

# Keston Newsletter

No. 3, 2007



*Vassil Marinov (left) with Fr Jordon Karageorgiev in the chapel of Stara Zagora prison in Bulgaria*

## Confession of a Bulgarian Prison Chaplain

by Vassil Marinov

I never believed that one day I would work as a prison chaplain. For me the words of Christ came true: 'What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter' (John 13:7). I began by graduating from the Academy of Mining and Geology in Sofia as a drilling engineer and specialised in 'international economic relations'. In 1994 when I was Director of the Air-Rescue Company, an emergency service for mountainous areas, I met Professor Todor Sabev, Deputy General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) then visiting Sofia. We spoke about religion in Bulgaria. He was surprised that I knew so much about different confessions and at the end of our conversation asked me what I

wanted to do and how he could help. I replied that I knew a lot about religion but needed to get a diploma, a recognised qualification in Bulgaria. He agreed to help me and kept his promise. After a visit to the UK in 1996 when I spent a month at Keston studying human rights and religious tolerance I went on to graduate from the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey that same year.

In Switzerland when attending a local church near Bossey, I was asked to take part in the service: I said a prayer in Bulgarian, and, as is customary in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, I prayed for our King Simeon II. At lunch afterwards one of those present told me that he

was a friend of the King and would mention me to him. Six months later, to my great surprise, I received a letter of appreciation from His Majesty who was then living in Madrid. In 2001 after 50 years in exile, King Simeon II returned to Bulgaria and I was invited to establish the King's Party called the National Movement Simeon II ([www.ndsv.bg](http://www.ndsv.bg)) which at the last election in June 2005 got 21.9% of the vote and won 52 out of 240 seats in parliament. In 2001 I thus had the chance to show him the letter he had sent me, which I had framed and which he remembered. That same year, he became Prime Minister of Bulgaria.

When I returned to Sofia, I was appointed Financial Director of Bulgarian National Radio, but at the same time constantly thought about working in the religious sphere, something which I had wanted to do for a long time. Then one day in 2002 the telephone rang. It was the Prime Minister's secretary who had been asked to arrange a meeting for me with the King. When we met we spoke about religion and the situation in Bulgaria, as I expected. Then two years later the Minister of Justice rang me and invited me to a meeting in his office. He knew about my religious education and during the conversation asked me if I would be willing to work in the area of religion but in prisons. My answer was an immediate 'YES!' He was surprised by my enthusiasm and continued: 'Then you must establish a new Directorate to provide for prisoners' religious needs within the Ministry of Justice'. I accepted and started with half the salary I had received at Bulgarian National Radio, but I did not mind as this work was what I really wanted to do.

The new Directorate was established by a decree of the Council of Ministers and called 'Directorate for Ensuring the Religious Needs of Prisoners' with its head office at the Ministry of Justice in Sofia. It was composed of two departments, one to liaise with NGOs and the other called the Denominations Department which dealt with strictly religious matters and deployed thirteen prison chaplains. The latter worked in the prisons of the following towns and cities: Sofia, Bobov Dol, Pazardjik, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Sliven, Burgas, Varna, Vratsa, Lovech, Pleven, Belene and Boichinovci. All these chaplains were priests in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, appointed as prison chaplains by the Ministry of Justice on 1 September 1999 following a world congress of prison chaplains organised in Sofia by the Prison Fellowship International.

Following the Religious Denominations Act passed in 2002, the registration of all religious denominations in Bulgaria became the responsibility of the judiciary rather than the executive. As of December 2006, 86 registered denominations in addition to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church were recognised under this Act. About 20 of these, including Orthodox, Muslims, Catholics and Protestants, were granted the right to organise formal worship in prisons. According to the Execution of Sentences Act (Articles 70a, 70b, 70c) prisoners were given the right to participate in religious services and rites provided by registered denominations, and to use relevant religious literature.

Prison chaplains reported to the head of the Denominations Department, who was responsible for coordinating the activities of all registered denominations allowed to perform



*Fr George Nikolov dedicates a new chapel at Samoranovo prison*

religious services and rites in prisons. The head of the department which liaised with NGOs was responsible for charitable, social and educational activities in prisons carried out by registered denominations and NGOs, and for communicating with the media.

The functions of the Directorate were as follows:

1. To coordinate Ministry of Justice policy with registered religious denominations, which are allowed to organise public worship in prisons, and with other registered denominations willing to engage in social and educational work in prisons
2. To assist the Minister of Justice in implementing state policy on tolerance and respect between different religious denominations
3. To coordinate registration arrangements for members of religious denominations

- the issuing of documents to prison chaplains
- 4. To coordinate the time for public worship in prisons with the Main Directorate for Execution of Sentences and its local units, and with members of the religious communities registered in the Republic of Bulgaria
- 5. To control and monitor compliance within prisons with inmates' religious rights and to ensure the provision by the prison administration of proper places and times for services of worship, personal interviews (confessions) and sermons
- 6. To draft opinions and statements and to participate in special committees as required by the Justice Minister according to the law
- 7. To coordinate with local and international NGOs which provide services in prisons
- 8. To examine complaints and information filed by prisoners with regard to infringements of their religious rights
- 9. To ensure that the rights and freedoms of prisoners are respected by the relevant officials



Currently, all prisons have Orthodox chapels. In 2004, an Orthodox chapel was opened at the prison in Stara Zagora. On 27 April 2006, another was opened at the prison in Vratsa and contains icons painted by an inmate serving a sentence for murder. The new chapel in the prison for first-time offenders (with a lighter regime and called a Prison Boarding House in Bulgaria) at Kazichene was opened in late 2006 and another was opened in a similar prison at Samoranovo in Bobov Dol. There are Orthodox chapels, all equipped by the Ministry of Justice, also at the prisons for first-time offenders (Prison Boarding Houses) in Smolyan, Razdelna, Cherna Gora, Veliko Tarnovo.

The Directorate also tries to meet the religious needs of Catholics and Muslims. The Catholic Church is allowed to celebrate the Mass, and Muslim Friday prayers are led by students from the Higher Islamic Institute as part of their training to become muftis. Educational provision is supplied by special schools set up within prisons which offer religious education as an optional subject. The Directorate supplies religious textbooks – free of charge and approved by the Ministry of Education – to such schools in Vratsa, Stara Zagora, Cherna Gora and Boichinovci.

Some NGOs have been able to work in Bulgarian prisons. The Prison Fellowship International, which has a branch in Bulgaria, has launched projects in Sliven, Kremikovtsi, Vratsa and Boichinovci, including a computer skills training course for eight people in Vratsa prison. The Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA), registered in Bulgaria in 1992 and now very active there, was able to organise the *Angel Christmas Tree* charity programme in Bobov Dol, Sofia, Kremikovtsi, and Sliven, providing Christmas presents for prisoners to give their children. At the Boichinovci young offenders institution with about 120 inmates of 14 - 18 years old, ADRA was allowed to organise a sewing and tailoring course and on the prison's 50th anniversary gave each inmate a tracksuit. Mother Theresa's nuns have been allowed to visit prisons in Sliven and Varna while the Protestant Church of Sweden was able to give an ambulance to the prison in Burgas.

Prison Fellowship International (PFI) has been influential in Bulgaria and has helped establish the prison chaplaincies. In 2004 the Directorate took part in PFI's European conference in Moscow at which Bulgarian prison chaplains shared their experience with representatives from Eastern and Western Europe as well as Canada. The British branch of PFI has provided religious literature for foreign inmates held in Sofia prison and has worked with the Bulgarian branch on a project – now introduced in Vratsa prison – to help prisoners on the verge of release to adapt to life outside prison. Other initiatives promoted by the Directorate have included the involvement of one of its officials in workshops and lectures on Muslim issues at the Sofia Police Academy, where members of the Bulgarian unit of KFOR in Bosnia are trained, and the organisation of a seminar in Sofia's largest Protestant church in March 2006 by the Police Chaplain Christy Smith from



London on the introduction of the Alpha Course in prisons. This seminar was for clergy and deputy-directors responsible for education and rehabilitation in prisons, and for prison visitors belonging to any denomination.

Now for the future: the Directorate is to be involved in discussions on several legislative acts and on a draft proposal to be submitted to the Legislative Council of the Ministry of Justice concerning amendments to current legislation in the field of human rights and religious liberty in order to bring it into line with EU legislation. A Chaplain's Code of Ethics, drawn up by the International Chaplains Association, is to be adopted in Bulgaria, committing all prison chaplains to the principles of religious freedom and tolerance in the discharge of their pastoral duties. A course on prison chaplaincy work is to be developed for Bulgarian Orthodox seminaries: this will be made up of 30 lessons with a certificate awarded at the end of the course. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church is also cooperating with the Directorate to produce a new type of baptismal certificate for prisoners which will not identify the place of baptism as being a prison chapel. The Directorate is also continuing to study the achievements of other European countries in

providing for the religious needs of prisoners, in promoting inter-denominational cooperation, and ensuring compliance with norms of religious liberty in prisons.

In 2005 at the farewell party for the Minister of

Justice, whose term in office had come to an end, I shared with the Minister the secret behind why I had accepted his offer to head the new Directorate. I recounted how in 1943 my father, an Adventist pastor and a conscientious objector who refused to take an oath, had been imprisoned because of his convictions and had spent two

years in Sliven prison. His sentence had begun with the words, 'In the name of King Simeon II...' (The King had been just 7-years-old at the time.) Now 60 years later this same King had

written the decree establishing the new Directorate with myself as Director, an event which I believed to be part of God's providence. In response to this story, the Minister, with tears in his eyes, said 'You have fulfilled God's providence; may God bless you!' My father is 82 now. He was an Adventist pastor for more than 60 years and would quote scripture to me, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters:

for thou shalt find it after many days.' (Ecclesiastes 11.1) I believe that after many years I have found what I was looking for.



*Alpha Course Seminar in Sofia*



*Vassil's father and mother with their great-granddaughter*



*Bulgarian Orthodox chapel in Stara Zagora prison*

## Home News

Keston held an EGM on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2007. After welcoming the members, the chairman read out a letter sent by Sir Sigmund Sternberg, a member of Keston's Council who was unable to attend the meeting: "As one of the longer-serving members of the Institute, I wish to express my warmest good wishes to you and to Michael Bourdeaux for the wonderful work you both have done which has enabled Keston to continue. You both have directed great energy and a seemingly tireless devotion to a struggle against the odds, and you succeeded! I am very grateful, and I am sure many members would join me in congratulating you both most ardently."

The membership had gathered to consider the proposal to move Keston's library and archive to Baylor University in Texas, USA. The Chairman explained the background to this proposal. For the past eighteen months the trustees had had to make hard decisions and fight to keep the organisation afloat, she said, and so she thanked them all for their support and hard work. The Council was now in good heart after the monthly deficits of the 2005-2006 financial year had been removed through drastic cuts, and after a laborious legal process had been completed to get rid of the lease on Keston's Oxford premises which would have eaten up most of Keston's remaining capital. With the ground floor sublet to Keston for a limited period, the trustees had put all their energy into finding an alternative home for the library and archive.

The search for a new home for Keston's collection had been long and laborious, the chairman explained. Most of the institutions approached had unfortunately not been willing to house both the library and archive because they either did not have the space or the money, or both. The Council had approached many institutions in the UK. Letters had been written or approaches made, among others, to Birmingham University, Oxford University, Cambridge University, King's College London, the London Diocese, Redcliffe College, Gloucester, Cardiff University, Cuddesdon, Ascot Priory, Pushkin House. Either they had shown no interest, or had visited Keston and then withdrawn, or were not able to offer suitable premises. By January 2007 only two remained in the running: Cardiff University and the Bodleian Library. The latter, however, only wanted part of the archive and none of Keston's books (the Council had decided that the collection should be kept together) and required a large endowment to accompany the collection if it was to be accepted. This would have left Keston with next to no money and unable to continue realistically in any form. Cardiff was taken very seriously: however, the building offered needed to be converted, it stood on its own rather far from the main libraries and did not seem to the chairman to be secure; funding for the conversion had yet to be found, no feasibility studies had been produced on whether the building would actually be suitable, and Keston would have had to repay the loan for the building work in the form of on-going rent.

As far as Europe in general was concerned, the Council had been attracted to Helsinki University because of its proximity to Eastern Europe. Initially a committee had been formed by Helsinki University's department of church history, but in the end they withdrew and decided against taking the collection. The Council also considered Prague, Budapest, Vilnius, Ukraine and a combination of Bremen, Heidelberg and Bonn, but either there was no money for the maintenance and conservation of the collection, or initial interest faded away. As trustees the Council had to be sure that the collection would be preserved, conserved, in the long-term: much of the samizdat the Council knew was in a delicate state, it was not kept currently in acid-free folders and many rusting paper clips were still attached to documents; the collection was in need of urgent conservation work.

As for US universities, Harvard had initially shown interest but then withdrew, and the Hoover Institution had sent over two representatives but, like the Bodleian, decided it did not want the library. Strangely, the one institution which the Council itself had not approached was Baylor University: they came to the Council. Three of their academic staff made a presentation to the Council in December 2006 and impressed the trustees with what they could offer. They had the expertise to conserve, to properly catalogue the collection, and would continue Keston's research with the founding of a new Keston Center for Religion, Politics and Society. Baylor was also ready and prepared to digitise some of the archive. Of course scholars would always want to read the actual documents, but the trustees realised that digitisation was the way forward for ultimate accessibility. Another advantage of the Baylor offer was that Keston would not have to bear on-going costs such as rent which it could not afford in the long-term, and would therefore have its remaining capital to use to promote the objects for which Keston was founded. Keston's funds could be used to provide scholarships for East European students to work in the archive, events which would interest Keston members, such as lectures or study days, could be funded, and the chairman proposed to continue producing the *Keston Newsletter* for members.

Michael Bourdeaux then spoke about the importance of the Keston archive, describing it as an "international treasure" which had been "the heartbeat of all the work we have ever done". It contained many original documents which needed to be conserved and, after visiting the Stasi archives and reading its files about himself and Keston, he had realised how much work still needed to be done on cataloguing Keston's collection. Raising money for archives was in general difficult, and for Keston "the death knell was rung when the Heritage Lottery Fund had turned us down". He strongly recommended the proposal that Keston's collection be given to Baylor, as this university would be able to conserve it and make it available to future generations. Keston, he said, had contributed to world history by showing the major role played by religion during the communist period: this role could "only be told in the future through Keston's archive".



The members at the EGM voted unanimously in support of the proposal to give the Keston collection to Baylor University and empowered the Council to negotiate a contract. In addition to the votes of those present, the Chairman held 150 proxy votes which she cast in support of the proposal. At the Keston Council of Management meeting held in Oxford on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2007, following some weeks of negotiations, a contract with Baylor was finally signed. As a result Keston's collection would shortly be shipped to the US.

In April Keston's chairman joined the Encyclopaedia team on a fieldtrip to Pskov and Staraya Russa during which information for the final volume of this ten-year project was collected. The final volume would be three times larger than originally envisaged and would be published in May 2008. The Encyclopaedia team hoped that Keston would organise a launch of this volume in Moscow in the autumn of 2008. With the profit expected by the publisher from sales by the time of the project's completion Sergei Filatov, head of the team, hoped to publish a collection of articles which had appeared in Keston's Russian language internet journal, *Russian Review*.

This latter publication has proved popular with the Russian-reading public and its articles have been regularly picked up by major Russian internet sites.

The library and archive have recently been used by Father Vitaly Serapinas who is researching the life and work of Metropolitan Sergi (Voskresensky), by Dr Zoe Knox (University of Leicester) working on the history of Jehovah's Witnesses in the USSR and Professor Richard Marks (University of York) studying the history of the Vladimir icon of the Mother of God. Keston's material was also used by Josephine von Zitzewitz (St John's, Oxford) researching religion in post-war Soviet literature and Chris Davis (St Antony's, Oxford) working on the Roman Catholic Church in communist Romania and the historical narratives of the so-called Moldavian Csangos/Ceangai. Dr Alar Laats (University of Tallinn) studying the history of the True Orthodox Church in Soviet Russia found the archive useful as did Magdalena Bezdekova (New College, Oxford) researching the role of NGOs (in particular the role of the Russian Orthodox Church and other churches) in tackling HIV / AIDS in Russia.

## Michael Bourdeaux writes:

It has been an extraordinarily busy time with the media. There are signs of a real revival of interest in our work and I've had to be ready to respond. The death of ex-President Yeltsin brought the expected spate of obituaries on TV, the radio and especially the major newspapers. I read no less than six lengthy ones - and was astonished. Perhaps that's too strong a word, as I've become used to the media's virtually ignoring religion, despite the fact that he received a magnificent state Christian funeral, the first since that of the next to last tsar, Alexander III, in 1894. And this was in the very Cathedral of Christ the Saviour which he had been responsible for rebuilding from the ground up in the 1990s (after Stalin's destruction). This should have been a tip-off to the obituarists: a massive revival of religion, which had begun under Gorbachev, continued under Yeltsin - but no one gave this serious consideration. Then there was the fact that Gorbachev's liberal law on religion of 1990 was eventually - and with reluctance - rescinded by Yeltsin in 1997. There wasn't a whisper of this in the press, so I contacted *The Times*, which printed my article on the "Faith" page on 28 April, the end of the week in which Yeltsin died.

Curiously, Mstislav Rostropovich died the next week. I had had contact with both him and his wife during the difficult times and had sung under his baton in the Philharmonia Chorus and much else, not least hearing him play the cello many times when I was a student in Moscow. By divine coincidence, our local Iffley Music Society, which I organise, had a cello recital already arranged for the Saturday after he died. We re-jigged the programme slightly to make it into a memorial concert. I had much contact with the local media in Oxford, as this was probably the first such concert in the country dedicated to the memory of Rostropovich, so I had the privilege of making a short speech on the great man, not least his commitment to the Christian faith.

I have also lectured on a cruise in the Adriatic. It's thrilling to have the opportunity to talk about the "new" Croatia, hoping soon to join the EU, but I found it truly moving to pay tribute to Albania, as it emerges from its dark ages, the only country in history which rooted out every expression of religion, but is now witnessing a strong revival of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, as well as Islam. I was able to highlight the good relations between the three - a bright spot among all the doleful reports about Islam around the world.

On 27<sup>th</sup> June I was delighted to receive the Lithuanian Ambassador at Keston. With him arrived a television crew from Brussels who filmed the whole event. Malcolm Walker was able to show him the archive and in particular the Memorandum which I will shortly be taking back with me to Lithuania where I will give it into the safekeeping of my dear friend Archbishop Tamkevičius of Kaunas.

# Baylor University

*Baylor University, founded by Baptists in 1845, is the oldest university in Texas. It developed from small beginnings. When it first opened its doors on 18 May 1846 it consisted of a partially furnished small frame schoolhouse where 24 young boys and girls were to study.*

*By September 1851 the number of students had grown to 52 and under the presidency of Rufus C. Burleson (1851-61) Baylor's curriculum was enhanced and enlarged. By 1861 Baylor was hardly recognisable as the same university over which Burleson had taken control a decade earlier. During the Civil War (1861-65) the university lost many of its students who went off to fight, many of its buildings were ruined and it was*

*plagued with financial problems. William Carey Crane, Baylor president from 1864-85, managed to save the university from bankruptcy, personally repaired fences and buildings, planted crops as well as teaching students, fundraising and dealing with administration. His successor, Reddin Andrews, who took over the presidency for a year, not only taught every day*

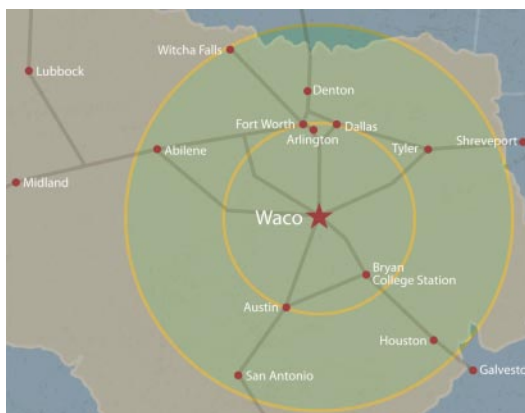
*of the week but said that he was his 'own woodman, fireman and waterman. I have been assistant cook part of the time and assistant nurse all the time. I have looked after household affairs and have been, in large measure, my own errand boy.' At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>*

*century Baylor began to be transformed under Samuel Palmer Brooks (president 1902-31). In 1902 it had fewer than 300 students but by the late 1920s enrolment had grown to 3,500, colleges of medicine, education, arts and sciences, theology, nursing, and business had been established backed up by stable finances. After weathering the Depression and the Second World War, decreasing student enrolment, financial*

*problems, with the campus unkempt and invaded with thistles and dandelions, by late 1947 student numbers grew to over 4,500 and the university's fortunes took a turn for the better leading to many improvements on the campus during the 1950s. The university is now thriving: Professor Wallace Daniel, a Russian historian at Baylor, brings the story up-to-date.*



*Baylor's founders sign the Act to incorporate Baylor University, witnessed by the President of the Republic of Texas, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. Judge R.E.B. Baylor stands at the foot of the table.*



Baylor University has remained since its foundation a Baptist University, connected by identity to the church, although in reality it is ecumenical and includes nearly all religious denominations. The university is located in Waco, in central Texas, halfway between Austin, Texas,

the capital and political centre of the state, and Dallas, the large metropolitan centre of banking and commerce. Waco is a city of 200,000 people, living in and around it, and is located on a major interstate highway, Interstate 35, running from Minnesota in the north to Mexico - the NAFTA highway as this thoroughfare is known. The city is reachable by car and by air, and the nearby Dallas/Ft. Worth airport is one of the largest in the world, connecting the eastern and western parts of the United States. Waco is also located on the Brazos River, a scenic river that fronts the campus and borders the School of Law, one of the states' finest.

Baylor is the home of nearly 14,000 students – 11,600 of whom are undergraduates, 1,400 graduate students, and nearly 1,000 in its professional schools – its theological seminary, school of law, and the health sciences. It is the home of the Armstrong Browning Library, the



central location in the world for papers of poets Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and researchers come from all over the world to explore this resource. It is also the home of the Texas Collection, a rich manuscript depository on the history of the American West. The University offers 22 doctoral programs, mostly in the humanities and sciences. Students come to the university from every state in the United States and from 90 countries, drawn to Baylor by its excellent reputation for teaching and increasingly for its research. International education has been important to the university for a long time. The University ranks in the top ten of American universities in terms of the percentages of its students who study abroad; and while its most popular programs are in Western Europe and in Great Britain, including one at Oxford, it also has programs in Eastern Europe, in Japan, and in China, and its latest programs are in Iraq and Afghanistan. This commitment to international education is extremely strong.

The faculty is of course the heart and soul of any great university. Baylor employs approximately 850 faculty members; 80 percent of the full-time faculty have terminal degrees, and 60 percent of its faculty reside in the College of Arts and Sciences, and more than 90 percent of all the classes are taught by full-time faculty members, not by graduate students. This faculty shares the fundamental mission of the University - that is, to 'educate men and women for world-wide leadership and service by integrating academic excellence and Christian commitment within a caring community.'

Today, Baylor University is a growing, thriving, outward-looking university, whose energy and dynamism are evident when one visits the campus. While it will remain strongly rooted in its history and its heritage, it is also forward-looking. It has recently completed a new comprehensive home for the sciences - a beautifully constructed sciences building with up-to-date laboratories and classrooms, at a cost of \$104 million. Currently, as many have told us,



there is no finer structure in the United States for study of the sciences. The University has also committed itself to preserving its own history and to reaching out to the community and especially to families, by completing two years ago one of the finest natural history museums in the south-west of the United States. The newly created Honors College is the home to more than one thousand students and is located in the centre of the campus in the Leon Jaworski Building. Today the University is constructing a new residential community for students,

a community to be named Brooks College after one of Baylor's greatest presidents, and is incorporating as its academic model the colleges at Oxford. The University is aware that it cannot remain stationary, that to compete in the future, it must both strengthen the quality of its programs and reach out, embrace, learn

from, and seek connections to a global community.

There are several reasons why the Keston Institute has found a good home at Baylor for its archive and library. First, because of the University's long-standing commitment to religious liberty and to freedom of conscience. This commitment to freedom of the mind and the spirit to discover the truth, without political force and outside compulsion speaks to the core principles of our heritage. From the materials in Michael Bourdeaux's book, *Patriarch and Prophets*, we can see how much that struggle played a large part in groups and individuals persecuted by the state. The legal separation of church and state has long been a key theme in our heritage. I recall reading in these very archive materials written in the late 1980s by Fr Alexandr Borisov about that subject. The theme of religious liberty of course became a key part of the 1990 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations.

Second, while Baylor is connected to the Baptist Church, its approach is ecumenical. Most important, it takes religion seriously. And while nearly all major universities in the United States have forsaken their religious connections to



the church, Baylor has not, nor will it. The materials in the Keston archive do not represent a peripheral source to us, part of a marginal interest. We have a very large concern with the study of religion, and it goes beyond an academic one; it is part of who we are, what we take most seriously, what we see as most vital to humanity, vital to community, to democracy, to civil society. One need only look at the University's 10-year plan, its 2012 Vision, to see that interest underscored.

Third, the Keston archive is a good match for Baylor University because of the University's strong renewed commitment to research. One can only appreciate the courage, the energy, and

the spiritual vision that went into the preservation of the materials in the Keston archive. The University's master plan, which it calls its 2012 Vision, emphasizes the central importance of research. It is part of an emphasis on creating a discovery university, a university in which students and faculty collaborate in research. In the last decade we have hired a lot of faculty whose research involves religion and society, both in the United States and in other countries. Having worked in the Keston archive personally, I know what a rich source of primary materials it holds, how it has helped keep alive and how it has nurtured the vitality of religion in the former Soviet Union and how it continues to play that role.

***Wallace Daniel***



**Baylor University Campus**

# The Keston Archive

## Lithuanian Petition Returns to Kaunas

*The Honorary Consul of Lithuania in Wales, Anthony Packer, wrote to Michael Bourdeaux before the 24<sup>th</sup> March EGM and asked whether Keston Institute would be willing to give back to Lithuania a petition (Memorandum) signed by over 17,000 Lithuanians and dated 1972. The Petition demanded religious freedom for Lithuania at a time when it was part of the Soviet Union and subject to Soviet anti-religious policy, thus making it extremely dangerous to sign such a document. It was addressed to Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and carried by Nijole Sadunaite, then a young Lithuanian Catholic, to Moscow. On her way there, however, after meeting a foreign journalist she decided, rather than delivering it 'into the morgue of the KGB' (her words), to give it to this journalist so that it might get out of the Soviet Union and become known to the world at large. Eventually it was sent to Keston and subsequently received wide publicity. Anthony Packer in his letter to Michael wrote:*

I wonder if I might enter a plea to the meeting through you, in connection with the future of the *Memorandum of the Lithuanian Catholic Church* - a document which lay on the table when I visited Keston two years ago in the company of the Revd Dr Vytautas Brilius, Superior of the Marian Fathers in Lithuania.

That meeting was accompanied by some significant emotion when you were able to link his surname - *Brilius* - with that of his mother - *Briliene*. When this association was confirmed you read aloud the powerful story from your *Land of Crosses* book of the discovery by the communist authorities that she as a schoolteacher had let slip to her pupils that she was a Christian believer. The result of this admission was that she had to defend herself in court, where she bravely declared herself 'proud of the opportunity to be there', and at last to be able to admit her beliefs in public: '...because we lose our dignity as humans if we have to crawl like worms in the face of unjust laws'.

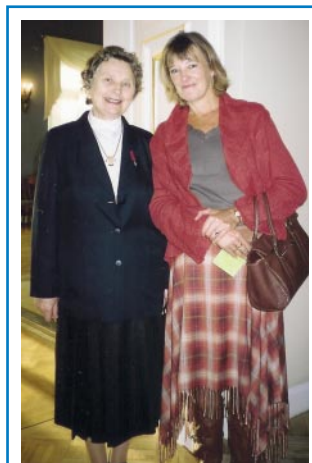
The poignancy of that moment was emphasised by the presence of the petition on the table before us. Addressed to the Soviet General Secretary of the Communist Party, at near the time of Briliene's trial, its simple request that the provision for religious liberty in the Soviet Constitution should be observed, had placed each of the 17,000 signatories at risk of perhaps ten, perhaps fifteen years of Siberian exile. Olivia Briliene's story, and the knowledge she had lost her livelihood, was an unexpected but acute reminder which connected us with the human implications of having been involved with that petition.

I would like to use this anecdote to explain that I would like, through you if the need should arise and if otherwise with your support, to plead with the Keston trustees to deal with this document separately from the rest of the collection, and to return it to Lithuania, its country of origin, where it is of course a hugely important national document. My reasons for this suggestion will be evident by now if this letter is read aloud, as the petition's recent placing in the Mažvydas National Library in Vilnius is generally known to Keston members. That important exhibition attested its estimation in the eyes of the Lithuanian people for whom it is a treasure of enormous national significance which embodies the spirit of the people in tangible form.



When we discussed the welcome given by the Lithuanian government when the petition was exhibited last year, I commented that to my mind at least, the character of this document is such that its value might be more adequately reflected by its being retained in a church reliquary rather than in an archive, a museum or a library. This is because its history, while also reflecting a claim for human rights, reflects the spontaneous response of dedicated Christians which came from the heart of the Lithuanian Catholic Church. It bore witness to the martyrdom of that Church, and was a further expression of the spirituality so bravely, regularly, and systematically recorded in the *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church* of that time, which your work then helped bring to the attention of a wider audience outside the country.

My request to the Meeting, and to the trustees is a bold one - that the petition should be returned to Lithuania, and in particular to the Lithuanian Church, the fellowship which nourished and sustained the hope which led to its preparation and promulgation during one of the darkest times. I am asking simply that the document is returned to Lithuania and given into the care of the Cardinal Archbishop of Vilnius - to be kept in his Cathedral as a treasured relic testifying to the prayers of the 17,000 signatories for the future of the Church and of the Nation.



*Nijole Sadunaite (left)  
with Lorna Bourdeaux,  
Vilnius 2005*

It is my view that the Keston trustees would, by such an act, be making an appropriate response not only to the hopes of those who signed this extraordinary testimony of faith, but would be honouring especially the wishes of Nijole and her colleagues at that time, who so courageously organised the venture, and then patiently copied out the names of all those who subscribed it, in order to protect the original testimony from the destructive capacity of the Soviet State by delivering a copy to the Kremlin while placing the original into your hands.

I know that you viewed Nijole's donation, which then passed through your hand to Keston, as a sacred trust. I now dare to make the suggestion that, if it is possible, the act of passing what she put into your hand into the care of the Cardinal Archbishop of Vilnius, would complete her mission in a particularly pleasing way. I hope very much that you, and also the trustees might feel able to agree that the time when the archive is given into new hands will be a suitable moment to reunite this important testament of human hope and resilience with the Church which nourished the faith of those who drafted and signed it.

*After the chairman had read out this letter, the members attending the EGM enthusiastically supported the idea of returning this unique document to Lithuania. It was agreed that a facsimile should be made for Keston's archive. The petition, or Memorandum, will now be handed over to Archbishop Tamkevičius – in communist days the editor of the Lithuanian Catholic Chronicle and now Archbishop of Kaunas – by Michael Bourdeaux during a ceremony in Kaunas in early July. We print the text of the Memorandum which, in an appendix, made clear that thousands more Lithuanian Catholics would have signed it had they not been prevented from doing so by the police and KGB.*

# MEMORANDUM

**To the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union  
The Kremlin, Moscow  
from the Catholics of Lithuania, 1972**

It is now many years since the end of the Second World War; the nations have restored the ruins, desiring permanent peace.

But the foundation of lasting peace is justice and respect for human rights. And so we, the Catholics of Lithuania, are deeply disturbed by the violation of these rights, since the believers of our nation are still deprived of freedom of conscience, and the Church is subject to persecution.

Our bishops, J. Steponavičius and V. Sladkevičius, have now been in exile for ten years without a trial and without a defined sentence, although they have committed no crime.

In November 1971 the priests J. Zdebskis and P. Bubnys were sentenced to deprivation of liberty because, fulfilling their duty, and at the request of the parents, they explained the basic elements of the Catholic faith to children. These priests helped the children prepare for First Communion, not in school, but in church, without using any kind of coercion - only those who wanted to took part.

By contrast, atheism is forcibly inculcated in the Soviet schools in Lithuania, believing Catholic children are forbidden to speak, write and act according to their conscience, and those who perpetrate this violence do not receive warnings and are not brought to trial.

Because of the lack of a sufficient number of priests, the requirements of believers remain unsatisfied. In many places one priest now has to serve two or three parishes. Even invalid and old priests are compelled to work. This situation has been created because it is not the bishops who order the affairs of the seminary, but representatives of the authorities. Every year the authorities decide to admit only up to ten students to the seminary. It is also the

representatives of the authorities who assign the priests to parishes.

There is an article in the Penal Code of the Lithuanian SSR which stipulates punishment for persecuting believers, but in practice this article is never applied. In 1970 the department of public education of Vilkaviškis district dismissed the teacher O. Brieliene from work solely because she was a believer. For the same reason, the district authorities will not allow this teacher to take up any work in the town of Vilkaviškis, not even as a cleaner. The perpetrators of such arbitrary action remain unpunished, although through no fault of their own representatives of the intelligentsia struggle to practise their faith openly.

Representatives of the authorities do not permit believers, even using their own resources, to restore the burned-down churches in, for example, the parishes of Batakliai, Gaure, and Sangruda. The faithful have to try with great difficulty to get permission from the authorities to hold services in any private home, but in not a single case is it permitted to fit out even a chapel in a former church-yard. At the same time, permission was given to build a dance-hall on the site of a former church in the parish of Andrievai.

We could point to many more facts of discrimination, which grieve us and compel us to become disillusioned with the Soviet Constitution and laws. Therefore we ask the Soviet Government to safeguard freedom of conscience for us, which is guaranteed by the Constitution of the USSR, but which until now has been absent in practice. The fine words in the press and on the radio do not satisfy us, since we await from the Government such efforts as will help us Catholics to feel ourselves to be citizens of the Soviet Union enjoying equal rights.

## APPENDIX TO THE MEMORANDUM

17,054 signatures have been added to the attached memorandum. It must be noted that only a negligible proportion of the believers of Lithuania gave their signatures, since the organs

of the police and the KGB undertook a series of measures to stop the collection of signatures. In the towns of Kapsukas, Šakiai, Nilauzas and Kapčiamiestis several people



who took part in the collection of signatures were detained. One of them was even conveyed to the police station in handcuffs. Lists of signatures found on him were confiscated, despite the fact that this memorandum was addressed to the Soviet Government.

If in future state organs are going to maintain the attitude to believers' complaints which they have held until now, then we shall be compelled to turn to international bodies: to the Pope, the head of our Church, or to the United Nations, as an authoritative institution which defends human rights.

Moreover, we wish to inform you that the present memorandum is the result of a national

calamity: during the years of Soviet rule in Lithuania, such social vices as juvenile crime, alcoholism and suicide have increased tenfold, while divorce and abortion have also assumed threatening proportions. The further we retreat from the Christian past, the more vividly are the terrible consequences of compulsory atheist education revealed, and the more widely is the inhuman image of life, deprived of God and of religion, propagated.

We are turning to you, as the highest Party authority, with a request to examine the facts we have set out with all seriousness and responsibility, and to take the proper decision.

***Representatives of the Catholics of Lithuania***



*The British Ambassador (right) talks to Lithuania's London Ambassador in front of a cabinet containing the Memorandum, which was one of the exhibits on display during Keston's exhibition at the Mažvydas National Library in Vilnius, November 2005*

## **Czechoslovakia: Communism's 'New Man'**

*Unlike Lithuania where the communist authorities did not succeed in creating a group of 'loyal' priests, the Catholic Church in former Czechoslovakia was split, with the laity criticising the hierarchy and some clergy for not supporting human rights activists and not standing firm in the face of government pressure. Jan Tesař, a Czech historian who signed Charter 77 and was a member of the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted, wrote a long document entitled Diagnosis 301.7 about psychiatric repression in Czechoslovakia. In the following extract, translated by Keston in 1980, he analysed the effect of totalitarianism on Czechoslovak society. The destruction of religious values had helped create a subservient society composed of people who had been persuaded that they could have no influence over their rulers and the development of their society. Augustin Navratil, who is mentioned in this text, had been interned in a psychiatric hospital after being charged in January 1978 with 'incitement against the socialist order'. He had campaigned for religious freedom.*

There is one more equally significant practical precondition for psychiatric methods of repression, which is common to all the 'fraternal countries', but which, it seems, carries especial weight in our particular circumstances. This is the general state of the society's morals. In order

to illustrate this point accurately and convincingly, I should like to cite the concrete facts of a case recently publicized by our friend Pachman. [Luděk Pachman, a former communist and recent convert to Catholicism had been exiled in 1974 and

subsequently broadcast on Radio Free Europe. Ed] I must just say, however, that when I talk either about the 'demented' Navratil, or, more generally, about the situation of the Church and believers in our country, I shall in both cases consider what I say to be only *pars pro toto*. I shall be describing a few fragments in order to give some idea of the whole.

Luděk Pachman (to judge from the radio reports) said nothing about the fact that the persecution of Augustin Navratil began only when the latter wanted to manifest his faith publicly and actually *live* according to Christian standards. Nor did he mention that the Catholic hierarchy kept quiet about this repression, and so much so that it could even be said that some of the hierarchy's members co-operated indirectly with the persecutors. I think this was also true of certain believers and it is even possible that some Catholic psychiatrists were secretly involved. Finally, Navratil was expelled from the People's Party, which is supposedly a Catholic party, for getting into trouble with the state security forces.

It would indeed be one-sided and untrue to say that the Church or believers are persecuted in our country. On the contrary, I think that some priests and bishops have a better life here than the *rentier-priests* had before the Council of Trent, and that they are telling the truth when they praise their situation in official declarations. The advantages of their position over that of the clergy in pre-Tridentine times are due, on the one hand, to the benefits of modern civilization and, on the other, to the fact that they have no need to fear Canon Law or Rome. There is, however, one precondition: they have to co-operate by carrying out their 'assignment'. In the system known as 'real socialism' everything and everyone is given an 'assignment'. What is the 'assignment' of the state-protégé clergymen? The answer may be found in current practice: a priest must become a civil servant in order to follow his calling and is financially rewarded for negligent performance of religious duties, whereas one who carries out his religious duties more conscientiously than the State might wish has his pay docked, or else is completely banned from exercising his ministry [Author's footnote: I am alluding here to the numerous instances, which have been publicised abroad in recent years, of priests being persecuted because, for example, they insisted on their right to teach religion, or they persuaded parents not to give up their lawful right to religious education for their children, or else because their attempts to satisfy people's spiritual needs went beyond performing the liturgy.]

The manifestations of religious belief which are guaranteed by the Constitution are, of course, understood (and declared) to be *vestiges* of the past in people's minds, which, for tactical as well as humane reasons, it is not convenient to eliminate immediately or by force. It is always being emphasized, however, that these vestiges are bound to die out in time and that the actual position of the Church and believers must conform to this presupposition. The whole network of institutions engaged in the state supervision of the churches works to ensure that this happens: this is the openly declared purpose of the State's ideological struggle. The churches and believers *permitted* by the State play an indispensable role in a communist totalitarian dictatorship, since against the background of their spiritual and moral crisis the struggle against religious obscurantism is that much easier.

The persecution of Augustin Navratil (and before him, of course, other and more brutal forms of persecution inflicted on thousands of other believers) came about because he refused to accept his state 'assignment', and also because he ruled and the servants of the rulers co-operated in carrying out *their* state 'assignment' to persecute him. Without this general conspiracy of crime, cowardice and indifference, such persecution would be totally impossible.

One may well ask just why the anti-religious struggle is being fought so painstakingly, and at such great cost, when universal indifference to ideology clearly permeates the ruling class, and is even characteristic of the militants of official atheism themselves. The answer lies in the *results* of the anti-religious struggle, which, we should note, is not the only attempt of this type to 'educate' people. The fundamental totalitarian concept of the individual as the property of the State also finds expression in other sectors of the life of Czechoslovak society where the individual can be easily manipulated for example, in the prisons [Author's footnote: Everyone who has been a prisoner under a communist regime and who has reflected deeply on his experiences has come to the conclusion that the worst aspect of his imprisonment was not the external living conditions, but the dreadful humiliation resulting from the totalitarian claims made upon the individual prisoner; to put it briefly, under dictatorships of a different type imprisonment can be equally bad as regards the external conditions, but only this system, only its prisons assume the right not only to the prisoner's body, but also to his soul; only they imprison his soul and try to crush it and remould it] and in the schools. Such intensive violation of the individual takes place



within a society which is absolutely indifferent to ideology, but this indifference is itself a part of the tacit social contract between the totalitarian government and society. Neither party objects to the afore-mentioned violation, because the primary motivation of both lies not in ideology, but in their 'philosophy of life' under the totalitarian system.

Thirty years of anti-religious struggle have almost eliminated religion from public life. It has been replaced by general reverence for material possessions and by a passion for obtaining them. This inversion of society's scale of values has, paradoxically, been brought about by the state ideology (which for a long time now, and particularly since the beginning of the period of normalization [following the 1968 Soviet invasion. *Ed*] has openly and cynically placed material values above all else) and by the failure of the centralized economy, which makes material goods scarce and therefore more precious than in a true consumer society. Thirty years of 'real socialism' (30 steps towards affluence, to use a phrase coined in the era of the presidents Gottwald and Zapotocky) have left

their mark. Yearning for 'affluence' has taken the place of the old 'piety'. And if the old 'piety' was, in its mass form, undoubtedly superficial and not a little hypocritical, today's yearning for 'affluence' is openly cynical. Thus finally the longed-for 'new man' was born.

This situation did not, I think, arise by chance, or through some unexpected deviation from the intended course, although this is how it may, and no doubt does, appear to some of the original communist idealists. The truth is, however, that this 'new man' is the result of a 30-year struggle with religion, 30 years of manipulating schoolchildren, 30 years of systematically 'educating' people at every step and persuading them how inadvisable and quite unnecessary it is to meddle with the machinations of the powerful. And while this result is drastically at variance with Marx's original intentions, *it is the perfect fulfilment of the totalitarian idea implicit in the Marxist system. The 'new man' is the product of this system; he is derived from its most fundamental principles and the system would break down immediately if it did not have vassals like him.*

**Jan Tesař**

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## The Russia Cristiana Foundation

by Janice Broun

For the last 37 years I have been a reader of *Russia Cristiana* or *La Nuova Europa* as it has become, an Italian language bi-monthly published since 1960 in Italy by a remarkable organization, the Russia Cristiana Foundation, established by Fr Romano Scalfi, an Eastern Rite Catholic priest, during the communist era. It is based in the elegant 18<sup>th</sup> century Villa Ambiveri in Seriate, near Bergamo in northern Italy. The late Jane Ellis (well-known to Keston members), as well as many Russian refugees for whom *Russia Cristiana* was a first port of call and a life-line, publishing their samizdat and publicising their persecution to the West, had spoken of the warm welcome they received from Fr Romano. In the year 2000 I got there at last.

Fr Romano, a jovial and healthy old man, who had recently celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, was just back from visiting Greek Catholics in Ukraine;

his beard, then still dark, testified to his Eastern Rite Catholic affiliation. 'Back in 1957,' he told me, 'we started our mission, in collaboration with 'Le Foyer Oriental' in Brussels; they smuggled into the USSR the books that we published, notably those by Fr Alexander Men. We've had Fr Dudko, Fr Yakunin, Brodsky, Sinyavsky, Sandr Riga, Ratushinskaya here. It's a pity the samizdat culture has disappeared – it was a true spring. Now we are free to send books, we've printed eight million copies of Fr Men's *Life of Christ*, and 50 other titles for Russia. We distribute 500 books a day, not just for Catholics but for Orthodox seeking to learn more about the Catholic Church.'

His Russia Cristiana Foundation was officially responsible for Catholic publications in Russia; it had opened a Library of Religion in Moscow and is involved in frontline evangelisation. 'The problem of Russia is mission – only one or two

percent of people are churchgoers. The Orthodox Church now lacks a spirit of mission. Books cost us \$70,000 a year. We make no profit; we sell below the cost of production, or else give them away. The Oriental Congregation provides just enough to pay our staff of seven. For everything else we rely on Providence. I'm a pensioner; I just get my lunch here! To further our mission, supported by a choir, I celebrate the Byzantine liturgy 60 or 70 times a year for any Italian parishes that want to experience its splendours. Our Foundation has 300 members and meets monthly for meditation and the liturgy as well as planning and fundraising.'

From the start, years before Vatican II, Fr Romano sought to build a bridge between the eastern and western 'lungs of Christendom' and to cultivate awareness in the West of the traditions of eastern faith, art, liturgy, culture and philosophy. Its offshoot press, La Casa di Matrona, based in Milan, had printed over 200 titles of key works on Eastern Europe as well as Russia, including a yearly icon calendar available in Britain. The Betty Ambiveri Library (she had given the Villa Ambiveri to Fr Romano, and was herself a resistance heroine) at Seriate held 15,000 books covering law, economics, history as well as religion, and was a prime resource for scholars. Regular summer courses on Russian language and culture were held at the villa.

Besides Fr Romano, the Villa Ambiveri was home to a small lay religious community and the Dell'Asta family with their three lively (then) teenage daughters, the eldest of whom had been on one of Russia Cristiana's pilgrimages with her mother Mara, the interpreter, to the Solovki Islands' monastery-turned-gulag. In 2000 they had just published Yuri Brodsky's superbly illustrated book on Solovki. I stayed in the modern hostel style accommodation built onto the roof. Staff relations were relaxed; at lunch the lady cook held forth on her views while Fr Romano sat back peacefully.

The community was proud of their modern Byzantine chapel with its iconostasis and recently painted frescoes and icons. The Seriate Iconography School which ran short courses, had trained over 300 icon painters since 1978, many under the famous Russian Orthodox painter

Fr Zinon. The icon was seen in the context of liturgy, meditations of church fathers, the witness and rebirth of the persecuted church, brought to life in a fraternity whose members were companions in spiritual discipline and faith, pledged to help each other in revealing the 'mystery of the other'. 'Fr Zinon comes here,' said Fr Romano; 'he and his monks are still excommunicated by their bishop. That is because in 1996 Fr Zinon and I received communion from each other at his monastery in Pskov – a spy denounced us. We both prayed for the Pope and for the Patriarch. People wept with emotion.'

With the hardening of Orthodox-Catholic relations and much bigotry on both sides, the commitment of Russia Cristiana's staff to promoting ecumenism was all the more vital. 'We hold seminars discussing unity in plurality. We feel Vladimir Solovyov provides the answer to the crisis in western spirituality and post-modernism.' From many Orthodox – including even prisoners – there was a heart-warming response and collaboration. To quote from one of the many letters begging for books received by Russia Cristiana: 'I want to thank you from my heart for your support, which greatly helps us Orthodox realise Christ's prayer to his Father – "Guard in your Name those you have given me, that they all may be one, as we are..." – unity must begin with us simple laypeople... I think that at heart we speak the same language.'

Russia Cristiana's magazine, now the splendidly illustrated *La Nuova Europa*, carries on the dialogue and provides features on culture, art, icons, literature, theology, politics, biography of witnesses and martyrs, and religious life today. I have personally reviewed several of their new and inspiring paperback series (*I Testimoni* – The Witnesses) for Keston, as well as several studies of church history under the Soviets by eminent Russian church historians published by Russia Cristiana in translation.

After my supper with the Dell'Asta's, Mara observed: 'You are sitting in the same chair as Fr Alexander Men sat in on his last visit here. We asked him, "What do you see for the future?" He answered: "I see blood."' A few weeks later he was axed to death.

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