

Keston Newsletter

No. 2, 2007



The Church of St John Chrysostom in Tula

Old Believers in Tula

by Xenia Dennen

We may feel overwhelmed when our church roof in this country begins to leak, but the costs involved pale into insignificance when we consider what will be needed by the Old Believers in Tula (200 km south of Moscow) who have been given the ruined Church of St John Chrysostom by the Russian Orthodox Church in place of their own church, built in 1906, which is still occupied by the local body which deals with the city's lighting.

In October 2006 I met Lydia Sinyova, churchwarden of the small Old Believer community in Tula consisting of about 30 members. As a child she remembered attending the 1906 Old Believer church, and said that her community was large before the Revolution. In 1938, however, this church was

closed; "we got used to hiding during Soviet times," she said.

Lydia Sinyova belonged to the Belokrinitzky "soglasie" (agreement). Old Believers can be divided broadly into two groups, the *bezpopovtsy* or priestless Old Believers, and the *popovtsy*, those who have priests and recognise the seven sacraments. Of these latter there are two main branches, the Belokrinitzky Old Believers (officially called the Russian Orthodox Old Believer Church) and the Novozybkovsky Old Believers (officially entitled the Old Believer Patriarchate of Moscow and All-Russia). The former hierarchy stems from an agreement made in 1846 by a section of the Old Believer community to depend no longer solely on



Lydia Sinyova the churchwarden

priests who defected from the state church, but to consecrate their own bishops and thus be able to ordain priests. The head of this branch, Metropolitan Amvrosi, resided in a monastery at Belaya Krinitsa (thus the adjectival form of ‘Belokrinitsky’), then in the Western Ukraine and part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire from



Entrance to the church

where newly-consecrated Old Believer bishops would secretly move to Russia. When religious freedom was granted to the Old

Believers in 1905 the Belokrinitsky hierarchy was fully formed and ready to function openly. The Novozybkovsky branch developed as a result of an agreement in the mid-19th century not to recognise the Belokrinitsky hierarchy and to continue to rely for priests on those who came over to them from the state church. In the 1920s, however, the Archbishop of Saratov and Petrov and the Bishop of Sverdlovsk joined them, leading to the creation of a Novozybkovsky hierarchy (this title derives from the name of their canonical centre – Novozybkov, Bryansk *oblast*).

During Soviet days when there was no functioning Old Believer church in Tula, Lydia Sinyova used to travel the 200 km north to Moscow every Sunday to the Pokrov Cathedral (Rogozhsky Cemetery) which remained open, and there met other Old Believers from her hometown who belonged to the same tradition



Lydia Sinyova and other Old Believers with Xenia in a renovated corner of their church

as she did. They all kept in touch with one another and eventually after perestroika, with the help of one of the lay leaders at the Pokrov Cathedral, formed themselves into an “*obshchina*” (community) with Lydia as churchwarden. In 1997 they held their first liturgy in Tula. But as yet they had no church building for their services and therefore, without an address, could not get registered as a religious organization, as was required by law if they wanted to open a bank account and organise themselves effectively.

Unable to get back their original church building, Lydia Sinyova and her fellow believers were delighted when in 2005 the local Russian Orthodox bishop agreed to give them the Church of St John Chrysostom. During the Second World War it had been used for manufacturing armaments and German prisoners had been forced to work

there; subsequently it was used to store pipes. Now a road full of potholes led to what was a



Small renovated section where the liturgy is celebrated

virtual ruin beside one of the town's rubbish tips. With immense labour Lydia Sinyova, no young sprite it must be said, and her fellows had just finished clearing away the rubbish by the time I visited them. As I talked to Lydia in one small corner which, partitioned off from the rest of the vast cold building, had been restored and made suitable for church services with an iconostasis, I began to understand what a difficult task faced her and her fellows.

Unfortunately Lydia's community had not attracted the younger generation. Those whom I talked to admitted that their children had not kept to their families' traditions. Although only 20 came to the liturgy regularly, at Easter 2006 their number swelled to 50, and as evidence that occasionally people not brought up as Old Believers joined them, a carpenter, who happened to live near the church, had made friends with the group, had started regularly helping with the restoration, and had been converted.

The local authorities, said Lydia, were neutral in the way they treated her community, whilst the Russian Orthodox Church behaved "normally". Their main problem, apart from the cost of restoration, was the lack of a priest. Fr Artamon from Borovsk visited them about five times a year as did Fr Vasili Budaev, currently serving in Astrakhan. But Lydia hoped that she might persuade Fr Budaev, whose family came from Tula, to transfer to St John Chrysostom, and looked forward to the day when current members of her congregation would go forward for ordination. "I'm just an old woman (*babula*)," said Lydia, "someone with a beard would have authority and get things done."



Interior of the Church of St John Chrysostom

Keston's AGM 2006

We were delighted to welcome the Venerable Peter Delaney, Archdeacon of London, as our guest speaker at the 2006 Keston AGM which was held at St Andrew's Holborn in the City of London. He chose as his subject the question of memory and its importance to faith communities, emphasising the importance of the Keston archive and library for the church and the wider community.

Keston's research and gathering of information about the collective memory of those who have undergone religious persecution, and often death, at the hands of those who find religious faith threatening to their own philosophies and political agendas, is impressive. I have a particular interest in Christians and other religious communities in the Arabian Gulf and am a frequent visitor to that area, so I have some understanding of what it really means to be religious minorities in a predominantly alternative faith society.

Collective memory plays a major part in the telling of people's stories. The three great monotheistic faiths depend very largely on retaining their faith stories and the core of their beliefs by capturing the words of those who originated their beliefs; they depend also on how that central stock of memories has been passed down through the tradition. Being People of a Book means more than simply reproducing given truths; it means living again those events and stories which fired earlier generations in giving birth to new ideas.

How does human memory work, what are its characteristics, can you trust it to be true and real? What happens to memory as it is passed on, how does oral tradition become recorded for posterity? How do you control the change which inevitably happens as memory becomes creed and dogma? How do you actually know that your source material is true and not someone else's spin on the subject?

You do not have to go far to realise that the most retentive mind can delude itself. So we begin with a dilemma about being human: if our minds are only as good as the information they receive, how can we be sure that they can give responsible objective judgements at all? Obviously the way we gain our knowledge is part of the problem: if we are subjective to the point of only reading and listening to those we agree with, we will delude ourselves that what we believe is the truth. Even if we start with gathering all the information that is available

to us (and that is quite something in our internet world!) we will of course edit it down to that which serves our own ends.

You can define memory under three headings:

1. **Encoding:** processing and combining of received information.
2. **Storage:** creation of a permanent record of the encoded information
3. **Retrieval/Recall:** calling back the stored information in response to some cue for use in some process or activity.

The human brain uses all three of these processes to create memory.

For People of Faith this use of memory rings bells and touches the very foundations of the way in which we share faith stories and live out lives centred on faith. Let me illustrate this in a simple way.

Christians believe that through their scriptures, the New Testament, God reveals himself in a unique way. Since Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Word made Flesh, known as the "Incarnation", the knowledge of who Jesus is, what he said, and above all what he did, form the basis of what Christians believe. In fact the preservation of the record of his life and teachings is entirely dependent upon memory; how oral tradition became codified into religious texts still occupies research amongst scholars. How the strands of the New Testament came to be approved and given credence is a serious part of theological study.

For the Jewish people tradition built upon the use of memory provides a profound basis for teaching and shaping the Jewish mind. Remembering the teachings of historic Rabbis forms a part of keeping the tradition alive. The Patriarchs and the Prophets actually lived and taught within the historic framework. Dates and times are governed by how the memory uses data collected over the centuries. The Prophets actually changed social structures by their prophecies and Jewish society

protects the memory by instilling in the community the great life changing events like Passover and New Year. To note how challenging is collective memory, witness the attempt to deny its existence in attitudes to the Jewish Holocaust.

For Islam the respected stories contained in the Koran enshrine the memory of the Prophet and retell the great events in his life which govern the periods of fasting and those of celebration for the Islamic community. As in Christianity and Judaism, the proclamation of the news about the faith depends upon refreshing the memory by repeating the stories over and over again, but leaving room for contemporary interpretation day by day.

But there is one very important concept in the way religious people remember their faith events which I want to highlight. It is expressed in a Greek word "Anamnesis" which means "remembrance" or "memory". It has of course direct links with the experience of the way in which Jews and Christians understand the act of remembering, it throws light on why the Eucharist and the Passover meal are so revered in both Christian and Jewish traditions, it also bears upon the writings of the Koran. In fact it comes from Middle Eastern thought and philosophy and affects the way in which informed people pray and use their memories.

When a Jew enters into the Passover meal and all that this means in the Jewish tradition, the memory is not simply looking back into the past, but is actually calling into the present the power and energy of the past event being commemorated. So the dipping of bread and the bitter herbs at Passover take the individual back in time – you are present with your forbears – and bring this past event into the present. The same is true of the Christian celebration of the Eucharist, the Mass or the Holy Communion. Because it relates to the Passover meal in origin it obviously carries some of the same connotations. But it is also bound up with a solemn promise, recorded in the collective memory of the Christian Church in the words of Jesus himself "Do this in remembrance of me" where the word used is "Anamnesis" (I Corinthians 11: 24 and Luke 22: 19) which calls to mind the actual belief that Jesus is present in this moment. For the Jesus story, memory is central in bringing the good news into the present and enabling it to be acted upon now.

So the preservation of memory strikes a chord both at the human level and at the level of faith.

To preserve for posterity the annals of those who have suffered and given their lives for their faith stands with Foxes' Book of Martyrs, the ancient Roman Martyrologies and countless records of those who have given up their lives for the freedom to believe. Keston's work means that it has not all been in vain; there is a purpose in the tragedy of religious persecution. In fact Keston is actually the corporate recollection of those who have passed out of human memory and into the records of faith. Their memory is being kept alive so that each one of us will understand what actually happened and why. The human story is given a new dimension, the dimension of faith and belief.

The richness and uniqueness of the material Keston holds make it priceless as a record of how the world has evolved through the communist years. Because your archive contains many direct accounts of the heroism and the strength of those often persecuted to death, these accounts will become the spiritual classics of the future and the telling of their story will be a direct outcome of making sure that the source material is maintained and kept in the best possible way. Thus the importance of your charity's decision to focus now on the maintenance and preservation of the archive and library.

The accessibility of this material to generations of people who want to understand what actually happened during the communist period is paramount. How you make accessible over 8000 books and 200 periodicals as well as your other core material exercises the mind for the future. Meanwhile Keston's website, lectures, articles and media links have taken your work further.

I know there have been painful cuts in staff and you have had to confront the availability of finance in order to maintain the archival material for the long-term future. We in the Diocese of London are concerned to help in any way that we can, and I have been in initial communication with your Chairman about finding space to house the library and archive in central London if that becomes your need. Now this of course will not suit everybody, but then nothing will. If such a solution appeals to the Council of Management and others, we are prepared to talk further about how the Diocese might enter into a partnership with you for the future. I am happy to say that the Bishop of London is keen that we talk further about any collaboration which might provide your library and archive with a new home.

Recently, on a visit to the Baltic States I went to see the Lutheran University in Rostock. Whilst there I was taken to an unfrequented part of town and shown the prison once run by the infamous Stasi. My host wanted me to see and feel how only 17 years ago this desolate prison became a place of no return for countless citizens who disappeared into thin air with no explanation. Where were the records of those lost, I asked, and was told they were not available; they too had vanished into the mists of time. How does that memory remain alive? We need a Keston to protect memories such as these.

Keston's existence has depended upon integrity, the search for the truth, and above all on preserving the memory of countless thousands of people who are often forgotten. Your collection of memories is central to understanding what actually happened to those who, because of strongly felt belief, suffered at the hands of those whose consciences allowed them to dispose of their fellow human beings as if they did not matter. You at Keston work to give each one of these souls the value they so richly deserve as children of God and fellow pilgrims on the journey of faith.

Time will prove that your unique records of whole societies and communities change the way in which we view history and the development of human progress. Some would have prevented you

from following the path upon which you now find yourself; others would openly work to destroy the memories which your work honours; many would still be indifferent to this history one way or another. But because of your archive, your library and your research the Keston experience is of enormous value to religious communities, to secular historians and to the histories of the countries which Keston has studied.

The continuation of your work will need careful investment in time and money, as well as prudence in handling your resources. It behoves the academic communities, the religious establishment and committed individuals to devise ways and means of supporting what you do. This needs to be preserved for the next generations who will depend upon your information to prevent losing the precious gift of God in human memory and the vision that goes with it.

My hope joins your hope for the future that Keston's history becomes a part of each of our histories and that its future is guaranteed not only in our corporate memories but is backed up by hard cash and the infrastructure to make it work for the future.

I end with these words of the 19th century poet Thomas Moore, "You may break, you may shatter the vase, if you will, but the scent of the roses will hang around it still forever".



A black metal cross marks the grave of the 20th century Russian Orthodox martyr Boris Talantov, who in 1971 died in a Soviet labour camp where he was imprisoned for writing about the persecution of the church in the Diocese of Vyatka during the Khrushchev anti-religious campaign

Fr Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa

by Michael Bourdeaux

Fr Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, who died at Alexandria, Virginia, on 21 November 2006, was, in the heyday of communism, one of its most high-profile victims. In Nicolae Ceauşescu's time the Romanian Orthodox Church was considered to be the paragon of what a church could achieve under the system. The destiny of Fr Calciu (as he was usually known) exploded this myth for the sham it was, although widely accepted in ecumenical circles of the 1970s and 1980s. I met him secretly in Bucharest on 28 August 1978 when he was a hunted man and about to be imprisoned for a second time. He exuded confidence that his recent actions expressed a compulsion to do and say what his faith dictated in the most difficult of circumstances.

Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa was born in the depths of rural Romania in 1925. As one of eleven children – and the only one ever to attend school – he learned respect for the beauty of nature which surrounded him in the remote wetlands of the Danube Delta. Under the influence of a Russian monk, a fugitive from communist oppression, he abandoned his medical studies, reacting against the secular environment. The communist regime, in power since 1944, arrested and imprisoned him without trial for fourteen years for “betraying his education”.

Many of his fellow victims died in appalling conditions. Fr Calciu survived, attributing this to a divine miracle – and in gratitude he vowed to dedicate himself to Christian service. This was far from simple under the prevailing conditions of militant atheism, and a former political prisoner could not enter on such study, so a university course in French was the best open to him. Surprisingly, though – and this is a tribute to an uncompromised leader of the Romanian Orthodox Church – Patriarch Justinian invited him to teach French at the seminary in Bucharest. He was able to study secretly for the priesthood, being ordained in 1973 aged 48.

His second period of imprisonment followed in 1978 (not long after I met him) - the result of a series of Lenten sermons at the seminary, in which he encouraged students to stand up for truth and the integrity of the Gospel in an

atheist society. Entitled “Seven Words to Young People” these sermons attracted up to four hundred students and also, inevitably, the attention of the Securitate. He addressed those “whose souls have been damaged by a materialistic philosophy and a total lack of spiritual endeavour.” He also publicly called on Nicolae Ceauşescu to reverse his policy of destroying Bucharest's historic churches to make way for his monstrous palace. The state stepped in, but cunningly demanded that the Church itself should remove him from his post. The new Patriarch, Justin, a much weaker man than his predecessor, acceded to this, which left Fr Calciu in limbo, betrayed by his church. He was accused of subversion by the state and given a ten-year sentence, again without a proper trial.

The World Council of Churches – unusually – attempted to defend him. The General Secretary, Philip Potter, received a letter written by Bishop Roman on behalf of the Patriarch, which contained the allegation, “Ever since he was a schoolboy [he] was under the baneful influence of a fascist organisation... The daily evening spiritual meditations, held by the professors of the seminary for the pupils, have been transformed by Gheorghe Calciu in[to] political fascist speeches and slander against the church hierarchy.” There were three pages of such libel. Robert Runcie, then Archbishop of Canterbury, came to Fr Calciu's defence and sent a forthright, but private, appeal to the Romanian Ambassador in London just after Christmas in 1983.

In the 1980s the Americans had a policy of granting certain countries ‘Most Favoured Nation Status’ in trade agreements. Ceauşescu's Romania – amazingly in retrospect – qualified for this, but it had to be renewed annually and conditions were imposed. In 1984 Fr. Calciu's release was demanded and the regime freed him halfway through his ten-year sentence, but only to house arrest and the indignity of being defrocked by his church, a sin never fully expiated.

In 1985 Fr Calciu was permitted to emigrate; he settled in Ohio for three years, punctuated by extensive international travel. During this time he visited this country twice. A two-week

speaking tour in May 1986, accompanied by his wife Adriana, culminated in a visit to Keston which had been busy publicising his situation over the previous ten years. Everywhere his sincerity and continuing devotion to the youth of Romania made an indelible impression. He considered all his life from the day of his first arrest, he said, to be a gift from God, because by all logic he should have perished, and indeed at times his suffering had been so great that he

had prayed for death. His delivery left him fearless.

In his last years Fr Calciu was able to revisit Romania several times and meet many of those whom he had influenced. The Romanian Orthodox Church in America never recognised his defrocking and in 1989 it invited him to take charge of the Holy Cross Church at Alexandria, Virginia, where he lived his final years.

Home News

Following Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia's resignation from the Council after many years of service, which was announced at the AGM, the Chairman was delighted when he accepted her invitation to join Keston's distinguished group of Patrons - the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Chief Rabbi, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain, and the Most Reverend Mario Conti Archbishop of Glasgow. Bishop Kallistos wished in this way to indicate his continuing support for Keston's work.

Keston's Council of Management successfully assigned the lease of 38 St Aldate's, Oxford, to another organisation in November 2006 with the ground floor sub-let to Keston for a year. This has freed the organization from a cumulative liability of £400,000 and has enabled the archive and library to remain on the ground floor while the Council has explored possible alternative locations for Keston's collection of books and documents.

Malcolm Walker, our librarian, reports that the archive and library proved useful for John and Carol Garrard who were working on a book about Russian Orthodoxy in the 20th century. Peter Thomas (whose professional name as an actor is Tom Peters), while writing a play based on Myrna Grant's book Vanya (about a young Baptist who, when serving in the Soviet Army, was tortured by fellow soldiers and subsequently died)

received advice and help from Malcolm. A Czech graduate from Prague's Charles University,

EGM 24 March 2007

**11.00 a.m.
7 St Andrew Street,
London EC4**

(nearest underground
Chancery Lane)

Please attend if you possibly can. There will be coffee and tea available from 10.30 a.m. onwards. We will be debating the future of Keston and of its library and archive, so your presence is vital. If you cannot come yourself would you fill in the proxy form, enclosed with this Newsletter, appointing the Chairman or another member of Keston to vote on your behalf.

studying for a Master's degree, has also found useful material at Keston. Caroline Walker's documentary, entitled Forgive Me Sergei, which won an award, is now available on DVD: this is about Sergei Kourdakov who led police raids against Christian gatherings in the USSR, escaped to Canada in 1971, became a Christian and on 1 January 1973 aged barely 22 was shot. When Caroline Walker started work on this film she received guidance from Keston on how to approach her subject. Mikhail Kizilov, from the Crimea, who is currently writing a DPhil thesis at Oxford University, has been engaged to help catalogue unsorted material.

Our President, Canon Michael Bourdeaux, continued to be busy on Keston's behalf in his retirement. On 30 December he visited the Maryvale Institute, Birmingham, to examine the thesis of an Open University candidate from Lithuania. This was about the life and theology of Fr Alexander Men, who was murdered in September 1990. Michael writes: "I was impressed by the quality of this work and learned much from it. Both the written presentation and the oral defence of the thesis were excellent, so my fellow-examiner and I were delighted to recommend Fr Arturas Lukaševičius (Kaunas, Lithuania) for his doctorate." A copy of the thesis is now in the Keston library, where Fr Arturas did some of his research. In January Michael flew to Hong Kong to lecture on a Saga cruise visiting China, Borneo, Vietnam and Singapore. He delivered two lectures on religion in China, one on Vietnam and one on Islam in the region: "I had been to China before, but this was new territory for me in the sense that I had not lectured on these subjects before. I've already been invited to lecture on China again – at Ritchie Court, Oxford, on 22 March."

The Chairman joined the Encyclopaedia team when they visited the Russian cities of Tula and Ryazan in October. The penultimate volume of this ten-year project had just been published so she was able to bring back some copies hot off the press.

The Keston Archive

In 1958 (23 May - 8 June) Sir John Lawrence, who was later to help found Keston in 1969, acted as interpreter for the first group of Anglican monks to visit the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin. In the following extracts from his diary, John Lawrence describes their meeting with Patriarch Alexi and Metropolitan Nikolai, head of the Department for External Church Relations (foreign department) and later with Archbishop Boris of Odessa.



Sir John Lawrence (left) with a group of Anglican monks speaking to Patriarch Alexi

I was travelling as an extra interpreter to the delegation of five Anglican monks. I had not been invited by the Russian Church to join the delegation. The monks had written to say that I might be with them and hoped I might accompany them for part of the time. But I did not know until I arrived at 11 pm at the airport whether the Russians would welcome me as a guest or not. We were met at the airport by Father Pimen, the Abbot of the Monastery of St Sergius, whom I have described elsewhere, and by Buevsky, a young man who ranks immediately after the Metropolitan Nikolai, and Bishop Mikhail of Smolensk in the foreign department of the Moscow Patriarchate. He is one of the first people who completed the eight years theological course at the theological seminaries, and academies, after the war. After graduating from the Moscow Theological Academy he went straight to work in the Patriarchate. He is not in orders because it is not the custom of the Orthodox Church to ordain a man unless he is exercising a pastoral function. He is an old friend of mine. When I asked him how the Russian Church was getting on, he said "Since you were

last here, three years ago, the young people have been coming to us more and more." When I asked some supplementary questions about this he smiled and said "You will see for yourself." I did.

We were then taken to the Metropole Hotel - a large Edwardian building where I lived for a year or two during the war. We were given a private room each, which was reserved for us even when we were out of Moscow. On arrival we were of course taken at once to eat a large banquet, with caviar and sturgeon, though it was by that time past midnight. A private dining-room was set aside for us in the hotel during our whole stay in Russia.

My first feeling on arrival at the airport was astonishment at the normality of everyone's appearance. Even if one knows Russia and is fond of it, up to now an arrival in the Soviet Union has given one a feeling of constraint. One never seemed to get accustomed to the appalling drabness of the people's appearance; but this time Russia looked very much like anywhere else. It may be that anyone who visited Russia

for the first time would still experience a feeling of repression, but to anyone who judges the Soviet Union by comparison with the recent past, the feeling of relief in the general atmosphere is very marked. This is partly a question of better clothes; the improvement in the past three years is enormous. But people undoubtedly feel freer to talk and this shows itself in their bearing.

[...]

We were invited to have an audience with the Patriarch and the Metropolitan Nikolai at the Monastery of St Sergius on the Russian Whit-Sunday. In the morning, the Patriarch, who is over 80, had taken a prominent part in the celebration of the liturgy, which we attended, and we feared that he might be too tired to receive us after such a long service. We had gathered that the occasion was likely to be rather formal. So Father Gibbard, the leader of our delegation, had prepared a little speech which I was to translate into Russian, and I had been searching round for suitable Russian phrases. But our reception turned out to be extremely informal. No-one was present except ourselves, the Patriarch, the Metropolitan, Father Pimen, and the Russian interpreter. When Father Gibbard began to make his speech, his Beatitude listened for a few minutes and then said, at the first suitable moment "AMEN". This left us rather in the air, but we were soon escorted into the next room where we had tea together. We learned afterwards that the Patriarch has a bad leg and finds it difficult to stand. No doubt this makes him reluctant to listen to speeches on his feet.

Nothing remarkable was said at our tea party, but the atmosphere was very friendly and gave me a chance of seeing a new aspect of personal relations among the leading personalities of the Russian Church. I have never shared the extreme suspicion of the Metropolitan Nikolai which is felt by many people, but he is obviously very wary, if not crafty. Indeed, if it were not so he would scarcely have survived Stalin's reign. On this occasion I saw a warmer side of his personality, which has considerably modified my judgement of him. It seemed obvious that he and the Patriarch were fond of each other, as men, and seem to have a real confidence in each other. When the time came for us to leave, the Patriarch said, with a grin, pointing at the Metropolitan, "Now he has got to go and receive the 'Peace Makers'." This referred to a party from the National Peace Council who were in Russia at the same time. After we had said Good-bye the Patriarch suddenly remembered something, and summoned us into his study. There he presented

each of the monks with a small icon of St Sergius, which we were told had been specially blessed. There were five icons for five monks. There was nothing for me, and indeed there was no reason why I should be given a present. But the Metropolitan Nikolai said to the Patriarch, in a stage whisper "Mr Lawrence, Mr Lawrence". His Beatitude said nothing but looked round rather wildly, for what seemed a considerable time. The Metropolitan repeated, in the same stage whisper, "Mr Lawrence, Mr Lawrence." Thereupon the Patriarch seized a marble desk-calendar from the table and gave this to me. Since it gives the days and months in English, I take it that it must have been given to him by some previous American or English delegation. It now stands on my desk in 59 Bryanston Street.

[...]

At Odessa we were the guests of Archbishop Boris, who is one of the most remarkable leaders of the middle generation in the Russian Church. He is about 45, a large fat man, with long black hair. (Russian ecclesiastics let their hair grow, like Sampson.) He has a spreading spade-shaped beard, and is an impressive figure. It was unforgettable to see him standing in his church, conducting the service, surrounded by his flock. He was originally a deacon and has a fine singing voice of the kind for which Russian deacons are famous. He has a reputation in the Russian Church for being a strict disciplinarian.

Obviously he is a man who engenders loyalty, and has around him a certain number of young men who are his devoted followers. The chief of these is his Secretary, Mikhail Sergeyeovich Miroshnichenko, who acts as a sort of chief of staff. We got the impression that everything in the Diocese of Odessa is done with an efficiency that reminds one of Field Marshal Montgomery, the Archbishop's Secretary being the Chief-of-Staff.

[...]

We stayed in the monastery which is sometimes described as the Patriarch's dacha, or country cottage. It is in fact a full-sized monastery, standing in its own grounds by the sea, some miles out of Odessa. This is the country of the Russian "black earth", and the monastery has a very fertile and well-kept garden, and kitchen garden. In the evening we were entertained to dinner by the Archbishop, together with a delegation from the Patriarchate of Alexandria. I sat opposite the Archbishop and it was then that he gave me the figures for the number of believers in the Russian Orthodox Church which I have quoted in *Frontier* [John Lawrence

originally founded and edited this quarterly journal. *Ed*]. He said that there were two tendencies in the Russian Church. One which tried to surround the Church with a Chinese wall, and another which looked on the differences between the churches as chiefly the result of an historical process, and clearly contrary to the will of God. He made it clear that he belonged to the second school, and said that the forthcoming conversations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches, in Holland, were likely to prove a turning point in the relation of the Russian Church to the rest of Christendom. We shall see.

The next day we visited Odessa. After a very wonderful and very early morning service in the cathedral we went to have breakfast with the Archbishop. He lives in a spacious villa on the outskirts of the town, with a largish garden. We breakfasted together under a large canopy, surrounded by flowering shrubs. The meal was sumptuous and the scene was patriarchal. It conveyed to me, more vividly than any words could have done, the important position which, at any rate some of the Russian bishops, now occupy. There is a small church attached to the Archbishop's residence, which he uses as his private chapel. Until last year one of the churchwardens of this church was Professor Filatov, the famous eye surgeon, who was a pillar of the church until his death. The church is still called Filatov's Church. The Archbishop described the changing congregations which he got at this church during the summer season. Odessa is a watering place as well as an important port and provincial capital and it has some of the characteristics of an English seaside town.

After breakfast with the Archbishop we visited the Diocesan offices. I was interested to see the rooms where the clergy stayed when they came to Odessa for Diocesan consultations, or to see the Archbishop. The Archbishop thoroughly understands the alarm that he causes among the weaker members of his flock and I think he rather enjoys it, but there is always a twinkle in his eye, and though he is feared I think he is still more loved. [...]

The monastery grounds are at the top of a two hundred foot cliff. There is a funicular railway to take the Bishop down to the beach. We travelled in this funicular and found a smart Soviet policeman keeping guard at the bottom. There was a small wooden pier sticking out about thirty feet into the sea, with a large and rather elaborate

Victorian bathing booth at the end. This is for the Patriarch to bathe from, and I was interested to hear that he does still bathe fairly frequently during the summer. Twenty yards to the left there is another and smaller pier, ending in a smaller bathing booth, which is for the Archbishop to bathe from: we were given the free run of this. The water was warm but to my surprise it was hardly salt at all. The reason is that the Rivers Dnieper and Bug flow into the sea some distance away, and in the spring their water sweeps along the coast, keeping it fresh for many tens of miles. To my great interest the monks bathed with us. They took off their long robes and put on ordinary bathing drawers, but their long hair caused them some difficulty. There seemed to be no uniform solution. One monk plaited his hair in two pigtails, another made it into a bun, while the Abbot, of whom more hereafter, did it in a horse's tail. Unfortunately one is forbidden to photograph on the sea-shore.

The Abbot of the monastery, Father Alexander, is a young man of 25 who speaks good German, and was Archbishop Boris's Secretary in Berlin. He is a good example of the new type of young Russian church leader, and he seems to have no difficulty in asserting his authority in the monastery, although a good many of the monks must be at least three times his age. He suffers from what is a great misfortune to a Russian clergyman - he is unable to grow a proper beard. His face is covered with irregular tufts. He is a very keen photographer, and always carries a cine camera slung outside his monk's robes. We dined in the refectory. The Abbot and his two chief assistants dined separately at a sort of high table, and at the beginning and end of meals the Abbot is asked to give a blessing. [...] During meals the lives of saints are read aloud in old Slavonic. We had the life of St Pachomius. I found it impossible to understand more than a sentence here and there and I do not believe that many of the monks were listening. A certain amount of conversation went on all the time. At one moment the young Abbot interrupted the proceedings by getting up with his cine camera, and taking shots of the picturesque looking Anglican monastic visitors.

[...]

The food at the Russian monasteries was adequate though rather simple. I gathered that the monks generally have a bit of extra food in their own cells to supplement the monastic diet. I do not know whether the rather grand monasteries which we visited have better food than one would find at more out of the way religious houses. [...]

Lithuanian Catholics

During the 1970s and 1980s Keston publicized the persecution of the Lithuanian Catholic Church by the Soviet authorities. In honour of Keston's past work, an exhibition of the Institute's collection of religious samizdat documents was organised at the Mažvydas National Library in Vilnius, in November 2005, and at the opening Cardinal Audrys Juozas Bačkis, Archbishop of Vilnius, spoke warmly about the role played by Keston during the communist period. In the 1970s and 1980s the Lithuanian Catholic movement's samizdat publication, the Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church, had been sent to Keston Institute where it had been translated and disseminated in the west. The following petition, signed by 61 priests, was translated and published by Keston: in 1970 four of Lithuania's six dioceses were vacant with two bishops, Vincentas Sladkevičius and Julijonas Steponavičius, arrested in 1957 and 1961 respectively, under restraint and unable to exercise their office.

To the General Secretary of
the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
(Mr Brezhnev)

To the President of the Council of Ministers of the USSR
(Mr Kosygin)

Copies to:-

President of the Lithuanian Council of Ministers,
Representative of the Council for Religious Affairs attached to
the Council of the Lithuanian SSR,
Leaders of the Lithuanian Episcopate.

PETITION

(From priests of the Vilnius Archdiocese of the Lithuanian Republic)

In January 1961 Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius, Apostolic Administrator of the Vilnius Archdiocese and the Panevėžys Diocese, was without known cause and without trial removed from office and sent far away from the diocese.

There have been cases where some priests have been deprived of their authorisation to serve and for a certain time they have been forbidden to act as priests. However, after this term expired, they have again been permitted to serve in their churches. There have even been cases where a priest has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment and, at the end of it, has returned to his work and even been promoted by the government (this happened with Bishop

Juozapas Matulaitis-Labukas, now Apostolic Administrator of the Kaunas Archdiocese and the Vilkaviškis Diocese, and with Ljudvikas Pavilonis, formerly priest of Klaipėda parish and now an assistant bishop).

But our bishop, Julijonas Steponavičius, who was consecrated with the permission of the Soviet authorities, has been forbidden to serve as a bishop for nine years now. Therefore we ask the Soviet Government to pay attention to this and to restore him as Apostolic Administrator of the Vilnius Archdiocese and of the Panevėžys Diocese.

8 September 1970

(Signed by 61 priests)

Theological education in Lithuania was severely restricted with only one seminary allowed to function. On 8 January 1969 two priests, Father Petras Dumbliauskas and Father Juozas Zdebskis, protested to the authorities in a document translated and circulated by Keston in 1973. It was addressed to the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers and copies were sent to the head of the Soviet Council for Religious Affairs and to leaders of the Lithuanian Catholic Church.

DECLARATION

We the undersigned Lithuanian priests, deem it our duty to inform you, Prime Minister, that in our country there are repeated violations of the freedom of conscience guaranteed by the USSR Constitution, especially in regard to the theological seminary in Kaunas.

Prior to 1940, Lithuania had 12 bishops, 1,640 priests, and four seminaries with 466 students, while at the present time there are only four bishops (two of them unable to serve), some 800 priests and a single seminary for priests with 27 students. These numbers were reduced

because officials of the secular government are administering the internal affairs of the seminary. In 1944, for example, the seminary for priests in Kaunas had 400 students. In 1946, the Soviet government reduced their number to 150. At present only 30 young men are allowed to study there. Therefore only five or six new priests graduate annually. Only four priests are expected to graduate in 1969.

Because of the shortage of priests, it is already impossible to serve the faithful. Some of the priests are old and some are already taking care of several parishes. Since some 30 priests die each year in Lithuania, it is obvious that some government officials are using administrative measures to achieve their goal: the destruction of the Catholic Church in Lithuania.

The rector of the seminary is obliged each year to send the list of candidates to the Lithuanian representative of the Council for Religious Affairs, so that he can determine their loyalty to the Soviet government. He has the power to eliminate any candidate without any explanation, despite the fact that the candidate for admission is a full citizen of the Soviet Union, has never

been tried and has committed no crimes against the Soviet Government. We do not understand why young men who have graduated from higher and special schools are not entitled to enrol in the seminary. Why do candidates, once removed from the list, lose their right to apply for entry to the seminary again? Why are candidatures sometimes rejected for quite insignificant reasons? We know that other educational institutions are not treated this way. Is this not a violation of the Soviet Constitution?

The faithful and priests of Lithuania have been distressed for a long time by this abnormal situation of the theological seminary in Kaunas. In 1968 the priests of the Telšiai Diocese wrote to you, Prime Minister, on this matter. This year, the priests of Vilkaviškis addressed themselves to the Lithuanian bishops and administrators on this question.

We therefore ask you, Prime Minister, kindly to allow the Catholic seminary in Kaunas to manage its internal affairs independently, to permit the church authorities to set the number of students to be enrolled, and not to put any obstacles before them.

Prayer for Eritrea



Population 4.4 million (UN, 2005)

Capital Asmara

Area 117,400 sq km (45,300 sq miles)

Major languages Tigrinya, Tigre, Arabic, English

Major religions Islam (47.97%) Christianity (47.43%)

GNI per capita US \$ 220 (World Bank, 2006)

Eritrea achieved its independence in 1993 following a 30-year-long struggle with its neighbour Ethiopia in which hundreds of thousands died or were made homeless. From 1890-1941 Eritrea was a colony of Italy.

During this period an Eritrean national identity was shaped; it was, for example, the Italians who gave the country the name “Eritrea” derived from the Latin for Red Sea – “Mare Erythraeum”.

After a short period under British and UN administration Eritrea became an integral part of Ethiopia in the early 1960s. Various liberation movements were launched in response to this incorporation of the country into the Ethiopian state, which was itself soon to become a Marxist dictatorship when, in 1974, the Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown.

Today tension is still high on the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Tens of thousands more soldiers died in two years of fighting which erupted in 1998 when Eritrea occupied the Ethiopian administered border town of Badme. The economy suffers because a large proportion of the population are serving in the military rather than in the civilian workforce.



In 1993 Mr Isaias Afwerki, a pioneer of the liberation fight, was elected the first president of the newly independent country. Although it was expected that a multi-party parliamentary system would be introduced in 1997, Eritrea continues as a one-party state. The People's Front for Democracy and Justice is the only party allowed to operate while in the wake of the border war and the terrorist acts of September 2001 national security concerns have risen to the top of the political agenda. In May 2002 the government imposed a ban on religions other than the Eritrean Orthodox Church, the Catholic and Lutheran Churches and Islam. More than 2,000 believers of various minority faiths are currently under arrest.

In addition to its clampdown on unlicensed religious gatherings the government has increased its pressure on the four recognised faiths. The Eritrean Orthodox Church, for example, has been forced to accept new limits on the number of priests allowed to serve in each parish throughout the country. This follows the removal of the church's ordained Patriarch Abune Antonios from office in August 2005 and his replacement with a lay administrator, Yoftahe Dimetros.

The 32-year-old gospel singer, Helen Berhane (see photograph below) was released in October 2006 after spending more than two years detained incommunicado without charge or trial at Mai Serwa military camp. She was arrested in May 2004 for her latest album of Christian music and accused of "corrupting" Eritrean young people. According to an Amnesty International statement

reporting her release, she spent most of her detention in inhuman and degrading conditions. Despite intense pressure, she refused to sign a letter renouncing her faith that would have ensured her immediate release. Consequently, most of her days in Mai Serwa military camp were spent in solitary confinement, either in metal shipping containers or underground cells, both of which lacked adequate ventilation, light and sanitation. Reports indicate that whenever she was out of

isolation Helen continued to share her faith with fellow prisoners. In mid-October 2006 came news that Helen had suffered such severe mistreatment that it had affected her ability to walk. It later transpired that she had been subjected to severe torture in February 2006 due to an increase in her international profile, but had only been allowed to receive adequate medical attention in October. With her release at the end of that month Helen was able to go home, but reports indicate that Helen is technically under house arrest and the family home and surrounding neighborhood under close surveillance by the authorities.

- *Pray for restrictions on religious freedom to be lifted and for religious prisoners to be released.*
- *Pray for peace on the borders of Eritrea and Ethiopia and in the wider Horn of Africa region.*

Sources: BBC, Compass Direct, Operation World

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