

# Keston Newsletter

No.1, 2006



*Sergei Filatov, Xenia Dennen and Roman Lunkin  
by the walls of the Novgorod kremlin*

## **Keston's Encyclopaedia Nears Completion**

**by Xenia Dennen**

Almost ten years ago Keston discovered the work of Sergei Filatov. He was beginning a comprehensive survey of all religions and Christian denominations in contemporary Russia. When I brought back to England from Moscow in 1995 some of Sergei's first reports which focussed on Russian Orthodox dioceses, Michael Bourdeaux at once recognised their value, aware at the same time that when doors to information open in Russia, they can quite quickly close again. Keston's Council of Management decided to support the project and since then we have been financing it at a fraction of what such a project would cost in the West. Now that Putin's authoritarian regime is clearly closing doors, we know that we took an opportunity which may not now reappear for generations.

Under the general title *Encyclopaedia of Religious Life in Russia Today: A Systematic Description*, we have published in Russian five

volumes so far, including an introductory volume containing general essays about religion in Russia. There are two more volumes to appear and then the whole work will be complete. It is divided into two parts Part I, Volumes 1-4, covers all the religious denominations which exist in contemporary Russia, while Part II, Volumes 5-7, is a geographical survey which covers all 78 administrative divisions of the Russian Federation, showing the religious make-up of each area. So far nearly 2000 pages have been published. Keston would like to publish an English edition but we will need to raise major funding for such a venture.

I have joined the Encyclopaedia team on a number of expeditions – to Siberia, the Altai, the Komi Republic and to various parts of European Russia. Last March Sergei Filatov, Roman Lunkin and I went to Novgorod: we set off from St Petersburg early one morning and headed

north on an elektrichka (local electric train) which took four hours to reach its destination. Once installed in our hotel, our first move was to send Roman – a bright young Russian journalist who has already got a PhD from Moscow University – to gather all possible information from the local official dealing with religious groups in the area. Sergei meanwhile started ringing the Russian Orthodox bishop’s office. I had earlier sent him a fax from the Oxford office saying that Keston’s chairman would be visiting Novgorod and asking whether he would accord me an interview. Unlike Vyatka where the bishop welcomed me most warmly, this time, although we knew Bishop Lev of Novgorod was well-versed in western church affairs (he had written his thesis on the Second Vatican Council and had studied at the Gregorian University in Rome 1975-1978) and liked to meet foreigners, we got the impression that his entourage wanted to keep him from such encounters. At all events, we were told that he had not received my fax and no interview was granted.

Thwarted in that quarter, Sergei and I managed nevertheless to secure a number of interviews with Russian Orthodox clergy, and to meet both the Roman Catholic priest and Lutheran pastor in Novgorod. Roman, meanwhile, was deputed by Sergei to focus his attention on Protestants, so he went off to talk to Baptist, Charismatic, and Methodist church members as well as a Salvation Army worker.



*Roman Catholic Church of SS Peter and Paul*

Fr Miroslaw Danielski, in charge of the Roman Catholic Church of SS Peter and Paul, built in 1893 which had been returned to the Catholics in 1996, looked after many Belorussians, Ukrainians, Germans and Poles. In the early 1990s, Fr Miroslaw said, relations with the Russian Orthodox had been friendly and Bishop Lev had even preached at the Catholic church. Now relations were not so happy. Sergei and I remained while the mass was celebrated followed by Stations of the Cross (these were represented by ugly western realistic images) and then heard Fr Miroslaw announce that he had been summoned to the local Ministry of Justice

and, as he had not lived in Russia for three consecutive years since his time in charge of the church from 2003-2005, he could be expelled and the parish closed down. He had not mentioned any of this to us during our interview. Sergei deduced that the local FSB (formerly the KGB) had inserted its claws into the Ministry.



*Fr Miroslaw, Xenia and Sergei*

After this experience of Russian “reality” we visited the Lutheran parish of St Nicholas led by a young Russian pastor, Igor Zhurabyov. He had been ordained deacon in April 2005 and hoped to become a fully-fledged pastor this year. The small church, with a flat for its pastor above it, was built in 2002 (No. 3 Mikhailova Street) thanks to financial help from Germany.

As we sat upstairs in Igor’s flat we heard how he had first been a Baptist and through reading the works of Martin Luther had found the answers to his many theological questions. Lutheranism, he told us, had been revived in Novgorod first in the early 1990s with the establishment of a German club, leading to the registering of a German Lutheran parish in 1996. Now, however, most of the Germans had emigrated to the West, thus reducing the size of the congregation to 45 with 25 regulars and about 80 attending the Christmas services.



*Pastor Igor and Xenia in the St Nicholas Lutheran Church*

Most were Russians with higher education who had come to Lutheranism via other Christian traditions – Orthodoxy, Pentecostals, Baptists –

and had found in Lutheranism a combination of liturgical life and study of the bible which they were looking for. Igor himself was highly intelligent, young, open-minded who thought for himself: he accepted women's ministry but because of Russian tradition thought it wiser for women not to strain towards ordination ... "perhaps Russia will change," he mused. He encouraged newcomers to attend church for two to three months "then when you feel this suits you, then we can start teaching you," Igor said. He supported ecumenism and his relations with the Orthodox bishop were good as were his relations with the Catholic priest (the latter had in fact rung him and fixed up our meeting). He found the German model of Lutheranism too orderly for his Russian environment, so preferred American forms and appeared to have close contacts with the Lutheran Church of America. In his view it was illusory to see Lutheranism in Russia as the "second lung" with Russian Orthodoxy: he did not think his church would spread widely; it should concentrate on consolidating its small niche: "We must remember history; we live now in a different world." I liked the way he emphasised that nationalism had nothing in common with the Christian faith: he was not, in his words, a "Novgorod Lutheran". Although he did not think it necessary to integrate Orthodox culture with Lutheran practise (I was fascinated to hear that he had used an Anglican text for his Ash Wednesday liturgy) he had nevertheless been delighted to receive an icon of St Nicholas from Bishop Lev which was placed prominently downstairs in the church.

After our cup of tea with Igor, Sergei and I wended our way through the kremlin to have a late lunch in a restaurant, famous since the 1970s, called Detinets, which was located in one of the kremlin wall's towers, and conveniently close to the Cathedral of St Sophia, built in the 11th century, where the bishop's right-hand man, Fr Alexandr Ranne, had arranged to meet us. Full of delicious food we later walked through the snow and then up the cathedral's winding staircase to the library, well-stocked with books thanks to the support of Bishop Lev.

Fr Ranne had come to the Novgorod Diocese with Bishop Lev and had helped revive the Orthodox Church during the early 1990s after the destruction of the Soviet period during which one of the richest – historically, culturally and spiritually – of dioceses had been stripped and beaten to the ground. Only 20 churches remained

by the end of the 1980s. Even the German occupation, which was brief, unlike that of Pskov where the Church had revived during the war, did not give Novgorod the chance to re-open some of its churches.

Fr Ranne supported diocesan policy of gradually building up the church and developing links with local intelligentsia circles: clergy had to be well-qualified before they could take on a parish, thus to date 122 parishes existed but only 89 priests and 10 deacons. Much emphasis in the diocese was placed, he said, on religious education: a secondary school, the Cyril and Methodius Centre with Orthodox theology included as a main subject in its curriculum, had been a successful enterprise as was now the Spiritual School, founded in 2004 at the Yuriev Monastery, for school leavers who were taught by university staff. This school was destined eventually to become a seminary, Fr Ranne hoped, by the year 2012.

One question interested us greatly: did Novgorod's ancient traditions of independence and democracy, its sense of being quite different from the centralised Moscow state which had been built up in the late 15th century, still persist in the minds of local people and clergy? Thus we arranged to interview Dr Konstantin Zavershinsky, head of a department entitled "Theory and History of Culture" at the Novgorod Humanities University, housed in the Antoniev Monastery. Formerly the Orthodox Church had had its seminary in this monastery and currently, we heard, wanted the buildings back. From Dr Zavershinsky we learned that in school history classes, children were taught that Moscow was the enemy! In his words, "among the young of Novgorod more and more speak with disgust, their eyes afire, about the Moscow occupation which drenched the city with Novgorodian blood, and about the imposition of a graveyard-like stability by Ivan the Terrible." Novgorodians were beginning to see themselves, he said, as inheritors of European democratic culture which had been crushed by "asiatic Moscovite despotism"; many were interested in the possibility that Christianity had been brought to Novgorod by Irish missionaries before the Great Schism. There was great interest in Novgorod saints which locals contrasted with Moscow's. Furthermore Dr Zavershinsky said: "Myth has to exist as we walk past the kremlin everyday.... There is a kind of sacred space created by the triangle of the Cathedral of St Sophia, the Yuriev and Antoniev Monasteries, a

symbol of the Trinity.” However Novgorod myths, folk dance groups and archaeological digs were channels for patriotic feelings – there were no nationalistic groups. Although most clergy in the area had come from other parts of Russia, many of them had become fascinated, including Bishop Lev, by the myths of a distant period when Russians had been free and democratic in an Orthodox republic which had been culturally, socially and economically advanced. We found that most clergy wanted priests to be elected at all levels as had been decided at the 1918 Local Council.

After our conversation with Dr Zavershinsky we took a taxi to the Yuriev Monastery (returned to the church in 1991) where Fr Sergi Logash was in charge of the diocese’s Spiritual School. It had been founded 18 months before: 80% of the pupils were school-leavers and the rest adults, with teachers from the local university. We were shown two student bedrooms, nicely appointed and cosy, and the library which impressed us. I liked Fr Logash – he was open, intelligent; he and the four monks at the monastery formed a highly educated brotherhood all of whom contributed



*Cathedral of the Transfiguration at the Varlaamo-Khutynsky Monastery*

to the teaching. Fr Logash praised northern asceticism which he described as clear, simple,

tough, able to withstand the rigours of the northern climate – an asceticism reflected in the simple lines of northern Russian church architecture.

Fr Logash encouraged us to walk 30 minutes to the nearby Perynsky Skete [hermitage] of the Birth of the Mother of God where we met Brother Dmitri (he plus two novices and a 76-year-old homeless man made up the small community). A tiny 12th century stone church stood in the centre of the skete. It had replaced an earlier wooden one on a site much-revered, Brother Dmitri said, by Prince Vladimir [Kievan prince who converted Russia to Christianity in the 10th century] before his conversion. The primitive conditions in Brother Dmitri’s living quarters with ancient loos, a filthy jacket on the floor to mop up water and pipes wrapped round with old clothes, did not make me feel confident that the food we were offered was free from bugs, so I limited myself to drinking just the tea. To my amazement, when it was time to leave, Brother Dmitri was able to order a taxi for us on his mobile! This spot seemed a favourite for those wishing to get away from the city, so I suppose taxi drivers knew the way there well.

Our next appointment was with a young priest who heads the Youth Department of the diocese called Fr Sergi Zolotaryov, priest-in-charge of the Church of Fyodor Stratilat. He had been nurtured by the Society of Anthony Rimlyanin (now defunct) which in the 1990s had been organised within the university and had been led by the remarkable Nina Kuznetsova, the choir leader of a local Orthodox church. The society had had about 50 members, had encouraged contact with Catholics and Old Believers in Novgorod and had organised visits to the west. It had a choir, organised summer camps and supported an icon-painting studio. Nina Kuznetsova’s work produced a number of the current Novgorod clergy who had gone on to seminary after the experience of her society.

Fr Zolotaryov was born and bred in the area. He was writing his thesis on Novgorod religious traditions and told us about an ancient custom which involved enacting the Old Testament story of the Burning Fiery Furnace in the Cathedral of St Sophia. He was proud of Novgorod’s contact with Scandinavia before the Great Schism, and I noticed stone crosses built into the walls of his church which I thought looked exactly the same as our celtic crosses. He claimed that Novgorod’s saints of the 12th and 13th centuries were

becoming ever more popular, referred to “the years of occupation” (by Moscow from the 15th century onwards) and liked to use the word “republic” when referring to Novgorod. Over 100 young people were involved in diocesan youth groups, and while we talked to him, teenagers were arriving for one of the two evening classes held at his church each week. The atmosphere was most friendly, kettles were being boiled and tea handed out to the youngsters.

The next day Sergei, Roman and I managed to persuade a driver (in Russia you just stop any car and negotiate a price) to drive us out to the Varlaamo-Khutynsky Monastery, founded in the 12th century, on the edge of town where with the temperature down to -10° the wind whistled round my scarf-entwined head. Some nuns now ran these monastic buildings as a centre for diocesan conferences. The Cathedral of the Transfiguration, built in 1515 during the “occupation”, was the resting place for the relics of Novgorod’s most revered 12th century saint, St Varlaam Khutynsky. In 1478, we were told, when Ivan III had approached the relics, fire had burst forth from them forcing him to retreat. Most beautiful of all was a tiny wooden chapel – a skete – atop a small hillock, just a short walk from the monastery, which marked the place where St Varlaam first settled. I loved that spot and enjoy contemplating the photograph which I took and include here. The steps upwards are a subject in themselves for meditation.

The next stage of an Encyclopaedia expedition, after all the interviews, involves the pooling of



*The St Varlaam Skete*

information: all our notes are shared with the head of the team, Sergei, and once all the team members are back at home base which is Moscow, a detailed report, or spravka, is compiled for Part II, the geographical survey. The hard work of writing up our findings has always been done by the Russian team members. I just have the fun of writing more informally for you, Keston’s members.

## ***Keston AGM***

***Saturday 4th November  
2006  
10.30 a.m.***

7 St Andrew Street  
Holborn Circus  
London EC4A 3AB

Speaker: ***The Venerable Peter Delaney  
Archdeacon of London***

(nearest underground: *Chancery Lane*)



*Sergei Filatov speaking at the St Petersburg launch of the Encyclopaedia in March 2006*

# The Keston Archive

**In December 2005 the Council of Management decided that Keston should focus its work on the maintenance and preservation of the Archive, which contains vital source material about the history and witness of believers in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union during the communist period. In this section of the *Keston Newsletter* we will give you samples of material from the Archive.**

## The Testimony of a Jewish Believer

*Professor German Branover, a physicist of world repute, who lived most of his life in the Soviet Union, wrote about his discovery of the Jewish faith in a book called *Iz Glubin* ("De Profundis"), published in New York in the early 1970s. Passages from it were translated by Keston in 1974. Dissatisfied with Dialectical Materialism, he began reading Western philosophy until, through a study of Jewish history and experience, he found "the key to the puzzle of mankind". In 1971 he applied for a visa to emigrate to Israel and, as a result, lost his post at the Riga Academy of Sciences. Eventually, after taking part in a 3-day protest fast, after many threats from the authorities and a number of days spent in prison, he emigrated to Israel in December 1972.*

(*Iz Glubin*, pp. 44-45) We do not know and shall never find out the origin of the world, nor why it exists and what it is - just as we shall not find out where we ourselves come from, nor what and why we are. But we do know that the world or Nature exists beyond us, inside and over us in its own grandeur, diversity, complexity, harmony, regularity and infinity. We do know that Nature is unified, omni-present, infinite - and only in it and thanks to it we ourselves exist and taste the joy of being.

[...] Now let us open the Book of Books, let us delve into the texts of the prayers for the Sabbath and festivals. We very soon realize that previously we were forcing an open door, and that the fruits of our reasoning were long ago anticipated - moreover in such depth, in such a form and in such language, which we could not have thought of. Only, instead of the word Nature, which we used in our discussions, here is written - GOD. Here we read that God is one, omnipresent, incorporeal and infinite. We read that in God is the essence of all things, in Him is the beginning and end of all that is on earth, in God are the causes of all causes and the laws for all laws.

(pp. 51-52) The spirit of man in ancient times was simple, spontaneous and responsive. He perceived nature, felt it and tried to grasp it. As thousands of years passed, people became more subtle. But all the animation of the soul was suppressed. [...] Nothing can supplement the loss of the ability to perceive nature. And here we must confess that man has hopelessly yielded his supremacy to animals [...] Man has lost the ability to

fall into meditation and contemplation [...]

(p.83) It is strange that after all the cries of "science disproves religion", all the sciences now could not lead more directly to the basic truths of a religious worldview.

(p.91) To understand and feel the impotence of science in the field of knowledge and to break with materialism - this is the first step towards religion, but it is perhaps also the easiest step. Subsequent moves can appear more difficult. For example, great efforts are called for in the transition from the sceptical and haughty attitudes, instilled by all one's education and upbringing, towards ancient sacrifices to a realization of the true meaning and lofty nature of this act. A man needs to work hard before harmony reigns in his soul.

(p.97) One might imagine the following scheme for the enlightenment of a man [...]:

- (1) A realization of the truth that science only gives the correlation of phenomena, but is helpless before their essence.
- (2) An understanding of the grandeur and wisdom of the Creator, who has established a world in harmony and continuously upholds its existence.
- (3) Worship before the Creator.
- (4) An understanding that the aim, the justification and the essence of the world is in the Torah.
- (5) The deepest and most joyful knowledge is simple faith.

## Persecuted Czech Catholics

*Czech Catholics sent the following appeal to the Pope in October 1979. By 3 November it had been signed by 350 Catholics, and by December the number of signatories had risen to over 500. It was written in defence of 11 Czech Catholics who were arrested on 10 September 1979 after a secret printing press and a stock of clandestinely printed books were discovered by the police.*

We write to you in our distress, because you are the Shepherd of all believing Catholics and therefore have the right to know of our sufferings. We have no court of appeal in our church leaders. Our priests' association, which claims to speak on behalf of Catholics, in fact only serves the State in its plans to stifle the religious life of this country. Any attempts to obtain justice from the state authorities have ended in prosecution.

We do not see any other way than this. Many believers would like to join in signing this letter but cannot do so because of serious consequences. We have not asked the good priests who are still working in parishes to sign this letter in case we should lose them. We know that by signing this letter we are exposing ourselves to danger but cannot act in any other way when our official leaders keep silent. Permanent silence could be regarded as a sign that the Czech and Slovak Church is accepting its gradual liquidation. If we give up our right to existence, no one in the world can help us.

But our Church is alive and wants to live its own life. We are aware of our mission received from Christ and cannot be satisfied with the official so-called "gratification of our religious needs". The best evidence of our will to live according to the Gospel is the increasing wave of police repressions. These repressions have culminated in the recent State Security operation against the Church.

On 10 September 1979 a number of believers, including priests, were searched, and religious literature, which included among other things your Encyclical, a biography of you and pictures of you inscribed with our prayer for you, was confiscated. This was followed by interrogations and detentions: already eight people are imprisoned. Others are also charged under Article 118 for "illicit trading". By this the authorities mean the selfless work of believers who, using primitive methods, tried to satisfy the need for religious literature, which in your own country, for instance, is readily available. We know very little about the contemporary life of the Church, about

modern catechesis or pastoral theology, about Christian currents of thought. The little which the censors allow to be published is only in order to create the impression of a Church without a future.

All this is happening in a State whose Constitution and international agreements guarantee citizens religious freedom and free exchange of ideas. Persecution of believers for religious activity, as opposed to mere faith, was never exceptional in our country but now is being applied more severely. Our brethren, now accused of criminal activities, in order to hide the real point of conflict, are facing harsh sentences; a few years ago, a priest was similarly sentenced to five years' imprisonment for making catechetical drawings. The huge contradiction between the constant suppression of religious freedom here and the government's protests against persecution of communists elsewhere is offensive to us. Of course this does not concern Catholics alone. When an ideological war has been declared which, instead of relying on an honest struggle of ideas, is backed up by the full force of the administration and police, this concerns not only believers but all honest men who demand freedom of thought as an integral part of human dignity. We express our solidarity with them. In this way we join you in your fight against every form of oppression in this world and for a true spirit of brotherhood within the family of man. We implore our Lord to grant you success in your efforts. We continue to pray for our enemies according to the Gospel demand, and we ask for divine grace in these difficult times so that we may not fail and may give good witness. We also ask the universal Church for help: may our brothers and sisters throughout the world remember us in their prayers as we suffer for our faith and its works. May they together with us ask that God may grant our prisoners strength and endurance to withstand violence and faithfully to carry their cross, which is also the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are aware that you, Holy Father, feel yourself one with us and will not abandon us: this is our strength and a sign of the love of God who never abandons his faithful.

## Pentecostals Respond to the Helsinki Declaration

*The Helsinki Agreement of August 1975, signed by the Soviet government, was important for Soviet Christians. Principle Number 7 began: "The participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion." Religious freedom in the Soviet Union was for the first time raised at a meeting of the WCC's General Assembly in December 1975 when it was proposed that a report on religious liberty in the signatory States of the Helsinki Agreement be presented to the WCC's Central Committee in August 1976. The following document, written in the Soviet Union by Denis Karpenko, a Pentecostal, and entitled "The Spirit of Helsinki and the Spirit of Atheism", is dated August 1976.*

A year has gone by since the moment when the "Final Act" of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe was signed at Helsinki. When this document was published, many short-sighted religious believers were glad: "At last!" they thought. "Now we shall no longer be fined, tried and libeled in the press!" (a pleasant error). After all, the countries which signed - including ours - had promised to "recognize and respect the freedom of the individual to express his religion or faith, alone or together with others, and to act in accordance with his own conscience." "In accordance with his own conscience" - well said! Perhaps a time of peace - even the thousand-year reign of peace - had begun? When Mikhail Shokhov, one of the Pentecostal Christian presbyters of Moscow, read this out to the group he was leading, saying that a time of real freedom had begun, he was summoned by the KGB and told that he had misunderstood what had been published: there would be no changes in our country with regard to believers, that it was too soon to shout "hurrah!", that the believers would have to shout "help!" instead. However, the atheists are far-sighted: they have a great deal of experience behind them already. You can't shout "help!" if you've been gagged. For example, the believers of Donetsk region were fined, but they were then summoned and deprived of the receipts for the fines they had paid, in case these might end up in the West. And so you can't shout for help. [...]

In Zhitomir region, where the atheists are really working hard for their daily bread, the local authorities (mostly in the villages) - after reading the Helsinki declaration - told the believers that they would now be free, that no one would break up their meetings, or fine them. Alas, they spoke too soon. After things had been "explained" to them by the executive committees of the district soviets, the village authorities said they had been too hasty, that nothing had changed.

The same anti-religious campaign is going on in the press. The newspaper *Vinnitskaya Pravda*, for example, in an article on 10 July 1976, "They can't hide behind their shadows" by G. Osipov and V. Gaichenko, writes that Pentecostals Vasily Matyash and Vasily Romanyuk fought against Soviet power during the war, with a prayer-book in one hand and a rifle in the other - although it was not like that at all. They were not believers during the war, but came to believe in the camps where they were serving sentences for their past deeds. The authors make mention of Pavel Kuzmich, who became rich - or so they write - by working together with his wife (not, of course, without the knowledge of the administrative authorities).

We have already written that *Vinnitskaya Pravda* often prints libels under the title of "Atheism - forward to the attack!", speaking of the past as if it were the present, stating that a believer did something when this either happened before he became a believer, or never occurred at all. The paper calls on communists and atheists to fight constantly against sectarian "teachings" and to show up the Pentecostals for what they really are.

On the anniversary of the historic agreement, when our press writes a great deal about the spirit of Helsinki, the spirit of atheism has shown its refusal to compromise: believers from the settlements of Malakhovka and Tomilino near Moscow were surrounded during a service in the woods by policemen, volunteer militia and persons in civilian clothes; they had their names taken; the preachers had their Bibles confiscated and were later fined.

Among these believers, there were people who had rejoiced that they would no longer be persecuted or fined, as in past years, that they would be able to express their faith "in accordance with their own consciences".



## An Observant Westerner

*Sir John Lawrence, Keston's first Chairman and later its President, was a shrewd observer of the communist world. Here are a few extracts from one of his diaries, which was written during a visit as part of a delegation of the Great Britain-USSR Association (John was its treasurer at the time) to the Soviet Union in November 1964, just after the fall of Khrushchev.*

I was surprised to find satisfaction that Khrushchev had fallen. A few years ago people seemed to be afraid of a Stalinist reaction after Khrushchev, but now it seems that things have moved on so far that Khrushchev was considered a brake on progress. No one, however, seems to have any confidence in the new men. I have long maintained that in Russia Communism is slowly breaking up [...] We arrived at Leningrad on Sunday morning and I said I was going to church. We were taken to the Nikolsky Sobor, a lovely rococo church [...] In the lower church, beneath the part where the service was, about thirty babies were being baptised. Six years ago the number would have been several times larger but that was before the pressure on the church was increased [*the Khrushchev anti-religious campaign lasted from 1959-1964. Ed*]. Now if you have your baby baptised, it means you are a staunch believer, and prepared to face the consequences of your belief. [...] We were accompanied by one of the teachers of English at the University, a very intelligent woman. She expressed delight at the music but indifference to everything else to do with church. However she could not leave the subject alone. I had become a believer when I was nearly forty whereas she had been brought up religious and had gone right away from the church. How come? I said I found

it was not possible to live any other way. How should one live? After this we had a conversation about how to live, like something out of a Russian novel, except that it was carried on in snatches in an undertone [...]

In Russia I never start conversations about religion but of course I make it no secret that I am a believer. On this visit I got the impression that there is a little more wondering about religion than before. There are a few highly placed Academicians who are staunch believers. They keep very quiet about it but do not deny it when pressed, and this must have some effect in a society that is so respectful to scientists. The real intellectual witness of the Russian Church is not given by most of the people we westerners meet, but rather by people like those young priests, who know the gaps in what they learnt in the theological colleges and are trying, without access to good libraries, to grapple with the intellectual problems of the age. I have seen duplicated copies of books such as Zenkovsky's *History of Russian Philosophy* and a translation of the Bishop of Ripon's history of the Church of England. In some circles there is interest in Teilhard de Chardin. Five hundred duplicated copies of a book go a long way when there is a hunger to learn. [...]

## Home News

*Keston is busy downsizing while the Council of Management negotiates the assignment of our lease: we plan to rent for a limited period just the ground floor where our library and archive are housed. Despite the difficulties we have had a number of visitors to the archive, including Evgeny Ostanin, a lecturer from the university of Vyatka (Russia) who is writing a book on the 20th century Russian martyr, Boris Talantov. Michael Bourdeaux has completed a first draft of his history of Keston; on 8th July The Times published his article on the Encyclopaedia and on 29th August the BBC broadcast his programme on the Jordanville (USA) summer school for Russian Orthodox music. The Director, Davorin Peterlin, left Keston in early August: as the Council was unable to renew his contract for financial reasons, he has moved to a senior post in Dublin. Philip Walters, who sadly also had to leave Keston's employment, will continue to edit Religion State and Society, which is now being funded by its publishers, Taylor and Francis. John Hanks, a professional chartered accountant, who kindly agreed to become Keston's Company Secretary earlier this year, looks after the financial administration and keeps a close watch on our income and expenditure. Thanks to the cuts Keston's finances have stabilised, but we still need your support – so do renew your membership when the time comes!*

# Keston's File in the *Stasi* Archives

by Michael Bourdeaux

Karl-Marx-Allee! Well, it's not called that now, of course, but at last I walked into a former stronghold of the *Stasi*, the East German KGB. This was a room in a tower block in the centre of ex-communist Berlin. There, laid out before me with typical German efficiency (and pleasantness, I must add) was the Keston *Stasi* file, 618 pages in six folders of unequal size. For the next two days I was absorbed.

Two years earlier I discovered that Keston had a file in the *Stasi* archives. To visit you have to wait your turn; finally in June mine arrived.

Keston comes under Section XX of the archive (contacts with organisations in capitalist countries) subsection 4 (religious bodies). The explanatory material told me that Section XX had at optimum 461 employees, Section 4 ("Counteracting Misuse of Churches") had 6 heads of department and 43 staff. Departments: evangelical churches, catholic churches, sects, church centres abroad, pacifist organisations, special tasks. Keston's file is in the fourth.

Every page has been numbered by the German government, which rescued most of the *Stasi* archive after the Wall came down in November 1989. Therefore one can access any required information by quoting section, file and page number.

I quickly gained the impression that the file entries are more notable for what they don't say rather than for what they do. The general impression is one of dull bureaucracy. From beginning to end there wasn't one astonishing revelation, no flights of imagination, no revealing personal profiles, no competent analysis of what we were really doing. Instead, you can imagine rows of backroom boys (or, more likely, girls) systematically perusing newspapers and Keston publications, cutting and

pasting. There's a huge amount of repetition, much of it verbatim and in carbon - (or photo-) copy of earlier entries. I didn't count, but I estimate that under half of the total pages contain new material, the rest being simply copies of what they already had on file. Once they had made up their mind what we were doing, the *Stasi* repeated this doggedly from the 1970s through to the last entry in February 1989.

The *Stasi's* analysis of Keston's *raison d'être* is based on an amazing misconception. Because we began our work officially in 1969, they attribute its genesis to the Soviet suppression of the Prague Spring (they don't call it that) the previous year. They repeat this endlessly, without ever once hinting at the true motivation, the impact of my study year in Moscow (1959-1960), when I witnessed the persecution of the church at first hand. Although this year is noted in my 'biography', nothing is made of it. They simply didn't know what "made Michael Bourdeaux tick" and what led to my establishing the 'Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism' (as it was originally called) in 1969.

Yes, they sent 'observers' to our AGMs who reported back on proceedings. They photocopied articles from the (mainly German) press. The *Stasi*, it seems, didn't plant a mole in our midst. They knew very little apart from what we ourselves published. There was one hilarious bureaucratic act: I visited East Berlin for a day on 16 May 1982. They took away my passport to scrutinise. Here in the file was a photograph of all 60 pages of my passport of the time, complete with three fingertips of the policeman who held down the stiff pages for the camera. Oh yes! They interrogated me and noted that I "conducted myself politely", so they let me pass through Checkpoint Charlie, even though they had found two Russian Bibles in my bag.

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