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## Church-Based Alcohol Rehabilitation in the Former Soviet Union

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### Drunk Driving Deaths

The toll was seven dead: five special needs orphans, their teacher, and her husband, returning home from a crafts fair. On 22 September 2012 a drunk driver on a two-day binge had plowed into a Moscow bus stop at an estimated 125 miles per hour. Following his arrest, 29-year-old Alexander Maximov, with a previous DUI and other traffic violations, told investigators, "I always do what I want."

Russian leaders Vladimir Putin and Dimitry Medvedev and the state Duma are all on record calling for stiffer DUI penalties in an attempt to reduce the nation's troubling rate of alcohol-related traffic fatalities. Looking at the larger picture, the World Health Organization maintains Russia has "by far the highest proportion of alcohol-attributable mortality" worldwide. In Lenin's famous phrase, taken out of context, "What is to be done?" Now that the post-Soviet church is free to exercise compassion, can it be some part of a solution to Russia's epidemic alcoholism? Perhaps so, but first, what are the actual dimensions of the crisis?

### Russia's Demographic Decline

Russia today is facing a serious demographic shortfall. Since the Soviet breakup, the country's population has fallen from 149 million to 142 million. With an excess of 12.5 million deaths over births in these years, the decline would have been even greater but for in-migration from Central Asia. At fault are deteriorating health care, an unhealthy diet, smoking, declining birth rates, emigration, and social trauma stemming from economic upheaval and persistent unemployment. The ultimate cause of demographic decline is an elevated mortality rate unprecedented in a highly educated, industrialized nation in peacetime. A host of Russian and Western analysts, in turn, argue that alcohol abuse plays a leading role in Russia's unsustainably high mortality rate.

### Russia's High Rate of Alcohol Consumption

Europe has the world's highest rate of alcohol consumption; and in Europe, Russia's annual consumption rate of 15.8 liters of pure alcohol per capita is exceeded only by Moldova (18.2), the Czech Republic (16.5), and Hungary (16.3), while the

annual male alcohol consumption rate of 35.4 liters is eclipsed only by Ukraine (37.4) and Estonia (36). Working-age Russian males down an average of more than 155 bottles of vodka per year.

### Alcohol Poisoning and Binge Drinking

Compounding the problem of increasing quantities of alcohol consumed has been the decreasing quality of spirits. Drinking often unsafe, home-brewed *samogon* has increased deaths from alcohol poisoning, as has the consumption of such lethal liquids as industrial alcohol, antifreeze, perfume, and cleaning solutions. Whereas fewer than 1,500 Americans die from alcohol poisoning annually, the figure for Russia in a recent year was 23,000. Russia, in addition, has the misfortune of Europe's second highest rate of consumption of strong spirits (63 percent). Binge drinking (the case for about one-third of Russian males at least monthly), heavy consumption apart from meals, and Russian cultural tolerance for heavy drinking also contribute to Russian alcoholism.

### Alcohol-Related Mortality

The unhealthy quantity, quality, and pattern of Russia's alcohol consumption provide the explanation for alcohol-related deaths of half a million Russians annually. Out-of-control consumption of vodka and other distilled spirits results in marked increases in alcohol-related homicide, suicide, traffic fatalities, drownings, fatalities from industrial accidents, fires, and falls, and terminal medical conditions including cancer of the mouth and cardiovascular, liver, kidney, and respiratory diseases. As examples, 75 percent of murders committed in Russia and 42 percent of suicides occur under the influence of alcohol, and in one Russian urban investigation, 83 percent of those who died in fires, 63 percent who drowned, and 62 percent who fell to their death were inebriated. Thus, in the midst of Russia's demographic free fall, an increasing body of evidence suggests that alcohol-related deaths are especially to blame.

### Social Costs of Alcohol Abuse

In addition to deaths, the social costs of Russian alcohol abuse include increased rates of theft, assault, rape, domestic violence, divorce, child neglect,

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## **Church Based Alcohol Rehabilitation** *(continued from page 1)*

and orphaned children. Misuse of alcohol is also responsible for fetal alcohol syndrome births and as much as a 15 to 30 percent shortfall in worker productivity. Russian émigré Harvard scholar Boris Segal estimates economic losses from alcoholism at one-third of Russian GNP.

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### **Church-Based Rehab**

Since the demise of the Soviet Union church-based rehab programs have proliferated, now totaling approximately 100 Russian Orthodox and some 600 to 800 Protestant. A Pentecostal church in Kyiv opened the first Protestant residential alcohol rehab center in the former Soviet Union in 1994, with the second, New Life, in St. Petersburg in 1995. The charismatic New Life Center in the Leningrad Region, with a residential population fluctuating between 170 and 400, may be the largest church-based program in Russia. Most church-sponsored rehab centers, however, are modest in size, typically working at any one time with 20 to 25 recovering alcoholics.

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### **Detox**

Those who enter church rehab programs undergo withdrawal “cold turkey” since church centers cannot afford drug regimens and prefer instead to rely on spiritual intervention. Christian rehab worker Alison Giblett credits, in particular, the “healing power of prayer” for sparing alcoholics withdrawal at its worst. Many program participants, for their part, report detoxification less severe or non-existent compared to previous withdrawals they have experienced.

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### **Rehab Routine**

At the heart of Russian church-based rehabilitation is the conviction that only God can reform alcoholics and that Bible study, prayer, worship, and Christian community are the practical, spiritual means of their deliverance. The usual rehab routine involving exercise, regular hours, regular meals, and regular work is naturally conducive to better health. Program participants regain appetites, regain weight and strength, and regain a sense of normalcy, in contrast to lives and bodies previously taxed by alcohol.

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### **Follow-up Care**

Residents who successfully complete rehabilitation programs and make their way back into society face the danger of relapse unless they take great care. Rehab centers therefore encourage their graduates to steer clear of old drinking friends and old haunts and, instead, to live four to twelve months in halfway houses, transition apartments, and in the case of Orthodox, in monasteries, nunneries, or remote parishes. Centers also try to arrange employment, stress the importance of permanent vows of total abstinence, and encourage attendance at periodic reunions.

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### **Former Alcoholics and Church Growth**

Journalist William Yoder, visiting Baptist and Pentecostal churches in Siberia, reports a common sight: “rows of silent men between the ages of 20 and 50 unaccompanied by women or children”—rehab residents and graduates. Moscow Pentecostal pastor and rehab director Andrei Blinkov has observed that

former alcoholics who stay active in church are the rehab program graduates most likely to stay sober. Churches are both organizing agents of recovery and products of rehab programs; churches start rehab programs and rehab programs start churches. Alison Giblett explains, “Drug and alcohol rehab ministry in Russia and Ukraine is the strongest determining factor of church growth.”

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### **Church-Based Rehab Success**

Four features of church-based alcohol rehabilitation programs have contributed to their success. First, recovered alcoholics very frequently serve as directors and staff in church-based rehab centers. Time and time again, as I interviewed directors and sponsors of programs across vast distances I found this point confirmed—from Khabarovsk to Novosibirsk to Almaty to Moscow to Kostroma. Fourteen of 20 rehab center directors interviewed by Alison Giblett were themselves graduates of recovery programs, as is the case with all 40 leaders of Evangelical Christian-Baptist Good Samaritan rehab centers. Rehab graduates who stay on to staff recovery centers serve as role models. In The Mill, Father Maxim and his workers urge residents to look to Christ and the saints for lives to emulate, but residents view ex-alcoholic staff members as the best examples of what they can become.

A second key to success has been the residential nature of recovery centers. The trouble with day programs, Alison Giblett argues, is that addicts “are still surrounded by all the same temptations.” Great value comes from community living with staff and residents eating, sleeping, working, and worshiping together, all of which fosters a healthy, sober lifestyle.

Third, churches almost always locate their rehab programs in the remote countryside where temptations prove harder to indulge. Alison Giblett recalls, “It was often in the small ‘family-run’ isolated homes located far from the cities and modern life where I sensed the strongest commitment to change and joy in their transformed lives.”

Finally, church-based rehab centers operate on remarkably modest budgets. Post-Soviet branches of such transnational rehab programs as Teen Challenge and Betel have sometimes received help with startup costs. However, most church-based rehab centers have received little or no operating support from clients, the government, or Christian sources abroad. That may be changing as Putin and Medvedev recognize the increasing threat that substance abuse poses for the nation. On 22 November 2012 the Russian Federal Drug Control Service announced funding of one billion rubles (\$32.2 million) for 2013 in support of rehab centers, apparently including church-based programs.

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### **Measuring Success**

The self-sufficiency that characterizes most church-based rehab programs stems from low-cost rural residence, volunteer staffing, drug-free detox, and a remarkably wide range of small business ventures. New Life and The Mill near St. Petersburg, Pastor Andrei Danilov’s center near Kostroma, an Operation Mobilization center near Novosibirsk,

and three rehab programs near Almaty illustrate the dizzying array of possibilities: electrical, plumbing, and construction work, auto repair, carpentry, making furniture, marketing honey, making bricks, and operating a sawmill, fishery, taxi service, and guest house. As for agricultural pursuits, these centers grow and consume or sell vegetables, fruits, flowers, and ornamental plants, raise livestock, breed bulls for sale, engage in potato truck farming, and make and market peanut butter, salsa, jams, and preserves.

Post-Soviet church-based alcohol rehabilitation programs are unquestionably prolific and give every appearance of success. However, measuring results, even defining success, proves to be a difficult task. Lack of agreement on what length of sobriety constitutes success makes for widely diverging estimates of effectiveness. "In Soviet times," University of Chicago Professor Eugene Raikhel notes, "a remission was considered effective if the patient didn't drink for two months," whereas today in church-based rehab programs, total abstinence for life is the yardstick for success.

On average, post-Soviet government-run and commercial alcohol rehab centers have success rates of less than 10 percent. Indicative of the poor showing of secular programs is the admission of one narcologist with 50 years' experience: "I know how to get a man out of drunkenness, but to teach him how to live sober, I am powerless." By way of contrast, the average success rate for church-based alcohol rehabilitation in Russia and Ukraine is 61 percent.

Positive, non-quantitative outcomes of church-based programs reinforce the point: widespread employment of rehab graduates as treatment directors and staff, numerous reformed alcoholics in new church leadership positions, and recovered alcoholics marrying and raising families in churches connected to rehab programs. A medical doctor in Ukraine with nearly 30 years of employment in state rehab programs came to the painful conclusion that her past efforts had been "hopeless and senseless." As a retiree, she now volunteers in a successful church-based program in Kyiv.

Also in Ukraine, state ministries, after evaluating various drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, designated the church-based "Know the Truth" curriculum as one of four approved resources for substance-abuse treatment. In Russia an outside specialist judged the success of the church-based New Life Center near St. Petersburg "on a par with...the very best Russian centers for addiction treatment." In 2005 in a Kremlin ceremony President Putin awarded a medal to New Life's director.

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### Rehab Shortfalls

While acknowledging the positive results of church-based recovery programs, a balanced perspective still requires examination of marginal and unsuccessful rehab efforts. In November 2010, on charges of unsanitary conditions, forced detention, and the mistreatment and death of a client, the Ministry of Justice ordered the closure of the Protestant "Transformation of Russia," which reportedly administered almost 400 rehab centers.

While some Russian Orthodox churches host Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, especially

conservative, nationalistic Orthodox are suspicious of AA because of its Western and Protestant roots. Also troubling is the calculation of a priest at Moscow's Danilovsky Monastery who runs AA meetings for Orthodox clergy, that perhaps one quarter of all Orthodox priests are themselves battling alcoholism.

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### Orthodox Criticism of Protestant Rehab

In addition, some Orthodox priests, for example, Father Maxim (Pletnev) who directs a St. Petersburg rehab center, dismiss Protestant rehab programs as the replacement of one addiction for another: "They may be saving people from drugs, but these people display a dependency on the sect very similar to narcotic dependency." Similarly, Father Alexander (Novopashin) in Novosibirsk warns against "sectarian" rehab centers as "scams that hide behind good intentions."

It is true that successful church-based residential rehab programs—in Russia and elsewhere—rely heavily upon strict and demanding house rules. However, since spiritual disciplines and rigorous daily routines characterize Orthodox as much as Protestant rehab programs, both could be said to be fostering new dependencies—and, in fact, neither would care to disavow fostering dependence upon God. Conversely, on a positive note, Orthodox sociologist Sergei Filatov of the Russian Academy of Sciences contends that Protestant rehab work in Siberia and the Russian Far East serves as a positive incentive for greater Orthodox efforts to aid alcoholics.

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### Primitive Conditions

Many church-based treatment centers must also cope with primitive accommodations. Centers often sleep six to ten persons per room and lack modern utilities, forcing residents and staff to make do without running water, indoor bathrooms, washing machines, or central heating. Such dire conditions would hardly seem conducive to successful recovery, but in rural Russia at least, such rudimentary living conditions are not unusual.

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### Relapse

Father Georgi (Edelstein) has successfully assisted recovering alcoholics in his parish outside Kostroma, but other alcoholics have failed to make good on his help. On occasion this enterprising priest has offered recovering alcoholics housing in newly constructed cabins, with the promise of deeding their quarters to them outright if they stay sober for a year. One morning in June 2004 I remember arriving in the village of Karabanovo to visit Father Georgi, only to see smoke rising from the ashes of an *izba* that had burned overnight. An alcoholic under Father Georgi's tutelage had squandered his chance: In a drunken state he had smoked in bed, catching fire to his home.

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### Ambitious Social Outreach

In spite of its hindrances and handicaps, church-based alcohol rehabilitation in Russia and Ukraine constitutes perhaps the most ambitious social outreach undertaken by Protestants in the wake of the Soviet Union's demise. Together the rehabilitation work of Protestant and Orthodox churches marks a dramatic departure from Soviet marginalization of religion. Since the advent of *glasnost*, the word *miloserdie* (charity) has no longer been obsolete as

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## Church Based Alcohol Rehabilitation *(continued from page 3)*

Soviet dictionaries previously had designated it.

The church-based rehab movement is also part of the post-Soviet reemergence of civil society. Whether or not current state harassment and suppression of Russian secular NGOs will undermine church-based rehab as well is an open question. Only time will tell if the November 2012 announcement of state funding for private rehab programs might signal a more favorable climate for at least this category of NGOs.

### Grassroot Initiatives

A striking feature of the post-Soviet, church-based rehab movement is the spontaneous character of its emergence without direction from, foreknowledge of, or approval from the state—or even church leaders for that matter. Pentecostals on the local level, who have launched the greatest number of church-based rehab programs, have undertaken the recovery of alcoholics without any appreciable Western influence, direction, or funding. What makes the indigenous character of the post-Soviet Pentecostal (and Baptist) rehab story all the more remarkable is that church-based rehab centers first emerged in the 1990s in the very same years as the dramatic influx of missionaries with their multi-faceted support for Russian Protestantism. While Western and Korean missionaries took substantive roles in shaping post-Soviet Protestant evangelism, church planting, theological education, publishing, and ministry to children at risk, Protestant rehab centers have managed to proliferate mostly on their own with, initially, minimal overseas involvement.

### What Is To Be Done?

In sum, alcohol abuse inflicts widespread damage upon Russia, undermining the nation's health, safety, family integrity, economic productivity, demographic viability, and political stability. The question remains: What is to be done? Efforts in combatting alcoholism in Russia, government measures have proven ineffective in good measure because the public is

little exercised by its own pandemic inebriation. "The difficulty," according to leading alcoholism researcher Alexander Nemtsov, "is that the alcohol problem in this large and heavily drinking country evokes almost no reflection in the national consciousness. Millions of personal tragedies attributable to drinking do not coalesce into a public sentiment against alcohol; heavy consumption has become a part of daily life."

Probably no less than a sea change in Russian culture would be required to effectively rein in alcohol abuse. That, in turn, would be possible only as a result of a newfound respect for human life that has been cheapened by devastating revolutions, wars, and famines. Patriarch Kyrill has argued that "Freedom is truly possible only when society and every individual respects the God-given dignity of every other person." Similarly, lasting freedom from alcoholism requires a deep-rooted respect for one's own person, a belief church-based rehab advocates derive from St. Paul's admonition that the body deserves care because it is God's temple (I Corinthians 6: 19-20).

Given the extent of Russia's abuse of alcohol, it seems unlikely that its population would adopt abstinence as practiced by most Russian Protestants and some Old Believers (traditionalists who split from the Orthodox Church in the 17<sup>th</sup> century). Still, it might be plausible to imagine that **out of self-interest the Russian state and the Russian public might come to better appreciate and make allowances for its various religious and ethnic minorities who either abstain from or better hold their liquor**, including Old Believers, Protestants, Muslims, and Jews. By some miracle, should that come to pass, sober graduates of church-based alcohol rehabilitation programs would stand ready as models for the nation of the possibility of a healthier existence free from enslavement to alcohol.♦

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## Anglican Mission in Post-Soviet Europe – a Personal Retrospective

Mark Oxbrow

### Church Mission Society—First Steps in Eastern Europe

"There's one from Bulgaria," my secretary told me as she handed me the day's post. It was the spring of 1990, and I was not aware that the Church Mission Society (CMS), for whom I then served as director for Britain, had ever had any contacts in Bulgaria in all of its 201-year history. In simple English, the letter I was holding told me, "The people of the village have come to our monastery for food and clothing. They are desperate. Can you help us?" The letter was signed by an Orthodox monk. I never did discover how he acquired my address in London.

The previous November, like most Westerners, I had watched in amazement as the Berlin Wall was converted into souvenir chips of spray-painted concrete, never thinking that this would have any implications for a 200-year-old Anglican mission agency committed to mission in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, least of all that it would shape the next

20 years of my ministry. But that letter from Bulgaria was a Macedonian call and one we could not ignore as, over the next few months, The British and Foreign Bible Society, Scripture Union, and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students all challenged CMS to "come over and join us." But what could an old Anglican mission do in post-Soviet Europe?

Our lack of preparedness, our caution about entering into new commitments, and our need to reorient strategy, staffing, and resources, rather than becoming the bureaucratic minefield that often bedevils large institutions, actually gave us a distinct advantage. Rather than rushing in, all guns blazing, to "evangelize the communists," we were forced to step back and take a full 18 months to study, reflect, and plan – with considerable prayer and spiritual struggle. With the assistance of a recent graduate in Russian and international affairs, Mr. Richard Nerurkar, as my research assistant, I began an amazing journey into the East of Europe, and more importantly, into Orthodoxy.

## Partnerships by Invitation

Very early on in this process we established the principles 1) that in each place we would seek first to work with the majority Christian community; 2) that **we would only work in places where we were invited to do so; and 3) that our first joint mission venture in each place would be determined by the priorities of the local church.** In most parts of the region this led us into relationships with Orthodox communities, but there were exceptions. In Czechoslovakia (as it then was) we engaged with Lutheran communities, and in the North Caucasus region of Russia, with Baptists and Pentecostals. Explaining to our Orthodox partners in St. Petersburg and Moscow that we also worked with Baptists in Dagestan and Pentecostals in Krasnodar was never easy, but also led to some important conversations. Similarly, working with both the Orthodox and eventually two separate Baptist communities in Georgia brought its challenges.

## Anglican Advantages

One significant advantage we had as CMS in those early days was our Anglican identity. (This was before Anglicans—at least in Britain—ordained women and well before Anglican struggles over same-sex relationships.) In the 1990s, many Orthodox leaders regarded Anglicans as “safe” both theologically and strategically. By strategically I mean that at that time as now, unlike Roman Catholics, United Methodists, and many Evangelical groups, we Anglicans had no plans to establish our denomination across the Orthodox world. In fact, it was the stated policy and practice of CMS that when individuals came to faith in Christ as a result of our work, we would encourage them to join their local Christian community, be it Orthodox, Lutheran, Baptist, or whatever.

Being Anglican also helped us in another way. The Anglican diocese in Europe had for many years, in some cases right through the Cold War, maintained a chaplaincy presence, often a church closely associated with the British embassy, in several countries in the region. The Archbishop of Canterbury also had improving relationships with many Orthodox hierarchs and his office rapidly invited CMS into these relationships. My first visit to Romania was therefore facilitated by the Anglican chaplain there, and my first meeting with His Holiness Patriarch Ilia of Georgia was alongside the representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Anglicans also share an appreciation of ecclesiology, liturgy, and Trinitarian theology which is appreciated by Orthodox colleagues but is not too offensive to Baptists and Pentecostals.

## Holistic and Diverse Ministry

So what were we able to do in those early years? Adopting the policy that our first missionary activity together should meet the felt needs of our partners, our first five years in post-Soviet Europe were characterized by a truly holistic approach to mission. With the Russian Orthodox Church we assisted with theological education and the development of religious education in schools, while in Ukraine the Orthodox Church sought our assistance in establishing a dialogue with academics on faith issues, the establishment of an apologetics journal, and the setting up of a mission institute. In Dagestan the priority was to help a new Baptist Church planted by students to acquire a safe place to meet and training for its leaders. In Georgia the Orthodox Church asked us to help its theological college and then to support its work in prisons and among disabled members of the community, while the Baptist church drew us into supporting Chechen refugees and engaging in medical outreach in the Islamic region of Adjara. Drug rehabilitation work was a priority for Pentecostal leaders in southern Russia, while in Romania we sponsored the first hospital chaplains, and in Czechoslovakia we helped the Lutheran Church establish an embryonic mission agency. The list goes on. We could easily have faced the charge of a lack of focus in our missionary engagement, but in reality **we had just one very clear strategy – to establish trusting relationships with partners which were based on a mutual appreciation** of the different missional insights we both brought into our partnerships.

## New Engagements with Orthodox

As time has passed some relationships have deepened and others have become more difficult, but the learning that took place within CMS, and for me personally, at that time, has shaped much of our ministry since. In particular, our engagement with Orthodox Churches in mission has challenged us to a more Trinitarian understanding of the *Missio Dei* (the Mission of God) and to an appreciation of the missional potential of liturgy as well as service and proclamation. One Orthodox student we worked with in the 1990s is now a metropolitan bishop, another a university teacher in Austria, and a third worker for the Russian Bible Society. A young Baptist we sponsored for training now trains others in a Bible college in central Russia, and a Georgian Orthodox partner now has a burden to reach out to Iranian Muslims. God’s mission goes on. ♦

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## After Communism: Forty Years in the Desert?

Danut Manastireanu

*Editor’s note: The first part of this article was published in the East-West Church and Ministry Report 22 (Winter 2014): 5-8.*

### No Clear Vision of the Future

The fall of communism as a political and economic system in Eastern Europe did not mean, unfortunately, the demise of communism as a way of thinking and as a pattern of behavior for people living in post-communist contexts. People just emerging from oppression do not have a clear understanding of the kind of society toward which they are in transition.

This is similar to what happened to the Old Testament Israelites in the desert. They knew Egypt all too well, but had no clear idea what life in the Promised Land would be like. This kind of situation can lead to a deep-seated hopelessness, one of the most common “diseases” in post-dictatorial societies. People who have been part of a centralized economy all their lives find it very hard to understand the mechanisms of

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## After Communism: Forty Years in the Desert? (continued from page 5)

the free market economy and of democracy. Again, it will be easier for younger people to learn and adapt to these mechanisms.

### Nationalism versus Globalism

Post-communist societies are quite polarized between traditionalists and modernists. Traditionalists look to the past, to ethnicity, and to religion as sources of identity, while modernists oppose these as outdated and look ahead to modern globalist concepts. After the fall of dictatorship, the artificially constructed identity of ethnic groups that had been part of such states entered a major crisis. People were confronted with a critical need to define a new identity. In this, ethnicity came to play a central role.

Another aspect that further complicates matters is the religious dimension of people's identity, a dimension whose importance was rediscovered after atheistic propaganda ceased and governments stopped exercising control over society. When people's identity was redefined, merging ethnicity and religion (technically known as philetism, a heresy condemned by a Christian council in the 19<sup>th</sup> century), this combination became truly explosive. In former Yugoslavia, from a philetist perspective, to be a Serb is to be Eastern Orthodox, to be a Croat is to be Catholic, and to be Bosnian is to be Muslim. When such sharply defined identities collided, the terrible result caused tens of thousands of deaths.

At the other end of the world-view spectrum, in post-communist societies we also find those who argue that looking to the past as a source of individual and corporate identity is detrimental to the establishment of a modern, developed society. These people are usually strong believers in alleged virtues of secularism (radical separation of religion from the public sphere) and globalization (a present-day tendency towards creation of cultural and economic uniformity across the whole world). It is again obvious that such polarization of the public arena has a negative effect on social cohesion in post-communist societies and slows transition to democracy.

### Lack of Models

One critical situation in periods of transition is an inability of older generations to offer a viable model to younger generations. Because of compromises or tacit acceptance of the former oppressive regime, most people in older generations lack moral authority in the eyes of new generations seeking spiritual guides.

In spite of acknowledged limitations and of baggage carried from the former regime, these older generations have no moral choice today other than to engage in the effort of shaping the future of their churches and of their countries. There simply is no one else to step into the gap. In humility and by the grace of God, they can succeed—against all odds.

### Money Talks

An extremely serious risk confronting communities, the church, and Christians who have been freed from oppressive regimes is that of letting themselves be controlled by the power of money. Christians often hold a dualistic world view in which prayer is spiritual while money is a worldly matter. Such believers never learn to handle money intelligently or to view their finances in the light of

their faith in God.

Most practicing Christians living under oppression tend to be poor because they and their families are denied access to privileges of the ruling class. When freedom comes, some Christians who have business skills become active and start accumulating wealth. At this point they discover, to their surprise, that other members of their Christian community believed the communist lie that wealth (rather than "love of wealth," as the Bible distinguishes) is the source of all evils. These perhaps well-meaning but ignorant Christians become envious and start slandering their business-minded brothers and sisters, accusing them of being worldly and of obtaining wealth by theft and dishonesty. As a result, the whole community loses, both in resources and in cohesion.

Clearly, from a biblical point of view, there is nothing sinister about wealth, so long as it results from honesty, integrity, and fair dealings. Yet the Bible addresses numerous warnings to wealthy people because they are exposed to serious risks of putting their trust in their resources rather than in God. These risks increase when Christians naïvely underestimate the corrupting power of money.

This same flawed and naïve understanding leads some Christians, including church leaders, to "sell themselves cheap" to competing foreign agencies and interests in the name of the allegedly higher interest of the Christian community. A number of Christian leaders in Eastern Europe have brought their churches into disrepute by their thirst for power, prompting them to engage their churches in projects and initiatives that made them dependent on external help—particularly financial—which then turns out to be debilitating to the local congregation. Such debilitating dependence is dishonoring to God.

### Obsession with Buildings

One particular effect of underestimating the corrupting power of money can be observed in the current obsession with putting up church buildings, occurring in many Christian communities of all denominations in former communist countries. Under some authoritarian regimes it was/is indeed often very difficult, if not impossible, for churches to put up suitable buildings. Under freedom, congregations have a legitimate desire to provide themselves with accommodations for all their activities.

Yet not everything about this tendency is right. Frantic and compulsive building activity often leads to a neglect of the building up of the living congregation, which after many years of oppression, needs at least as much attention as external walls. These demanding building projects frequently exhaust the congregation, with very little, if any, spiritual benefit.

Some years ago, the church in which I worshipped started a new building project, in spite of the fact that its existing building was adequate and that the 60 members of the church were mainly elderly pensioners or students without income and, as a result, the congregation did not have the financial resources to sustain such a project. Yet a start was made on the building in the hope that money would somehow materialize, most probably from the United States. The building was wildly out of proportion to the size of the existing congregation, designed to hold more

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than 400 people. Today, after years of demanding effort, the building is still not finished, the church has been through crisis after crisis, and the number of congregants is smaller than it was when the project started.

**On what basis do churches embark upon such huge projects? They are most often based on promises (or hopes of promises) from congregations in the West.** Besides the irresponsibility of this conduct, on both sides of the equation, **few count the cost of economic dependency that eventually must be paid.** As the secularized “Golden Rule” goes, “He who has the gold, makes the rules.” Consequently, indigenous congregations are in danger of losing their independence and may be pushed unwillingly in directions its members would never have accepted under other circumstances.

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### The Price of Freedom

Any given community is as valuable as the price we are prepared to pay for it. If people and communities really want to enjoy freedom, they must consider the price freedom demands. Following are some possible prices we may need to pay.

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### Slower Growth

To keep intact the precious gift of freedom, Christians need to make the wise decision to accept a pace of personal and ministry growth that aligns with God’s reality, including financial reality, in our context and congregation. Otherwise we risk becoming dependent on external funding rather than God, and such dependent funding alliances will prove the arch-enemy of freedom.

Saying this, we do not intend to promote the idea of isolating local and national churches from the church universal. That also would be contrary to the New Testament’s portrait of the church. At the same time, **we cannot accept that one part of the ecclesiastical body (the one that has more money) should dictate to other, poorer parts of the body. This is not biblical partnership but ecclesiastical imperialism.**

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### Biblical Interdependence versus Financial Dependence on Aid

Jesus Christ promised the apostles, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Biblically taught Christians believe genuinely and sincerely that it is Christ, through the Holy Spirit—not us, through the help of Western money—who will build the Church. Thus,

communities need to learn to depend on God, rather than money, in determining ministry direction and to steward all resources according to biblical principles of justice and generosity.

Giving churches, individuals, governments, or organizations from many wealthy lands possess a financial power that can easily be abused through domination and control, both of which are incompatible with Christian understanding of partnership and financial giving. Strangely enough, it is often churches experiencing serious problems with members’ giving which are most tempted to engage in projects that exceed their financial capabilities and, as a result, end up in financial dependence. This is proof not only of ecclesiastical pride but also of irresponsible leadership, with grave consequences for the spiritual health of the church concerned. Christian leaders bear a responsibility to teach churches about the biblical disciplines of giving and to be models to church members in this area of the life of faith. Christian leaders must also prove wise and persuasive in making sure the church preserves its freedom and does not let itself become financially dependent.

Quite negative experiences of Christian churches in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe (unrealistic hopes, disappointment, nostalgia for the past) should alert us to the possibility and the danger of not being ready for freedom. Truly it often seems hard to learn from history. Yet with a little bit of help, and insights gained through reflection, such depressing experiences can be mitigated.

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### The Way Forward

All promise for our shared futures resides in investing in children and youth. They have been less damaged than adults by totalitarian systems, or for that matter by the flaws in free-market systems in the West. By mentoring them into becoming wise and good as discerning and fully engaged citizens of our communities and countries, we nurture hope. Seeds planted in them can bear fruit into eternity. ♦

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*Edited excerpts reprinted with permission from Danut Manastireanu, After Liberation, Then What? Enabling and Protecting Communities in Post-Authoritarian Contexts (Monrovia, CA: World Vision International, 2012).*

On what basis do churches embark upon huge projects based on promises (or hopes of promises) from congregations in the West? Few count the cost of economic dependency that eventually must be paid.

We cannot accept that one part of the ecclesiastical body (the one that has more money) should dictate to other, poorer parts of the body. This is not biblical partnership but ecclesiastical imperialism.

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## The Cathedral of Christ the Savior as Scandal and Haunted House

Eliot Borenstein

*Editor’s note: On 21 February 2012, Pussy Riot, a feminist rock protest group, staged a performance in Moscow’s Cathedral of Christ the Savior that was broken up by security forces. The women stated that they were opposing Patriarch Kyril’s support for Vladimir Putin’s reelection as president. In March 2012 three of the group, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria Alyokhina, and Yekaterina Samutsevich, were arrested, and on 17 August 2012 their trial ended with a guilty verdict on charges of “hooliganism motivated by religious hatred.” They were given two-year prison sentences. On 10 October 2012 the court suspended the sentence of Yekaterina Samutsevich. The other two women served 21 of 24-month sentences before being amnestied on 23 December 2013 on the eve of the Sochi Olympics.*

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### Scandal Compounded

If one hears the words “Cathedral of Christ the Savior” and “scandal” in the same breath, it is safe to say that Pussy Riot will come to mind. The standard liberal defense of this troupe’s anticlerical, anti-Putin

performance before the Cathedral’s icon screen is that “Of course, I can’t approve of doing something like that in a church, but their punishment was unjust.” Here is the familiar civil libertarian stance supporting the rights of the outrageous while keeping

(continued on page 8)

The rebuilt Cathedral is either the triumph of a resurgent, state-forming Orthodoxy or a scandalous monument in utter disregard of constitutional separation of church and state.

The scandal of Pussy Riot in sacred space also publicized the scandal of a cathedral profaned by crass commerce and equally crass church-state politics.

## The Cathedral of Christ the Savior as Scandal and Haunted House (continued from page 7)

the perpetrators at a safe, sanitary distance. My argument is the opposite: From start to finish, the venue of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior has been precisely the incarnation of scandal. To many observers, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior is not just a site of scandal; it is *itself* a scandal. Though its architecture is Russian revival, its spirit is purely Gothic, the locus of historical, cultural, and political hauntings that are consistent with Gothic emphasis upon guilt and retribution.

### The Scandal of the Cross

It is the Cathedral's vexed status as sacred space that makes it not just the site of scandal, but scandal itself. Scandal and the sacred have been intimately connected for at least two millennia. As Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker argue in *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, Christianity was born in scandal—to the Romans, the horror of crucifixion was not the physical torment it caused but the sheer humiliation of the procedure and the display: "Death on the cross was associated with such shame that it was not a topic for polite company."

### Synthesizing the National and the Spiritual

In its initial 19<sup>th</sup> century tsarist conception, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was to be the synthesis of Russia's national and spiritual destinies—a commemoration of Moscow's survival in the face of the Napoleonic invasion. Initially a neoclassical project full of Masonic symbolism, the Cathedral was redesigned under Nicholas I in the Russian Revival style. Consecrated in 1883, it would be desecrated in 1930 on Stalin's orders—first stripped of its gold, and, finally, on 5 December 1931, demolished with dynamite in a public spectacle captured on film. The atheist regime's plan was to replace the Cathedral with the Palace of Soviets, a grandiose, Bolshevik Tower of Babel with an enormous statue of Lenin at its peak, like an abandoned groom on top of a Stalinist wedding cake.

### From Aborted Palace of Soviets to Swimming Pool

As with the planning for the original Cathedral, the selection of a design for the Palace of Soviets proved tortuous. No fewer than four competitions took place (one all-Union, one international, and two behind closed doors). For a while it appeared that the grand symbol of Soviet supremacy might be designed by a British-born architect living in New Jersey, before Stalin himself put the seal of approval on a home-grown draft. Its construction was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II, and its steel frame, like the gold of its predecessor, was commandeered for more pressing military requirements. After over a decade as a barren foundation pit, the site was transformed into an immense inversion of its original design: instead of a tower with one person on top, it became the world's largest open-air swimming pool, with thousands of people bathing at a given time, a secular parody of the mass baptism of Rus. Then in the late 1990s, the Cathedral was reconstructed, initially intended as a near-exact replica, but eventually revised due to the input of the reliably tacky Zurab Tsereteli.

### The New Cathedral Merging Church and State--Again

The pool was more than a pool, because its very existence reinforced the desecration of the vanished Cathedral. The rebuilt Cathedral on the same site is either the triumph of a resurgent, state-forming Orthodoxy or the site of a scandalous monument in utter disregard of constitutional separation of church and state. The Cathedral has fulfilled its destiny as a symbol of both church and state, sanctifying the state in the eyes of hardliners, and profaning the church in the eyes of skeptics.

### More and Less Than a Cathedral

The inclusion of a business center in the Cathedral compound (seen by insiders as separated by a secular firewall, and by outsiders as part of a seamless whole), basement parking, and the discrete charms of a gift shop are particularly jarring within the Eastern Orthodox context. American Protestants and Reform Jews are accustomed to seeing their places of worship as multi-purpose rooms, used for AA meetings, clubs, and other activities when no service is underway, while temple gift shops have been supplying a steady stream of kitschy Judaica to generations of Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. The Orthodox Church, however, is traditionally a place of holy mystery. And, most famously, Patriarch Kirill has used the Cathedral as the site of sermons calling on the faithful to vote for Putin (this being one of the primary justifications for Pussy Riot's selection of Christ the Savior as a performance venue). Add in the complex finances of the Cathedral's reconstruction (with the direct involvement of former Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov), and we clearly have a cathedral that is both more and less than a cathedral.

### A Haunted Cathedral

In what way, then, can it be said that the Cathedral of Christ the Savior is haunted? Certainly by the ghosts of the past, and more specifically, by the ghosts of architecture either razed or left unbuilt. The donation boxes scattered throughout Moscow in the 1990s were usually accompanied by images of the demolished Cathedral, functioning as both an advertisement for the future and a memorial for a departed loved one.

The Cathedral of Christ the Savior is tantamount to taking an Indian burial ground, building a shopping mall on top of it, and then knocking down the shopping mall in order to replace it with a sparkling new Indian burial ground—with a casino attached to it. From this perspective, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior is a doubly haunted house awaiting the arrival of its ghosts.

And arrive they did. Liberal critics of the Pussy Riot trio hauled into court were appalled by what they perceived as a medieval, obscurantist witch trial. Both state and church spokesmen repeatedly characterized the women's song and dance as "satanic" and "diabolical," a spectacle that could only have been generated by the devil-possessed in need of exorcism. Still those who see the scandal only in terms of the acts of irreverent women may be missing a larger point. **The scandal of Pussy Riot in sacred space also publicized the scandal of a cathedral profaned by crass commerce and equally crass church-state politics. ♦**

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# Comparing Levels of Religious Restrictions in Post-Soviet States

Mark R. Elliott

Since 2009 the Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project has published reports assessing the level of restrictions on religion worldwide. Pew’s 2014 study, *Religious Hostilities Reach Six Year High*, ranks 198 countries and territories (accounting for 99.5 percent of the world population) for the year 2012, based on a Government Restrictions Index (GRI) and a Social Hostilities Index (SHI).

The GRI “measures government laws, policies, and actions that restrict religious beliefs and practices, including efforts by governments to ban particular faiths, prohibit conversions, limit preaching, or give preferential treatment to one or more religious groups.” The SHI “measures acts of religious hostility

by private individuals, organizations, or groups in society,” [including] “religion-related armed conflict or terrorism, mob or sectarian violence, harassment over attire for religious reasons, or other religion-related intimidation or abuse” (p. 2).

To determine rankings, Pew researchers consulted a variety of sources including reports prepared by the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, the Council of the European Union, the United Kingdom’s Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group, Freedom House, and Amnesty International.

“Very high” and “high” levels of religious restrictions apply in Russia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. “Moderate” and “low” levels of religious restrictions are most evident in the Baltic states and Central Europe.

## Post-Soviet Rankings of Religious Restrictions

(Levels of restriction are calculated based on a 10-point scale with 10 the highest level of restriction and 0 the lowest. In descending order, **Government Restrictions Index** designations are noted in bold and *Social Hostilities Index* designations are noted in italics.)

<b>Very High (6.6 and higher)</b>	<i>Very High (7.2 and higher)</i>	<b>High (4.5 to 6.5)</b>	<i>High (3.6 to 7.1)</i>	<b>Moderate (2.5 to 4.4)</b>	<i>Moderate (1.5 to 3.5)</i>	<b>Low (0.0 to 2.3)</b>	<i>Low (0.0 to 1.4)</i>
<b>Russia</b>	<i>Russia</i>	<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	<i>Kosovo ▲</i>	<b>Ukraine</b>	<i>Poland ▲</i>	<b>Bosnia-Herzegovina</b>	<i>Belarus</i>
<b>Uzbekistan</b>		<b>Belarus</b>	<i>Georgia ▲</i>	<b>Romania</b>	<i>Serbia ▼</i>	<b>Poland</b>	<i>Slovakia</i>
<b>Azerbaijan</b>		<b>Armenia</b>	<i>Kyrgyzstan</i>	<b>Serbia</b>	<i>Hungary</i>	<b>Czech Republic</b>	<i>Latvia</i>
<b>Tajikistan ▲</b>		<b>Turkmenistan</b>	<i>Armenia</i>	<b>Slovakia</b>	<i>Tajikistan</i>	<b>Kosovo</b>	<i>Turkmenistan</i>
<b>Kazakhstan ▲</b>		<b>Bulgaria ▲</b>	<i>Azerbaijan</i>	<b>Republic of Macedonia</b>	<i>Slovenia ▲</i>	<b>Albania</b>	<i>Estonia</i>
		<b>Moldova</b>	<i>Bulgaria</i>	<b>Croatia</b>	<i>Croatia</i>	<b>Estonia</b>	<i>Albania</i>
			<i>Bosnia-Herzegovina</i>	<b>Georgia</b>	<i>Uzbekistan</i>	<b>Slovenia</b>	
			<i>Ukraine</i>	<b>Latvia Lithuania</b>	<i>Kazakhstan</i>		
			<i>Romania ▼</i>	<b>Hungary ▲</b>	<i>Lithuania</i>		
			<i>Montenegro</i>	<b>Montenegro ▼</b>	<i>Czech Republic</i>		

\* ▲ Denotes an increase of one point or more from 2011 to 2012.

▼ Denotes a decrease of one point or more from 2011 to 2012.

In order to compare post-Soviet states with religious restrictions worldwide, it should be noted that in 2012, 29 percent of the 198 countries and territories studied had “very high” or “high” levels of government restrictions on religion and 33 percent had “very high” or “high” levels of social hostilities involving religion. Europe witnessed the largest increase in government restrictions on religion, while the Middle East and North Africa experienced the largest increases in social hostilities involving religion (p.1).

Among post-Soviet states, “very high” and “high” levels of religious restrictions apply in Russia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. “Moderate” and “low” levels of religious restrictions are most evident in the Baltic states and Central Europe. ♦

Source: <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/01/14/religious-hostilities-reach-six-year-high>.

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

# Missionaries in Bulgaria: Bulgarian and Western

Excerpts from the work of Peggy J. MacPhee, edited and with comments by Mark R. Elliott

*Editor's note: Peggy J. MacPhee's dissertation focuses on the theological views of native Bulgarian missionaries and evangelists, including their understanding of sin, salvation, and God's call to mission (among other issues). The present article, drawn from the dissertation (from the abstract and pp. 257-58, 260-61, 264-72, and 275-81), addresses that part of the study that deals with Bulgarian perspectives on foreign missions and missionaries.*

Foreign missionaries are respected for their vision and initiative and for caring enough to come. At the same time, they have been found lacking in cross-cultural awareness.

The present study of the theology of mission of Bulgarian cross-cultural missionaries is based on interviews with 45 Bulgarian Evangelical believers active in sharing their faith in Christ. Foreign missionaries who have come to Bulgaria over the past 100 years have provided both positive and negative models for ministry. They are respected for their vision and initiative and for caring enough to come. At the same time, they have been found lacking in cross-cultural awareness, naïve with respect to appropriate ways of decision making, and generous but unwise in the way they have given funds for use in local ministry.

Bulgarian missionaries are deeply concerned about their isolation from—and sometimes their sense of competition with—local churches and pastors. This unhealthy situation hinders the care and support of missionaries, as well as the integration of new believers into churches. Bulgarians are also concerned about the need to deal with the negative public image of Protestants and the resulting shame of being considered members of a cult.

The wave of conversions that followed the political changes of 1989-90 is clearly over. Mission has entered a new phase characterized by individual conversions and slow church growth in the midst of a society no longer concerned with faith and freedom but immersed in problems created by economic and political instability.

In the future, missionaries to Bulgaria must take much greater account of the country's deeply rooted pagan traditions and its mixed Islamic-Orthodox heritage, without neglecting its more recent experience of communism and post-communist materialism. All these factors have played a part in shaping the Bulgarian worldview, and hence are relevant to the future Christian mission in this Balkan nation.

## Data Collection

In the context of this study the term *missionary* refers to individuals whose primary focus is sharing their faith, whether supported by churches, mission organizations, or their own efforts as self-supporting "tentmakers." All Bulgarian missionaries interviewed were involved in active ministry: church planting, children's or youth work, or a specialized outreach, for example, to prisoners or the handicapped. Data collected for this study included on-site participant observations, written surveys, and semi-structured, oral interviews. The latter ranged in length from a minimum of two hours to a maximum of an overnight stay.

Those interviewed originated from many regions of Bulgaria, and most were involved in ministry in a city or region other than their place of birth. They possessed a wide range of educational backgrounds and were either ethnic Bulgarians or ethnic Turkish Bulgarians. A significant number were involved in outreach to an ethnic group other than their own,

either Roma or Turkish. Despite working across ethnic and cultural boundaries, no one reported having learned a new language in order to engage in ministry, although they understood that a second language would enhance their ministry.

A clear sense of God's calling was very important to those interviewed, although their individual experiences were quite varied. For those from Muslim backgrounds, accounts of visions, dreams, and direct experiences of God were regarded as completely normal and highly motivating. Few of the missionaries had had any training specifically oriented toward mission or cross-cultural work, and the majority had had only very limited formal training in biblical studies. Many were ministering with little supervision or oversight of their work, while some were working alone. For many, lack of supervision and direction constituted one of their major felt needs.

## The First Phase

The first phase of data collection included observation, tape recordings of conversations, and written notes taken during interviews. All of these data were collected and tabulated. The second phase of the study involved two focus groups composed of volunteers recruited from the main study who were presented with all the accumulated data. These volunteers were invited to a day-long meeting in a choice of two different cities and dates to facilitate ease of travel. Each group was given the tabulated material and asked for comments and observations. Participants were also asked whether or not the results were, in their view, typical for Bulgaria. They answered adamantly in the affirmative.

## Lack of Local Bulgarian Church Support

A great deal of tension exists in Bulgaria between native missionaries and local churches. Bulgarian missionaries grieved over local churches that were not interested in their work and did not support their ministries. They expressed sadness over the unwillingness of local pastors to accept seekers and new believers, particularly those who had not yet been socialized into the proper ways of behaving in church or who came from ethnic minorities and therefore from different cultural backgrounds. They also grieved over the sense of competition that exists between missions and churches. Churches often regard mission work as detracting from building up the local church, drawing funds and able workers away from the church, while missionaries see their efforts as essential to the health and growth of the local church.

Bulgarian missionaries pointed out that the root of this problem lies first of all in the isolationism and the mentality of self-preservation that Protestants retained from the communist period. Another root cause is the fundamental lack of understanding of the nature of mission work on the part of pastors. As a result, local churches do not teach giving to missions, nor do many of them encourage involvement in outreach outside the

functions of the local church. Consequently, Bulgarian missionaries find it very difficult to find financial, spiritual, and practical support from local churches in Bulgaria, forcing many of them to attach themselves to foreign missionaries or foreign organizations in order to find financial and organizational support.

### Problems with Ethnic Intolerance

It was no surprise to learn that existing ministries and churches in Bulgaria tend to operate within relatively tight homogenous units, whether ethnic (such as Turkish or Roma) or social (based on education or social class). Nevertheless, Bulgarian missionaries were troubled by two apparently contradictory tendencies: the expressed desire of minorities in Bulgaria to be included in majority churches, and the refusal of majority groups to accept minorities.

A tension exists between the desire of missionaries to create tolerant churches whose membership reflects the whole cross section of society, and the preference of Bulgarians to associate with other Bulgarians. Missionaries ask whether becoming a Christian should alter this tendency, such that believers from all social groupings will naturally *want* to worship and serve together in socially blended churches? Or is it right and appropriate to find social and ethnic segregation in Bulgarian churches?

### Prejudice against Protestants

Many times in interviews, Bulgarian missionaries noted official mistrust of Protestants, which distressed them and hampered their ministry. Public perceptions of Protestants as members of dangerous, non-Christian cults has been accompanied by undeniable Protestant disunity. In marked contrast to Islam, Judaism, and Roman Catholicism, Protestants in Bulgaria have no common voice or structure and do not readily cooperate, clinging instead to denominational roots, or even worse, to individual local churches and/or their leaders. The Bulgarian Evangelical Alliance is the sole organization that unites some of these disparate groups, but it does not yet have much of a public voice. Foreign missionaries have the potential to set an example of cooperation and understanding that might do much to change this state of affairs in Bulgaria—provided the will exists.

### Protestant Yearning for Respect

To a certain extent the shame of being part of a despised Protestant minority explains its longing for suitable church buildings. Consider the experience of a North American missionary brought up on tales of pioneer congregations that constructed their church buildings with their own hands, or at least through their own combined gifts. Independence and “doing it yourself” are qualities also highly valued in the worldview of western Europeans. In contrast, those who come from a Bulgarian Orthodox or Roman Catholic background regard the Church as an immensely wealthy, hierarchical, global organization, with new local churches typically funded from centralized sources and functioning under centralized authority. Is it any wonder then that the Bulgarian public questions the authenticity of a local church that is independent, isolated from others, and unique in its teaching? And is it therefore any wonder that Bulgarian pastors seek the respectability

of an appropriate public building in which to present their faith to the world? How tempting it must be to seek and accept foreign aid in order to attain such a worthwhile end.

### The Need for Cross-Cultural Understanding

Unless missionaries have had appropriate training in cross-cultural awareness prior to entering a new setting, it may be difficult for them to understand which of their ideas, values, and beliefs are culturally bound. In time, they learn that other cultures hold different ideas about relationships, time, leadership, priorities, values, friendships, and beliefs about God, life, and death. But in the meantime the tendency exists among missionaries to go about life as if new cross-cultural understandings will prove an interesting, pleasant pastime to be worked out in the years ahead, but that right now it is necessary to get on with the job that they have come to do.

### Bulgarian Advice for Foreign Missionaries

Several major issues seemed to most deeply concern Bulgarian missionaries. In each case, they believe these concerns should be addressed by their foreign mission counterparts. **Bulgarian missionaries repeatedly recommended that foreign missionaries consider more carefully the possible consequences of their giving prior to giving**, in order to prevent generous and sacrificial gifts from producing undesirable consequences. Bulgarian missionaries suggested that foreign missionaries should ask the following questions when planning mission work:

1. Who in the local community, in principle and in practice, might be their best advisors, *regardless* of whether or not they speak the language of the foreign nationals or whether or not they are immediately available to give advice. Bulgarians frequently stated that foreigners were in too much of a rush. How best to help cannot be decided in a few days or even a few weeks. Such decisions take time.
2. Have foreign missionaries made inquiries of cross-culturally aware advisors (either more experienced foreigners, or better still, long-term Bulgarian and foreign missionaries) with respect to what are culturally appropriate and publicly acceptable ways of making decisions, meeting needs, and organizing work?
3. Is there consensus among indigenous Christians with respect to needs that should be met first?
4. If foreign missionaries help a particular church, how will the remaining churches and pastors feel about *not* being included? What hard feelings, envy, and dissension may result? How can such unintended results be avoided?
5. Are foreign missionaries making decisions based on their own priorities or on the priorities of indigenous churches?
6. Is it possible to develop an adequate system of accountability for funds so that money is not misused, and no one is tempted by having personal access to funds? (For most Bulgarians, this precaution does not stem from lack of trust in each other, but as a means of ensuring open and honest use of resources.)

Bulgarian missionaries repeatedly recommended that foreign missionaries consider more carefully the possible consequences of their giving prior to giving.

(continued on page 12)

## Missionaries in Bulgaria (continued from page 11)

7. Have foreign missionaries considered entrusting responsibility for the use of money to a spiritually mature council or group that is able to handle funds wisely, abiding by the laws of the land?
8. Do newly arrived missionaries consult with veteran missionaries as well as respected local pastors, or do they depend upon the advice of chance, English-speaking acquaintances in making decisions?
9. Have foreign missionaries considered the long-term effects of doing something *for* someone rather than working *with* someone to mobilize local resources to meet the need? Is giving creating financial dependency?
10. Have foreign missionaries considered helping Bulgarians by working with them to increase local giving to their work?

### The Need for Giving Guidelines

Christian literature on social action focuses almost exclusively on motivating and encouraging the wealthy West to give to the poor and needy. However, rarely, if ever, does this literature provide practical guidelines with respect to how to do this without simultaneously creating new problems for recipients. It would be helpful to learn what the long-term effects of donations are upon the community from the perspective of Bulgarians. Bulgarian missionaries ask whether or not foreign donors understand that it is perfectly possible that money given inappropriately may lead to worse long-term results than not giving at all. This comment should not be construed as an excuse for not giving generously to the needy, but it is certainly an admonition to engage in considerably more research prior to giving. This, of course, means more work for the giver. But this effort will be generously repaid with long-term positive consequences.

### Overcoming Mistrust

All human beings have a need for close relationships. Possibly this need has been accentuated among Bulgarians by their history of mistrust engendered through both Ottoman and communist repression. Most foreign missionaries have the advantage of arriving in Bulgaria untainted by the level of distrust resulting from centuries of Ottoman and communist rule. Why is it that Bulgarian missionaries feel that their relationships with foreigners are superficial, and what can be done about this problem? Are foreigners willing to pay the price and take the time to develop deep relationships and to learn what is expected of a friend or a missionary in the Bulgarian context? Foreign missionaries must learn from Bulgarian co-laborers and from relevant missiological literature what the essence is of a good relationship from the perspective of a particular culture. As one Bulgarian missionary put it, "This takes months and years because they have to know you first."

### Bulgarian Political and Cultural Paranoia

Clearly politics has played a significant role in church and mission history. Whether one considers

emperors calling the early church councils or in the ninth century Bulgarian King Boris I promoting Christianity in his realm, it is clear that politics cannot be ignored in any analysis of church history and theology. Similarly, foreign missionaries working in Bulgaria have been charged with introducing a "foreign religion." The Bulgarian Constitution defines the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Islam, and Judaism as the nation's "traditional religions," thereby underscoring the "foreignness" of non-Orthodox Christians, even in their own country. Repeatedly in interviews Bulgarian missionaries shared the distress and shame they felt in response to state and media charges that they were members of a cult.

Despite Bulgaria's entry into the European Union, political and cultural paranoia over "foreign religions" abound. Foreign missionaries, for example, frequently are accused of favoring the political or economic interests of their home countries, and in some cases, they are accused of being spies. Bulgarian media also charge foreign missionaries with destroying Bulgarian culture by importing a foreign culture on behalf of a foreign government. The same charges are laid at the feet of native Protestant Bulgarian missionaries, with the added invective that they are betrayers of their own culture.

In reality, all missionaries by their very nature introduce change because they call people to give their highest allegiance to God and not to country. Both Bulgarian and foreign missionaries place higher regard on the Kingdom of God than on any man-made culture. They understand God's kingdom as supra-cultural, enduring eternally, while they understand that all cultures are constantly in a process of change, with or without the work of missionaries, foreign or indigenous.

### Global Church Cross-Fertilization

Just as new believers challenge older believers by the joy and enthusiasm of their faith, so new churches have a stimulating role to play in terms of the global church. One of the main advantages of cross-cultural studies of mission theology is the creation of cross-cultural encounters that challenge and put to the test older understandings of the Christian faith. At the same time such encounters function somewhat like a church council in that they create dialogue and discussion and encourage movement towards consensus. Instead of bishops arriving from all over the known world, theological understandings are sent around the world, both via the written word and via people, and are "field tested" in each new locale where they are shared. Just as the church in Jerusalem needed the corrective of the ministry to the Gentiles, so theologians in the West, as elsewhere, need the corrective of questions raised by newer churches. This challenge must be accepted with humility in "the realization that the Bible is never fully grasped by the Christians of any culture" (M.T. Starkes, *Toward a Theology of Mission* [Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1984], 94).

Without research and without regard for the past, the tendency exists for each generation of missionaries to depend solely upon their personal knowledge and experience. Missiologist M.T. Starkes notes, "The future missionary will need technical competence,

Money given inappropriately may lead to worse long-term results than not giving at all.

intellectual curiosity, courage, and the ability to do and use research” (*Toward a Theology of Mission*, 96). Research is a very broad concept that includes learning from the present generation, while not neglecting lessons to be learned from previous generations of missionaries. Also, of course, it includes foreign missionaries learning from indigenous Christians.

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### The Way Forward

In one respect, western missionaries are much like their eastern counterparts, possessing a willing spirit and a sense of God’s call. Some consider such an outlook sufficient preparation for cross-cultural mission work: 1) because “that is the way it has always been done,” with some good results; 2) because some lack recognition of the necessity for serious theological, practical, and missiological preparation; or 3) because sending agencies do not consider it their job to properly train candidates (although this could be done utilizing experienced staff to help others in similar work.)

Many of the Bulgarian criticisms of foreign missionaries center on ethnocentricity and lack of cross-cultural awareness. Bulgarians are relatively

tolerant of these shortcomings, but they justifiably decry Protestant disunity and denominational empire building which undermine Christian witness in an unbelieving world. Bulgarians also deplore the irresponsible use of foreign funds and the lack of accountability of donated funds.

This much is clear; across Bulgaria one can find active Christians who indeed have been called by God to engage in mission. And these **Bulgarian believers** possess one of the essential requirements of a cross-cultural missionary—that of active obedience. They **are pioneers** in mission in an era of transition, **engaged in the difficult work of breaking new ground and discerning how best to accomplish mission “the Bulgarian way.”** ♦

*Edited excerpts published with permission from Peggy J. MacPhee, “Implicit Theology of Mission of Bulgarian Field Workers with Implications for Cross Cultural Collaboration in Mission,” Doctor of Missiology, Biola University, 2010.*

Bulgarian believers are pioneers engaged in the difficult work of breaking new ground and discerning how best to accomplish mission “the Bulgarian way.”

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## Occult and Esoteric Doctrines in Russia after the Collapse of Communism

Demyan Belyaev

After the collapse of the communist system it was not only the established denominations (the Russian Orthodox Church and various Protestant churches) that experienced a boom in Russia, as people tried to fill the spiritual and ideological vacuum left behind by the previous system. In addition, numerous religious and spiritual movements, academically classified as occultism, esotericism, or alternative religions, have been offering ways of coping with life to a population that is looking for meaning.

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### Increasing Occult Popularity

As early as 1988 national newspapers ran the first articles on UFOs, yoga, and parapsychology that showed none of the aggressive and “unmasking” features previously characteristic of publications on these topics. The pioneer was the national newspaper *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, whose target audience was mostly the generation of 20-30-year-olds.

The first newspaper exclusively specializing in this subject area appeared in 1990 under the title *Anomaliia*, with print runs the first two years of 250,000 copies per issue. However, the highest number of copies (up to 550,000 per monthly issue) has been reached by other specialized esoteric newspapers and journals, including *Orakul* [Orakul], *UFO [NLO]*, *Secret Power [Tainaia vlast’]*, *The Age of Aquarius [Era Vodoleia]*, and *Paranormal News, [Anomal’nye novosti]*.

In Russia political liberalization was followed by a rapid growth in publications of all kinds related to occult knowledge. Books by Helena Blavatsky, Nikolai Roerich, George Gurdjieff, Daniil Andreev, and other Russian and Western esotericists of the past came out in huge print runs. The number of public healers, magicians, and astrologers grew exponentially. Healing with the help of magic techniques was especially popular. Moreover, other

movements at the margins of the esoteric subculture, such as Slavic neo-paganism, extremist elements of Russian nationalism, and traditional shamanism in Siberia and certain other Russian regions, have also seen an upturn (Marjorie Balzer, *Shamanic Worlds: Rituals and Lore of Siberia and Central Asia* [Armonk, New York: North Castle Books, 1997]).

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### TV Healers

TV played a special role in the process of spreading esoteric knowledge and skills in the years of *perestroika*. The first popular subject was healing. On 31 March 1988 Ukrainian doctor Anatolii Kashpirovskii (b. 1939) performed a live operation on the show *Vzgliad [Opinion]*, using hypnosis as an anesthetic. On 9 October 1989 the public channel *Ostankino*, which can be received all over Russia, began broadcasting Kashpirovskii’s healing séances. That same year Muscovite Alan Chumak (b. 1935), a trained sports coach and journalist, appeared with similar séances for the first time. On live TV he claimed to charge water, food, and other items with healing energy.

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### Astrology and Magic

The next vogue was astrology. In January 1989 the astrologist Pavel Globa (b. 1953), a trained historian and archivist, and his wife Tamara made their first appearance on the Leningrad channel *The Fifth Wheel (Piatoe koleso)*. Pavel Globa had been teaching astrology underground since the late 1970s, for which he was charged for anti-Soviet agitation and imprisoned. The Globas have made a significant contribution to the popularity of astrology among the broad masses of the Russian population, mostly by associating it with ancient esoteric knowledge with links to Zoroastrianism. A third very popular area of applied occultism was magic. In the late 1980s-early 1990s, also on TV, Ukrainian Iurii “Longo” Golovko

(continued on page 14)

## Occult and Esoteric Doctrines in Russia (continued from page 13)

(1956-2006) gained notoriety as a practitioner of white, practical magic. The phenomena demonstrated included levitation and even resurrection of the dead.

Although these individuals were national celebrities in the late 1980s, they no longer have the same influence on the population as they used to, but most remain active to the present day. Kashpirovskii, for example, has been on several short tours throughout Russia since 2005, even though his performances no longer draw large audiences, and there have been a number of protests against his "charlatanism." Allan Chumak toured Germany for a month in 2005, giving séances in various towns. Pavel Globa still reads the horoscope every morning on one of the commercial TV channels and publishes articles in newspapers and journals. He also advises politicians and businessmen (www.Globa.ru).

The scene in contemporary Russia, however, is not limited to representatives of "applied esotericism." In addition, we find those who specialize in the dissemination and/or teaching of different paranormal schools, training systems, and practices. This section of the esoteric subculture includes bioenergetics (often also called psychics), the development of psychic abilities, as well as several approaches from the field of practical psychology as long as they appeal to the existence of supernatural forces or laws.

### Occult Best-Sellers

Another important way of communicating esoteric knowledge in contemporary Russia, both theoretical and practical, is through books. The pioneer in this field was Gennadii Malakhov (b. 1954), who published his first book on this topic, *Cleansing of the Organism and Diet (Ochishchenie organizma i pitanie)*, in 1991 in the small southern town of Staryi Oskol. This book was followed by several others, and by 1995 Malakhov had sold more than four million copies of his highly esteemed four volumes. He still lives in his native town of Kamensk-Shakhtinskii in the Rostov area in southern Russia, and he regularly travels the country, meets his followers, publishes a newspaper, has his own TV show, and owns the publishing house *Genesha*.

Mirzakarim Norbekov (b. 1957) came to Moscow in 1993 and began to hold health promotion séances on various stages, as did Andrei Levshinov (b. 1957) in St. Petersburg. Later they both turned to writing books, trying to gain a bigger audience for their ideas and healing methods, in the same way as Malakhov. Each wrote bestsellers that made them famous throughout Russia (Andrei Levshinov, *Taina upravleniia sud'boi* [Moscow: "Olma-Press," 2002]; and Mirzakarim Norbekov, *Opyt duraka, ili kliuch' k prozreniiu. Kak izbavit'sia ot ochkov* [St. Petersburg: "VES," 2003]). Norbekov organized a network of courses for the restitution of sight. Subsequently he began offering courses for the development of intuition, which he presents as a necessary prerequisite for founding one's own company and improving one's financial situation. Levshinov taught yoga and Qi Gong and held outdoor training sessions abroad, which he called "grand master classes."

### Cases of Fraud

Some clear cases of fraud have been exposed where people pretending to represent the esoteric subculture are looking only for financial gain. Notorious is the case of Grigorii Grabovoi from Kazakhstan in 2006, who offered to resurrect, for a fee, the school children killed during the attack by Chechen separatists in Beslan. He was subsequently given a prison sentence. However, such cases are for the most part exceptions.

### Soviet-Era Precursors

On the whole, it is noteworthy that those who are now recognized as bearers and disseminators of esoteric knowledge began to engage with this subject matter well before the fall of the Soviet Union. Thus, it is very hard to accuse them of having chosen esotericism simply as a convenient way of making money in the financially difficult transitional period of the 1990s.

Andrei Levshinov told me that he has been interested in yoga, karate, and psychology since 1978. Gennadii Malakhov was the director of the Alertness (Bodrost') Club for natural healing as early as 1984. These observations suggest that what intensified significantly after the collapse of the Soviet Union was not interest in esoteric knowledge as such, but merely the scope of this interest and the intense communication of this knowledge to broad groups of the general population.

### Varying Interpretations

Different scientific approaches have been used to examine the recent developments in the religious panorama in Russia (among which esotericism and occultism are usually counted); they have led to a variety of conclusions. On the one hand, doubt is cast on the profundity of the beliefs of those Russians who today refer to themselves as believers. In view of the widespread belief in astrology and miracles, some people say it is an exaggeration to speak of a religious renaissance in Russia, since such a mixture of beliefs ought to be interpreted as a sign of rejection of all definite religious convictions (Kimmo Kääriäinen, "Religiousness in Russia of the Collapse of Communism," *Social Compass* No. 46 [Issue 1, 1999], 35-46).

Some scholars, however, say that religiosity in Russia was never very high and the Orthodox Church, it is suggested, never had a monopoly on religious belief even in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Stefan Plaggenborg, "Säkularisierung und konversion in Russland und der Sowjetunion" in H. Lehmann, ed., *Säkularisierung, Dechristianisierung, Rechristianisierung, im neuzeitlichen Europa* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997], 275-92). Others insist that in Russia even communism was turned into a religion (Sam McFarland, "Communism as Religion," *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* No. 8 [Issue 1, 1998], 33-48). According to these people the view that the country underwent a process of secularization in the Soviet era is erroneous, as is the view that a de-secularization took place during the 1990s. On the contrary, the dogmatic and quasi-religious atheistic system had nothing to do with secularization, and only today

In view of the widespread belief in astrology and miracles, some people say it is an exaggeration to speak of a religious renaissance in Russia.

are we witnessing secularization. Russia's spiritual evolution is like a pendulum moving between different kinds of religiosity, that is, from Orthodox Christianity to communism and atheism towards post-rational eclecticism (Dmitrii Furman, "Religion and Politics in Mass Consciousness in Contemporary Russia," in Lehmann, ed., *Säkularisierung*, 291-303).

### Diverse Religious Phenomena and Blurred Lines

In the early 1990s it was not only Marxist ideology that was in a very weak position. Orthodox Christianity had been compromised by decades of collaboration with Soviet authorities. As a result, the main rivals of Orthodox Christianity, traditionally the dominant religion in Russia, were those religious doctrines whose adherents "believed not in God but in supernatural forces" (Furman, "Religion and Politics"). The adherents in question can identify with Orthodox Christianity as well as with Christianity in general and even with atheism; typical for this group is an interest in Eastern religions, spiritism, and para-scientific and para-religious mythology.

Religion in Russia has turned into a folkloric belief system based on science, para-science, and theosophy. Magic, occultism, and elements of Eastern religions are combined with traditional Christian dogmas. Therefore, it is claimed, the "real" religion of Russia is "not Orthodoxy, and not paganism, shamanism, or atheism either," but rather, "a popular religion combining many elements of different origin." Only on the surface is there a Central Asia that is home to a "popular religion based on shamanism, Zoroastrianism, Islam and other sources" (David Lewis, *After Atheism. Religion and Ethnicity in Russia and Central Asia* [London: Curzon Press, 2000], 295). The public consciousness of Russia is "occultism-after-atheism," while Orthodox Christianity no longer serves as a source of beliefs and values, but rather as the "public religion," that is, a source of the national ideology and identity (Alexander Agadjanian, "Russian Religion in Media Discourse--Entropy Interlude in Ideocratic Tradition" in Matti Kotiranta, ed., *Religious Transition in Russia* [Helsinki: Kikumora Publications, 2000], 251-88).

### Survey Findings

Could the present esoteric subculture in Russia turn into a rival of traditional (Christian) religiosity and even aspire to a dominant position in the religious consciousness of the population? This question motivated me to carry out my own opinion poll among the Russian population in 2006. For this poll I presented 1,600 persons from all over Russia with a questionnaire on belief in occult ideas and their experiences with occult practices. This poll has so far been the only scientifically founded quantitative investigation in Russia specifically designed to

analyze the proliferation of occult worldviews in the Russian population ("'Heterodoxe' Religiosität auf dem Vormarsch in Russland? Zur empirischen Untersuchung des religiösen Synkretismus im postsozialistischen Raum," *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* No. 16 [2008], 177-202).

According to the results of the poll the majority of respondents agreed with esoteric worldviews, and even those ideas that were rejected by or viewed in a skeptical light by the majority were approved by a relatively large minority. In addition, respondents were asked about their practical experience with esotericism. Over 22 percent of Russians have had some contact with a spiritual healer, with a subjective success rate of almost 56 percent; almost 35 percent of Russians over 18 have read some kind of esoteric literature and around 50 percent believe they have profited from the advice in this literature.

**Around 15 percent of the population adheres to traditional religious beliefs. In comparison, around 20 percent of the population has a predominantly esoteric worldview.** Another 27 percent are both traditionally religious as well as believers in esoteric ideas, and around 30 percent ostensibly have no consistent convictions in the field of religious or esoteric belief (Author's poll, September 2006).

### In Summary

In summary, 2006 polling results allow us to draw a number of conclusions. First, in contemporary Russia esoteric worldviews are more common than traditional forms of religiosity. Second, esoteric worldviews apply consistently to at least 45 percent of the population, compared to 40 percent who hold traditional Christian ideas, and 10 percent who adhere to scientific materialism.

We can point to a few specific conditions that may have encouraged the flourishing of esoteric beliefs. Above all, esoteric and occult doctrines have a long-standing tradition in Russia, in particular among the intellectual elite, both before the Bolshevik Revolution and after. Secondly, **the fast rejection of Marxist doctrines** in public consciousness **in the early 1990s furthered the reception of everything new, including all kinds of occult and esoteric doctrines.** Thirdly, one can say that perhaps Russian consciousness remains less influenced by the West European Enlightenment. ♦

*Edited excerpts reprinted with permission from Demyan Belyaev, "Occult and Esoteric Doctrines in Russia after the Collapse of Communism" in The New Age of Russia; Occult and Esoteric Dimensions, ed. by Birgit Menzel et al. (Munich: Otto Sagner, 2012)*

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### The Occult and Esoteric Beliefs in Russia Today *(continued from page 16)*

*Edited excerpts reprinted with permission from Birgit Menzel, "Introduction" in The New Age of Russia; Occult and Esoteric Dimensions, ed. by Birgit Menzel, Michael Hagemeister, and Bernice*

*Glatzer Rosenthal (Munich: Otto Sagner, 2012): pp. 11-28.*

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# Occult and Esoteric Beliefs in Russia Today

Birgit Menzel

Early twentieth century Russia witnessed ambivalence about the new world and the uncertainty of all human knowledge. Many people who concluded that neither scientific nor legal experts nor the churches could resolve the vagaries of modernity embraced new occult doctrines. In contrast, Soviet rule, especially in Stalin's time, attempted to eliminate all metaphysical thought. Most people who engaged in occult or esoteric practices had to go underground or were sent to forced labor camps. However, the end of the Soviet Union has brought a reconsideration of the boundaries and paradigms of rationality.

## Soviet Repression of the Occult and Its Popular Resurgence

Soviet civilization defined itself as a purely rational society, based on work, science, and empirical knowledge, yet its cult of the rational was taken to such an extreme that one could speak in terms of a "rationalistic religion." Since the 1960s and the 1970s, there has been a marked reaction against this "cult of the rational," and countervailing concepts became popular in both artistic practice and everyday life. Expressions of reaction against "Soviet-speak" included a rediscovery of eastern religious concepts and philosophy, and experiments with drugs and transcendental practices.

The marked return of religion since the fall of communism has included a fast immersion in the occult and esoteric phenomena. Many Western scholars of contemporary Russia have encountered this prevalence of occult and esoteric ideas in post-Soviet culture through its vast published literature amply evident through browsing bookstores and street kiosks. It is almost impossible to understand contemporary Russian literature without being equipped with an encyclopedia of the occult. **In the 1990s no less than 36 percent of all non-fiction**

**publications in the humanities dealt with occult-esoteric topics.** Some former Soviet thick journals, such as *Literaturnoe obozrenie* and *Nauka i religii*, have adopted a whole new profile with extensive coverage of the occult.

## Academic Interest in the Occult

In post-Soviet Russia fascination with esoteric, supernatural, non-Orthodox spirituality, and utopian and pagan folk traditions can be found at all levels of intellectual and artistic life, including the sciences and politics. One cannot help but note the increasing number of conferences, research projects, university course offerings, and college textbooks on paranormal powers (from bioenergy theories to so-called "torsionic" fields to UFOs and cosmic consciousness) produced by scientists at the highest academic ranks. In 2000 the Russian Humanitarian University in Moscow introduced a course on the history of esotericism (to use Russian academic parlance) in its department of religious studies. The Russian Academy of Sciences found these developments so disturbing that in 2002 it established a commission whose purpose was to warn against the spread of "obscure pseudoscience."

Today's occult revival should be seen, first of all, as a result of seven decades of the forceful suppression of metaphysical thought in Russia. The spiritual vacuum caused by the downfall of communism helps explain the impact of belief systems outside the established religions. As literary theorist Mikhail Epstein writes, "Many more people now exit atheism than enter the churches. They exit atheism without arriving; they stay somewhere at the crossroads" (*Na granitsakh kul'tur. Rossiiskoe-Amerikanskoe-Sovetskoe* [New York: Slovo-Word, 1995], 315).

## Blurred Borders between Traditional Religions and the Occult

How have the borders between established religions, such as Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Shamanism (along with other esoteric beliefs) shifted in the post-Soviet turn to religion? In Russia, the borders between science, religion, and the occult have differed from those in the West for several reasons. Russian Orthodox Christianity, rooted in the Eastern Byzantine tradition, has always been open to mystic experience and esoteric knowledge. **In one Russian survey, of those who declared themselves Orthodox, 35 percent also believed in magic and 30 percent in fortune telling** (Iurii Sinel'nikov, *Izmenie religioznosti naseleniia Rossii. Pravoslavnye, musul'mane, suevernye, povedenie Rossiian* [Moscow: Nauka, 2000]). Mystical, utopian, and pagan roots in religious and intellectual belief systems, and more generally in Russian folk culture, have been stronger in Russia than in Western societies and have had a pervasive influence throughout the twentieth century. Asian philosophy and religions, including indigenous Shamanism and Sufism, have been especially strong in Siberia, Buriatia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

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