children, some without feet, some without hands. And everyone was dirty. You wash one, then he crawls across the floor – and he’s dirty again. Some you have to spoon-feed, some you have to wash every hour. I was so tired. My first night shift I didn’t get a wink of sleep. They’d brought in a new one, and he kept calling for his mama all night long. I sat by his bed, took his hand, and stayed like that with him until morning. I cried and cried. In the morning I went to the priest to ask for his blessing to quit. ‘I can’t do it,’ I said, ‘I can’t watch this. I feel so sorry for everyone, it breaks my heart.’ But the priest wouldn’t give his blessing. He said, ‘This is your cross to the end of your days.’ I begged and pleaded with him. But then I worked for a while and learned to live with it. “Still it’s hard. I write down the names of all the children I take care of on a piece of paper. I have a notebook at home, and that’s where I write all of you down. And at Easter I light a candle for each one of you. It’s getting to be a lot of candles. It’s expensive. But still I light one and say an Our Father for each of you. Because the Lord told us to pray for all the innocent children. But you have such a strange name, Ruben. Must be Armenian. The Armenians are Christians, I know that for sure. Not Armenian, you say? Then I thought, since his parents don’t come to visit, they must be Basurmans

(continued on page 14)

There weren’t many people eager to wash floors and change children’s pants. The bosses simply turned a blind eye to the believing attendants. And they did believe. They believed on matter what.

The Attendants *(continued from page 13)*

or something. A christened soul wouldn't abandon her child. They're bitches – forgive me, Lord, old fool that I am, no matter how hard you try, you still sin. But you're going to be in my notebook without a last name recorded. Your last name is so queer, I wouldn't be able to write it. Everyone's written down with a last name, except you. In prayer you're only supposed to say the first name, but it's still not good that there's not a last name."

What can I add to this story? I grew up, read scads of different books, and now I think I'm very smart. Thank you to my teachers, who taught me to read. Thank you to the Soviet state, which raised me. Thank you to the smart Americans, who created the

computer and gave me a chance to type this text with my left index finger.

Thank you to all the good-hearted attendants for teaching me about goodness, for the warmth in my heart that I carried through all my trials. Thank you for what can't be expressed in words, or entered on a computer, or measured. Thank you for your love and Christian mercy, for the fact that I'm a Catholic, and for my little children. For everything. ♦

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Catholicism and Islam: Failed Predictions of European Secularization

Mark R. Elliott

Catholicism

Philip Jenkins, professor of history and religious studies at Pennsylvania State University, prompted extended discussion in 2002 with his highly acclaimed study, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). This study managed to provoke both enthusiastic affirmations and vehement disclaimers. See Frans Wijsen and Robert Schruter, eds., *Global Christianity: Contested Claims* (Amsterdam-New York: B. V. Rodopi, 2007). *The Next Christendom* contrasts the state of Christianity in the United States (for the most part, stagnant) and Europe (mostly in sharp decline) with the church in the global "South" – Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia – (remarkably dynamic). Jenkins successfully challenges the longstanding consensus of mainstream scholarship that secularization inevitably follows in the wake of modernization. As his study amply documents, lands south of the equator do not fit the secularization thesis.

But Jenkins' more recent work, *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis* (Oxford University Press, 2007), makes a case for even European religious revitalization. In the process he marshals abundant evidence of religious vitality in Eastern Europe. As regards post-Soviet European states, Poland and the neighboring Czech Republic and Slovakia contradict the thesis of the inevitability of secularization.

- Polish Catholic seminarians numbered 7,000 in 2005.
- Polish monasteries and nunneries are thriving, home to 1,845 monks and 23,000 nuns.
- Attendance in worship is strong with 78 percent of Poles reporting regular participation.
- Poles migrating to Western Europe take their faith with them.
- Britain now has a Polish population of 750,000 to one million, with Poles now more numerous than Pakistanis.

- "By some estimates, the greater London area has perhaps a million legal and illegal East Europeans" (*God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis* [Oxford University Press, 2007], 58).
- More and more Polish priests are serving outside their homeland. Polish seminaries make "a special point of teaching them English which they will need to evangelize Britain or Ireland" (*Ibid.*).
- Croatian Catholic churches are becoming more numerous in Britain, while 82 British Catholic churches now conduct masses in Polish. "We used to celebrate mass three times on a Sunday, and we were never full," noted one London congregant. "Now we have six or eight services every Sunday, and people are standing outside in the street" (*Ibid.*).
- Poland's popular Radio Maryja (Mary) distresses the Vatican and the Polish Catholic hierarchy with its ultra-conservative politics, its downplaying of the Holocaust, and its xenophobia. Nevertheless, it "demonstrates the survival of old-style reactionary church politics at least in corners of Europe" (*Ibid.*, 67).
- South of Poland in the Czech Republic, Father Vladimir Mikulica has spearheaded a Pentecostal-style revival; and
- Next door in Bratislava, Slovakia, Silva Krcmery, a medical doctor and dedicated Catholic layman, has helped transform St. Martin's Catholic Church into something resembling a North American megachurch.

Islam

Jenkins also points out that Islam's growing presence in Europe undermines the thesis of inevitable secularization. He dwells at considerable length on the promise and peril of growing Muslim minorities in various West European states. In addition, Jenkins highlights the longstanding place

Philip Jenkins makes a case for even European religious revitalization.

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of Islam in the Balkans and its growing significance in Russia.

- “Over seven million Muslims live in the Balkan states, with another 900,000 in Bulgaria” (*Ibid.*, 114).
- Albania is the only country in Europe with a Muslim majority; and
- As a result of the Balkan Wars in the 1990s, Kosovo is more Muslim than ever, following the expulsion of some 40,000 Orthodox Christians.

As for Russia:

- Its 15 to 20 million Muslims account for 10 to 14 percent of Russia’s total population of 143 million.
- Russia “has as many Muslims as the whole of Western Europe, and almost as many mosques – 5,000 to 6,000” (*Ibid.*).

- Russia’s Muslim birth rate is far higher than that of its non-Muslim population; and
- The possibility of the spread of radical Islam is a major concern of the Russian government.

While Jenkins sees much of the religious revitalization of Europe in positive terms, he concludes with a disquieting parallel between Europe’s current religious strife and East-West ideological strife after World War II. His observation is intriguing, but none-too-comforting: “It seems not only are rival ideologies once more locked in seemingly permanent struggle, but just as in the Cold War, Europe again represents a critical theater of rivalry – this time, among secularism (less triumphant than predicted), Islam (gaining ground), and Christianity (showing new signs of life). New specters are haunting Europe” (*Ibid.*, 25). ♦

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New specters are haunting Europe.

Reflections on God’s Continent

Darrell Jackson

Philip Jenkins’ latest offering, *God’s Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe’s Religious Crisis*, shines the spotlight on the presence of many Christians among those who have made their way to Europe from Africa, Asia, or Latin America, and from Eastern Europe to Western Europe. Some of these intentionally carry their Christian faith with them. Others have relocated for purposes of employment or education and have revitalized almost lost causes. Romanian migrants revived the ghost town of Aguaviva in Spain where over 100 have settled, prompting the opening of a new Orthodox worshipping community. Aguaviva’s Romanian population is only a miniscule percentage of nearly two million Romanians, a tenth of the country’s population, who had already emigrated to Spain and Italy before Romania’s admission to the European Union. In 2006 Romanians sent home more than £2 billion (\$3.53 billion) in remittances to family members still living in Romania. In Bradford, England, an American branch of the Romanian Orthodox Church established a congregation in 2005, and Roman Catholic parishes across the

United Kingdom have been revitalized by migrant Roman Catholics from Poland.

In March, 2007, Ross on Wye Baptist Church, in the heart of rural Herefordshire, England, commissioned a Ukrainian pastor to investigate the spiritual needs of the nearly 8,000 Ukrainian seasonal workers in the area. For an England vs. Russia football match, screened live at the church, there were just under 50 East Europeans from Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Moldova, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Slovakia.

These accounts of East Europeans living in Western Europe arise from recent research carried out by the Nova Research Center in England. They suggest, as does Jenkins, that Christianity in Europe, East and West, is increasingly characterized by transition and dynamism as a result of the movement of migrant people within and into Europe. Many more stories of faith being lived out in new surroundings remain to be told. ♦

Darrell Jackson is tutor in European Studies and director of Nova Research Center, Redcliffe College, Gloucester, England.

Catholic and Orthodox Pilgrimages in Europe

Philip Jenkins

Catholic Pilgrimages

The continuing popularity of pilgrimages refutes simple claims that European Christianity is dead. Critics might question the kind of faith that such pilgrimages demonstrate, and both Protestants and many liberal Catholics are nervous about the theological content of a Marian healing shrine. But if we regard the pilgrimages to Mecca or Varanasi as symbols of the passionate faith of Muslims or Hindus, then we should treat Christian expressions with equal respect.

The world's largest Marian shrine is Guadalupe in Mexico, which attracts ten million visitors a year, while six million visit Brazil's Church of Our Lady of Aparecida. But Europe is still home to several thriving centers that draw pilgrims on a near-Latino scale, and over the past half-century, those numbers have grown substantially. Lourdes drew a million each year in the 1950s. That number is now closer to six million annually, and 50,000 might pass through even on a quiet day.¹ While estimates vary, Europe's second most visited shrine is Poland's Jasna Góra in Czestochowa, which attracts four or five million, with a heavy youth representation. Pilgrims come to see a miraculous picture of the Virgin, supposedly drawn from life by St. Luke the Evangelist. Each year, six million Poles, or 15 percent of the population, make a pilgrimage to some site. Pope John Paul's visit to Croatia in 1998 also helped restore the popularity of Marija Bistrica.²

Some East European pilgrimage sites boomed under Communist regimes, when they offered a form of clandestine resistance to official repression. In the 19th century, Lithuanians began the custom of erecting crosses on the Hill of Crosses, *Kryžiu Kalnas*, near Vilnius. These symbols flourished under Soviet rule, and the harder authorities tried to sweep them away, the more devotedly people set up thousands of new crosses, until eventually, in the 1980s, the government acknowledged failure. By now, the total of crosses, large and small, runs into the tens of thousands. Under the patronage of John Paul II, the Hill reinforced its position as a shrine

of nationhood as well as Catholic devotion, and a center of pilgrimage. Other new shrines have also developed. Just since 1981, the village of Medugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina has enjoyed European celebrity for the apparitions of the Virgin and for the words of counsel that she reportedly addresses to the faithful. By some accounts, Medugorje has attracted 30 million visitors in this relatively short period.³

Orthodox Pilgrimages

Among Orthodox churches too, the revival of monasticism since the fall of Communism has led to a reestablishment of ancient shrines that once more draw large numbers of pilgrims. Such once-great landmarks of Russian Christianity as Sergiev Posad and Valaam are flourishing anew, offering spiritual direction to seekers. So is Optina Pustyn, which in its day welcomed Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. In 2006, many thousands of Russians stood in line to visit the relic of the hand of John the Baptist, which had been removed from the country during the 1917 Revolution, but was once more on display in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior. Symbolizing the resurrection of Russian Christianity, the cathedral itself had been demolished in 1931, but was wholly rebuilt in the 1990s. Bulgaria's national shrine is the ancient monastery of Rila, which a million faithful now visit each year to engage in the distinctly unsecular pursuits of venerating relics and seeking healing. Also, across Russia and Eastern Europe, the end of Communism coincided with a renewed interest in painting icons, a devotion that seems set for a potent revival.⁴

Editor's Note: See also Boris Vukonic, "Catholic Pilgrimage: The Phenomenon of Medugorje," East-West Church & Ministry Report 7 (Fall 1999): 1-3.

Notes:

¹ Mary Lee Nolan and Sidney Nolan, *Christian Pilgrimage in Modern Western Europe* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 203-30.

² Ellen Badone, ed., *Religious Orthodoxy and Popular Faith in European Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); Ellen Badone and Sharon R. Roseman, eds., *Intersecting Journeys* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Jill Dubisch and Michael Winkelmann, eds., *Pilgrimage and Healing* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005).

³ Donald Foley, *Understanding Medjugorje* (Nottingham, UK: Theotokos Books, 2006).

⁴ Benjamin Forest, Juliet Johnson, and Marietta Stepaniants, *Religion and Identity in Modern Russia* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005).

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