Keston Newsletter

No. 12, 2010

Interior of datsan at Women's Buddhist Centre in Ulan-Ude: Sergei Filatov is shown round by Zorigma Budaeva

Buddhism in Buryatia: Recent Trends

by Sergei Filatov

Buddhism was well established in Buryatia by the mid-17th century. Once this area of Eastern Siberia had been colonised by Russia, its religion was eventually given official status by the Russian monarch in 1741 and some 20 years later allowed to establish its own hierarchy of lamas. After the Revolution in the 1930s Buddhism was totally destroyed, and although in 1948 Stalin allowed a Central Buddhist Spiritual Administration (CBSA) to be established and legalised Buddhism, its leaders continued to be arrested, its holy places desecrated and only one datsan could function. [Datsan = Buddhist temple. The Ivolginsky datsan remained open during the communist period. *Ed.*]

The revival of Buddhist structures in Buryatia began in 1990: Buddhist religious buildings and valuables were now returned to their rightful owners while the CBSA in 1992 was granted the status of an All-Russian religious organisation and given the Ivolginsky datsan, about a half-hour drive from Buryatia's capital Ulan-Ude, as its main headquarters. During the early years of perestroika the CBSA gained respect through its leader, Khambo Lama Munko Tsybikov, the last and much revered lama from the older generation who had been imprisoned in Stalin's labour camps. After his death

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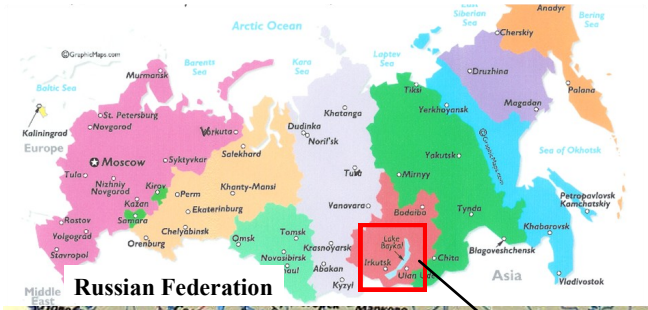
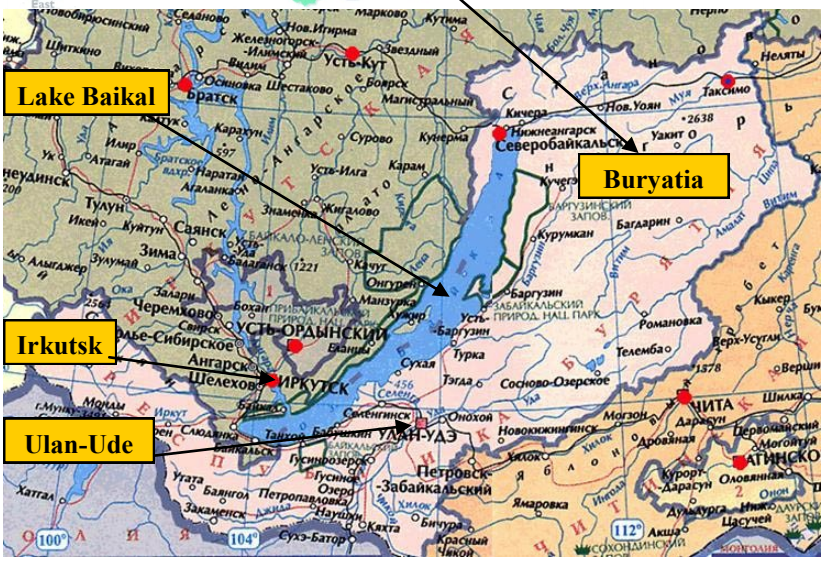




in 1992, and for the next four years, three Khambo Lamas successively headed the CBSA which during this period faced a number of crises: its financial and ideological control over all Buryatia's datsans was challenged by new independent Buddhist organisations.

In 1995 an energetic leader called Damba Ayusheev, who had successfully revived an important datsan in a traditionally Buddhist area of Buryatia, was elected Khambo Lama and set about reforming the CBSA: he changed its name to the Traditional Buddhist Sangha of Russia (TBSR) and adopted a new set of Statutes. [Sangha = collective noun denoting the whole community of Buddhist monks, nuns and laity. *Ed.*]

TBSR or the Traditional Sangha with Ayusheev at its head (he was regularly re-elected as Khambo Lama), became the official religious organisation of Buryat Buddhists and conduit for the national and religious revival of the Eastern Buryats (those living east of Lake Baikal). Ayusheev proved to be an inflexible leader: he only allowed the teachings of the Gelug school [one of four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism which emphasises scholarship and monastic discipline. *Ed.*] to be preached. He aimed to revive Buryat Buddhist tradition which, he believed, was indissolubly linked with the Traditional Sangha (TBSR) and the Gelug school. He promoted the use of the Buryat language, rather than Russian, and to a lesser extent Tibetan, for rituals at the datsans, which alienated many Russian-speakers, including members of the Buryat intelligentsia who did not fully understand their own language.

The material and organisational health of TBSR depended on the datsans which were subordinated to it, so Ayusheev focused much of his attention on the education and training of the monks and on the revival of the monastic tradition. He was strongly opposed to the existence and spread of shamanism in Buryatia, and disapproved of mixing Buddhist traditions with those of shamanism. Buddhism, in his view, was the only fruitful and beneficial religion for Buryats:

> 'Shamanism is the religion of primitive man, it is a spiritual expression of his fears and superstitions. Shamans cannot explain to anyone where a person has come from or whither he is going, which are the two main questions facing man. Shamanism has no future.'

Furthermore, Ayusheev disliked European influences and completely rejected their value for Buryat Buddhism. In his view Buddhists had nothing to learn from Europeans; rather the opposite – Westerners should search for Buddhist wisdom among the Buryat people:

Ivolginsky datsan

Buddhist monks at the Ivolginsky datsan

> 'Russians, and Europeans in general, adopt the methods and practice of Buddhism, but its core is not accessible to them. Those Russians who are really serious about Buddhism become pupils in our datsans; they should not try to teach us.'

Some Russians responded to this challenge and went to study in the Sangha's datsans, since, despite its strong nationalistic character, the Traditional Sangha, having preserved the living tradition passed down from teacher to pupil, and traditional forms of monastic life, had maintained its authority among Russians.

Ayusheev saw himself not only as a religious but also as a national leader for Buryatia. He believed he could defend and express the interests of the Buryat people, particularly of the Eastern Buryats, who, unlike the Western Buryats (many of them were Russian Orthodox or shamanists), were nearly all Buddhists. He focused much of his energy on mission among the indigenous peoples of Siberia, including those not traditionally Buddhist, and in 2000 a number of young Buddhists from Tuva, Kalmykia, the Altai and Khakassia came to study in the educational institutions of the Traditional Sangha. To achieve his goals Ayusheev created a rigidly centralised organisation with an authoritarian administration and a unified ideology, and tried to keep the Traditional Sangha's datsans strictly subordinated to his leadership. His critics accused him of trying to copy the Moscow Patriarchate with its authoritarian structure. He also tried to develop international links allowing TBSR to take part in the Asian Buddhist Conference for World Peace, in the World Buddhist Brotherhood and the World Buddhist Sangha, and sent Buryats to study at Buddhist institutes not only in India but also in Burma and Thailand where some of the traditions were alien to Buryatia's Traditional Sangha.

As the Dalai Lama is the main spiritual leader for all Buddhists who belong to the Gelug school, including those in Russia, attitudes towards him have political significance for Buryat religious leaders. Ayusheev's rigidly centralised organisation is based on principles which are threatened potentially by the authority of the Dalai Lama, so it is interesting to note Aysheev's somewhat contradictory position: he recognises the Dalai Lama as the nominal spiritual leader of all Buddhists, but is critical of his concrete recommendations for the organisation of Buryat religious life. 'For many years we have been cut off from Tibet. Without any direct contact, respect for Tibet has grown to a large degree. We now see how unfortunate are the Tibetans and we feel very sorry for them,' he commented. By distancing himself from the authority of the Dalai Lama, Ayusheev has tried to emphasise the special role of Buryat national Buddhism, as distinct from Buddhism which has been influenced by the West. Critics of Ayusheev think he is suspicious about the activity of Tibetan monks within Buryatia, trying to control their every move, and in June 2000 they sent an open letter of complaint about him to Leonid Potapov, the President of Buryatia, claiming that the activity of TBSR's leadership was in reality 'destructive'. They accused Ayusheev of fomenting 'enmity and scandal', rejecting the authority of leading Tibetan spiritual teachers and opposing the work of Tibetan lamas in Buryatia. Was it because Ayusheev had objected to inviting the Dalai Lama to Buryatia that the head of world

Buddhist prayer wheels

Buddhism had not once visited the republic for the past five years?

Ayusheev was opposed to the policies of Leonid Potapov, Buryatia's President, and accused him of failing to take an interest in the spiritual needs of the Buryats, especially of the Eastern Buryats. According to Ayusheev, Potapov brought into the administration shamanists from a Buryat minority, who were not local people but recent arrivals from the Irkutsk oblast, and had held back the development of Buryat national consciousness and Buddhism in Buryatia. Ayusheev's relationship with the administration was exacerbated by the support it received from some new Buddhist organisations, founded between 1997-2001 as a counterbalance to the Traditional Sangha. He turned to the Federal government in the hope that it would recognise TBSR as the dominant central organisation for all Russia's Buddhists, believing that Moscow wanted a strong Buddhist organisation, totally committed to it, which was ideologically and structurally monolithic: 'the indigenous peoples of Siberia, on becoming Buddhists within the Traditional Sangha, will be committed Russians; the ground for separatism will disappear for good,' he stated.

Lama Nimazhap Ilich Ilyukhinov

Although Ayusheev failed to make Buddhist organisations in Kalmykia and Tuva join TBSR, he was able to obtain recognition by Moscow of TBSR's status as the only official Buddhist traditional organisation, enabling it to participate at the beginning of 1999 in the creation of the Inter-religious Council of Russia which included Russian Orthodox, Muslim and Jewish representation. As leader of TBSR he was now the only person who represented Buddhism at the Federal level, and as such participated in the debates on legislation and other government decisions connected with Moscow's religious policy. Ayusheev's reliance on the Federal government reflected the kind of relationship with the state which existed in pre-revolutionary days – and Ayusheev was an admirer of tsarist Russia:

> 'I hate the communists, but love the tsars; under them Buddhism in Buryatia flourished. Catherine the Great established the hierarchy of lamas; I'm proud to be the 25th Khambo Lama, in the direct line of Buddhist tradition established by Catherine. Buddhism as it was under the tsars needs to be revived.'

In 2007 Leonid Potapov was replaced by Vyacheslav Nagovitsyn as the new President of Buryatia, and with this change the relationship between the Traditional Sangha and the Buryat authorities also changed: the long-running conflict ran out of steam and relations improved, at least publicly. At the same time the new government adopted a relatively tolerant policy towards the 'alternative' Buddhist groups which rejected Ayusheev's authority and had begun to emerge some ten years earlier: many Buddhist leaders, especially those who had come under European Buddhist influence, disliked the Traditional Sangha's authoritarianism, nationalism and its conflicts with the republic's authorities. In 1997 the first split occurred, led by Nimazhap Ilich Ilyukhinov, who during the 1980s had been a monk in the Ivolginsky datsan and a pupil of Lama Bakula Rinpoche, India's ambassador in Mongolia.

From the start of perestroika Ilyukhinov had participated in the democratic movement, had joined the Christian-Buddhist Union (a section of the Christian-Democratic Union of Buryatia) and in 1996 took part in elections to the Duma as a supporter of the democratic movement. Ilyukhinov believed that Buddhism could and should provide the spiritual foundations for the democratic development of Buryatia. In January 1998 a Congress of Buddhist Communities of Russia was held in Moscow at which a new body, the Spiritual Administration of Russia's Buddhists (SARB), was set up under the chairmanship of Ilyukhinov. This new structure became an association of autonomous communities, which followed different schools of Buddhist teaching, and included some traditional communities of the Gelug school in Buryatia, as well as a number of communities in European Russia composed mostly of Russians. SARB's centre was the Dkharma community, made up in the main of young Buryat members of the intelligentsia, in Ulan-Ude.

In 2008 Ilyukhinov built a large datsan in Ulan-Ude with space for teaching Buddhism and accommodation for Buddhist monks. He was committed to the revival of Buddhist education and

supported closer ties with Tibet—with Tibetan teachers and with the Dalai Lama. He accused Ayusheev of *de facto* opposing the authority of the Dalai Lama: 'We should revere the Dalai Lama like God,' Ilyukhinov said, adding:

> 'Ayusheev considers that he is leader of Buryatia's Buddhists and the Dalai Lama only leader of those in Tibet. Buryatia's leader holds a purely bureaucratic post, whereas the Dalai Lama is a sacred person. Almost all the Tibetan monks, invited here by Ayusheev, have left thanks to the disgusting treatment they've received. A few have married Russians or Buryats, have found some sort of job and are now indistinguishable from locals.'

Hills around Ulan-Ude

Unlike Ayusheev, Ilyukhinov recognised the value of various schools of Buddhist teaching and did not consider them to be heretical. He and his supporters valued European Buddhism and built up contacts with many Western groups, recognising the significance of a Western worldview for Buddhism. One of Ilyukhinov's main aims was to end the conflict among Buryatia's Buddhists, most of whom belonged to TBSR, and the conflict with the Buryat government.

Another two communities, belonging to two significant strands of Buryat Buddhism, joined SARB. The first of these was the 'Dzogchen' communities in Ulan-Ude which were founded by A. Vyaznikovtsev and N. Dudko, both members of the St Petersburg Intelligentsia. These communities were composed mostly of Russians, with a significant number of Buryats, had Russian teachers and had become a basic component of Buryat religious life. The second community to join SARB was the 'Dzogchen' community belonging to the Nyingma school [the oldest school of Tibetan Buddhism. *Ed*] in the village of Mogsokhon. Most of its members, too, were Russians and it was headed by Batodalai Dugarov, one of Bidia Dandaron's pupils (the Buddhist teacher imprisoned in 1973 whose case was known to Keston and publicised in its journal). However, the teaching of Dugarov and the *Dandaronovtsy*—'followers of Dandaron'—diverged considerably from the worldview of their teacher who did not belong to the Nyingma school, and this led to strong criticism from traditional Buddhists who adhered to the Gelug school. The *Dandaronovtsy,* they said, had isolated themselves, and without well-qualified teachers their spiritual development had been arrested. Dugarov, nevertheless, managed to overcome this opposition and moved to a semi-ruined datsan near to the village of Shuluta; in 2008 his community started to make contact with some highly-regarded teachers.

In mid-1999 the Traditional Sangha was shaken by yet another schism, this time led by Lama Danzan-Khaibzun (Fyodor Sergeevich) Samaev who was ideologically even further removed than Ilyukhinov from the position of Ayusheev. On the one hand, Samaev was a Western Buryat belonging to the tradition of Buryat Buddhism which combined Buddhism and shamanism. On the other, he had a degree from St Petersburg University (he also obtained advanced spiritual training in India and Ulan Bator) and had headed the St Petersburg datsan from 1990-1997; so Russian Buddhist circles were familiar to him. In 1999 he led a revolt of three datsans against 'Ayusheev's dictatorship' with the aim of forming a new central organisation called 'Maidar' which was finally established in Ulan-Ude in July that year. In October 1999 Samaev declared that 'Maidar' had been created to enable Buddhists to defend themselves against Ayusheev, who through Russian legislation had the power to expel the head of a datsan and appoint a replacement; now any new datsan, which did not wish to join the Traditional Sangha, could join 'Maidar'.

Samaev did not think that there was yet a Buddhist revival in Buryatia:

> 'building datsans does not represent a revival of Buddhism; real revival requires spiritual development... Buddhist revival involves changing people's thought processes. In Buryatia Buddhism has degenerated; there is no revival'.

Nevertheless he believed that Buddhism in Russia had a great future:

> 'you don't have to go to the Himalayas to

Rigzen Lama

study. Contemporary Russia's instability creates the conditions for adaptation and makes a person think... Russians who study Buddhism from foreigners are a new phenomenon.'

He was convinced that Buddhism needed to understand modern society and become an integral part of it; it should teach modern man in a contemporary environment to think and act well.

On the outskirts of Ulan-Ude he created a 'Maidar' centre, which included a Buddhist spiritual academy and an educational centre called 'Arigun' where, in collaboration with Americans and Europeans, Buryatia's ecological problems were studied. 'Maidar' attracted both traditional Buryat datsans which opposed Ayusheev, as well as Russian Buddhists; it used mostly Russian in its rituals and adopted many shamanist practices. Samaev maintained contact with European Buddhists and invited the president of the European Union of Buddhists to Buryatia. He was loyal to the Buryat government – 'conflicts with the government go against Buddhist teaching' – and opposed, in principle, associating Buryat nationalism with Buryat Buddhism as he thought this was destructive.

In 2005 Samaev was tragically killed in a road accident, but his movement did not die out. It is now headed by Dashi-Lama, who promotes ecological ideas and focuses on restoring and protecting sacred spaces. Within Ulan-Ude's academic community a group of Samaev's followers still exists, and he has followers in other parts of Russia and in Ukraine. The Ulan-Ude group is respected by the local Intelligentsia and government, and continues to organise conferences in Samaev's memory dedicated to ecological and cultural questions.

The most serious challenge to Ayusheev's Traditional Sangha occurred in 2001. A group led by Choi-Dorzhe Budaev broke away and formed the Association of Buryatia's Buddhists (ABB) which by 2010 had eight registered organisations. Budaev was a charismatic figure, with great authority among Buryatia's Buddhists, and was highly-regarded by the Dalai Lama. A number of Tibetan monks joined ABB. Of all the 'alternative' Buddhist organisations the ABB's criticism of Aysheev was the most clearly formulated and severe. In the words of Rigzen Lama, a close colleague of Budaev:

'Education, teaching, prayer and preaching are the most important in Buddhism, not the organisation of local festivals, performance of rituals, or the building of datsans. If we always give priority to rituals, rather than to prayer and the search for truth, then we will always lose our way. We don't need some sort of "Buryat" Buddhism. The Dalai Lama is our leader and teacher.'

ABB's leaders believed that it was indeed Ayusheev who had undermined the possibility of a visit to Russia by the Dalai Lama; the Russian Foreign Ministry kowtowed to the Chinese Communist Party possibly thanks to his intrigues.

Zorigma Budaeva

In 2003, with the Dalai Lama's blessing, Budaev ran as a candidate in the City Duma elections in order 'to defend true Buddhism' at a government level. One of ABB's plans had been to create some sort of association between the three national Buddhist unions of Buryatia, Kalmykia and Tuva, a plan which Aysheev tried his best to undermine. Aysheev also found ways of preventing ABB from getting land for its buildings and undermined its contacts with the local government and with sponsors. Thus relations with the Traditional Sangha and with Ayusheev personally were strained to breaking point. ABB wrote to Putin attacking Aysheev's poli-

(Left to right) *Xenia Dennen, Zorigma Budaeva & Sergei Filatov in the women's lay monastery*

cies and stressing that 'if the Russian government separates Russia's Buddhists from the Dalai Lama, extremist national ideas will grow in Russia's republics'.

A unique development in the life of Buryat Buddhism occurred in the early 1990s: a group of lay women Buddhists, with support from Darima Tsyngueva, founded the Association of Lay Buddhists, headed by Zorigma Budaeva, which led to the creation of a lay women's monastery. Such an untraditional and modernising idea for Buryatia – a rare phenomenon within Buddhism generally (apart from a few examples in Tibet and Mongolia) – was supported by the Dalai Lama and his representatives, with whom Tsyngueva maintained close contact. The women's monastery – the fourth in the world and the first in Russia and Buryatia – known as the 'Buddhist Women's Centre', was built in Ulan-Ude thanks to the efforts and financial support of Buddhist believers. A few dozen women regularly attend the Centre; their teachers are nuns from Mongolia who regularly travel to Buryatia. The Association does not get involved in politics, but is loyal to Buryatia's President, and in exchange is supported by the Buryat government as an apolitical Buddhist organisation involved in social and charitable work.

SARB, ABB and 'Maidar' recognise the authority of the Dalai Lama in all things and keep in contact with Tibet: they take part in demonstrations in support of Tibetan independence and keep in touch with the Society of Friends of Tibet in Ulan-Ude. The Buddhist monastery for lay women enjoys the semi-official support of the Dalai Lama's representatives and this has earned the unspoken disapproval of the Traditional Sangha's leadership. In the current situation the Dalai Lama cannot, on the one hand, oppose the Traditional Sangha as most Buddhists in Buryatia belong to it; any deterioration in relations would inevitably undermine his influence on Buryat territory. On the other hand, the 'alternative' Buddhist associations, which are hostile to the Traditional Sangha and to Ayusheev, are the closest spiritually to the Dalai Lama, and manage to maintain unofficial links with him.

Some six years ago a spiritual centre which directly represents the Dalai Lama was established in Buryatia: in July 2004 the 'Rinpoche-Bagsha' centre, with a datsan containing the largest golden Buddha in Russia, was dedicated and given a grand opening. The datsan stands on Bare Mountain overlooking Ulan-Ude with a magnificent view. The founder of the centre was the highly revered Tibetan lama, Eshe-Lodoi Rinpoche, who obtained Russian citizenship and has committed his life to Russian Buddhism. Many Buddhist leaders and believers came to the opening from India, Tuva, Kalmykia, Vladivostok and other cities and regions of Russia. According to Rinpoche the centre was opened at the request of believers who wanted to study Buddhist philosophy seriously. Funding came from Rinpoche himself, from Buryatia's government and from the city of Ulan-Ude, as well as from individual Buddhists and pupils of Rinpoche in Buryatia and other regions. As well as looking after the centre, Rinpoche acts as the spiritual teacher for all the

'Rinpoche-Bagsha' datsan overlooking Ulan-Ude

'alternative' associations in Buryatia, and is now considered the most authoritative Buddhist leader in the region. No longer can Aysheev claim that his organisation has overarching spiritual authority over all Buddhists in the republic.

President Leonid Potapov during his time in office was particularly concerned about Buddhist religious organisations and wanted them to overcome their divisions. The Council for Cooperation with Religious Organisations (an institution within the Buryat government) strongly recommended that the Traditional Sangha hold a congress to help unite all Buddhist associations. But Aysheev interpreted this recommendation as interference in the Traditional Sangha's internal affairs and as an attempt to oust him as leader. He subsequently refused all contact with Potapov. After 2007, under President Nagovitsyn, the Traditional Sangha acquired a privileged position and received the most financial support, unlike SARB and ABB which received almost nothing and faced problems in relation to rentals, the purchase of land, and bureaucratic hitches over various projects.

According to Anatoli Zhalsaraev, consultant to Buryatia's government on national questions and civil initiatives, the Traditional Sangha was strongly represented in the countryside; peasants did not care which jurisdiction they belonged to, while Ayusheev, with his administrative ability, had managed to develop 'a religious infrastructure' throughout the republic. In contrast, in Ulan-Ude where people took their religion more seriously, only three out of 29 Buddhist organisations belonged to the Traditional Sangha, while all the rest belonged to 'alternative' jurisdictions. In addition the Aginsky datsan and other Buddhist religious organisations in the Irkutsk oblast and the Zabaikalsky krai (east of Lake Baikal) did not accept Ayusheev's leadership in practice. The Traditional Sangha, stated Zhalsaraev, had lost almost all its authority and had simply become a factory providing religious services.

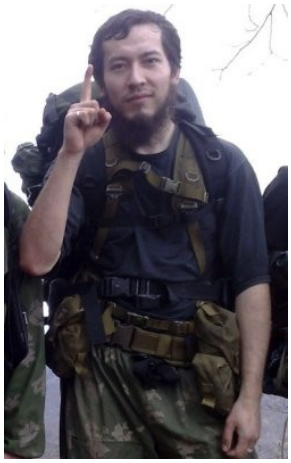
Yet Buryat Buddhism in general had lost none of its authority, Zhalsaraev believed, neither among the Buryat people nor among Russians and other nationalities in the Russian Federation. For the majority of Russian converts, Buddhism in Buryatia was, as ever, the source of wisdom and the best school for Buddhist practice: 'People come here from all corners of Russia'. Buryat Buddhism's attraction for Russians, however, was not 'a one-way street'; many Buryats were converted to Christianity – to Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Lutheranism or Pentecostalism. There was no significant opposition to this process: Buryat public opinion, the majority of lamas and the government reacted calmly to the conversion of Buryats. There were relatively few Buryat Orthodox as the Russian Orthodox Church was weak in Buryatia: a separate diocese was only created in 2009 and many priests only worked among Russians; furthermore, at the end of the 1990s, the life of Buryat Orthodoxy was shaken by a number of church scandals which were discussed widely in the local press and alienated many people. The Pentecostal churches in contrast had gained the most Buryat converts: there were now congregations composed exclusively of Buryats and some Buryats had become pastors. A Russian Pentecostal pastor commented: 'It's easier to convert Buryats than Russians; they are more open to the spiritual. Whole Buryat families turn to Christ; they are friendlier, their families are stronger, more closely-knit.'

The long history of Russian interest in Buddhist wisdom and the absorption of European values by Buryats have helped create a unique Eurasian synthesis. Buryats are fascinated by the West and Russians by Buryat Buddhism. For nearly all the peoples of the Russian Federation religion preeminently provides the basis for national identity. The Federal authorities and the Russian Orthodox Church's clergy constantly inject into public discourse the term 'traditional religions', by which they mean those religions which are historically the largest and associated with a particular ethnic group. These 'traditional religions' claim a privileged position in relation to the state. Public opinion and most of Russia's ethnic groups, even if they have not overtly supported this concept, do not oppose what is essentially a nationalistic doctrine.

The Buryats, in contrast, are the only nationality where this ethnic principle has failed: it is supported by only one strand of Buddhism, the Traditional Sangha, which, despite all its efforts, has not succeeded in establishing its monopoly. The awareness that transcendental relations with the Absolute cannot be equated with commitment to ties of kinship, clearly has its roots in the Buddhist worldview. Yet this awareness is not universal among Russia's Buddhists: in the two other Buddhist republics of Russia – Kalmykia and Tuva – religion fulfils the same role as among the other peoples of Russia; religion is linked with national identity and the question of separating the two has not even been posed. Unlike Buryatia, you will find no Russians in the Buddhist communities of Kalmykia and Tuva. In essence Buryat religious life is the complete opposite of the norms which in recent years have become part of Russia's religious life: however surprising this may sound, Buryatia turns out to be the region of Russia where religious life most closely conforms to European norms.

Caucasus Emirate: North Caucasus Jihad

by Mikhail Roshchin



Sheikh Said Buryatsky

The situation in the republics of the North Caucasus is extremely unstable and it may not be totally inappropriate to compare this area's instability with that of Afghanistan, Iraq and the Gaza Strip. In the small North Caucasus republic of Ingushetia the summer of 2009 proved very turbulent: on 22 June at around 8.30 a.m. a suicide mujahedin in a 'Lexus' car with Moscow number plates crashed into the motorcade of President Yunus-bek Evkurov of Ingushetia (appointed on 31 October 2008) and blew himself up. Evkurov was seriously wounded and transferred to a Moscow hospital for treatment where it was not clear how quickly, or indeed whether, he would recover.

During the summer of 2009 there were also regular clashes between the local militia and mujahedin in various corners of Ingushetia. Ruslan Amirkhanov, the Minister of Construction, was shot on 12 August in his office in the government complex in Magas, while his murderer was calmly able to leave the building. On 17 August at 9 a.m. during the morning police parade in front of the local Interior Ministry (MVD) building in Nazran, a 'Gazel' car stuffed with explosives and driven by two suicide bombers was blown up. The powerful explosion killed over 20 people and wounded about 150.

On 26 August on the website of the Ingushetia mujahedin (http://hunafa.com) a video was posted in which the young and totally Europeanised Sheikh Said Buryatsky (see **Biography**, p.11), considered by the Russian authorities to be one of the most dangerous figures in the leadership of the Caucasus Emirate and a prolific producer of lectures and sermons on Islam, explained how the explosion in front of the Interior Ministry building on 17 August was prepared and why such action was justified. At the end of the video the presenter stated that one of the suicide bombers had been Said Buryatsky (see the 'video' section on the http://hunafa.com website). To confuse matters, exactly two days later a representative of the Ingushetia mujahedin leadership denied this statement, and on 5 September a video clip on the same website showed Said Buryatsky himself announcing that he was alive and well, and that the end of the earlier video had been mistaken. 'Every Muslim will in turn become a *shahid* [i.e. be willing to lay down his life. *Ed*] but at a time appointed by Allah. My time has not yet come,' he said. His time in fact did soon come: he was killed on 3 March 2010 in the Ingushetia village of Ekazhevo immediately after pronouncing his last sermon (http://www.rosbalt.ru/2010/03/05/717962.html).

On 13 August 2009 President Evkurov, who had managed to recover from his injuries caused by the June explosion, was able to return to his duties, and, with the help of his skills as a former military intelligence officer, succeeded in reducing the wave of terrorist incidents and shootings against Interior Ministry personnel in Ingushetia.

On 27 November 2009 the North Caucasus jihad emerged on central Russian territory: jihadis managed to detonate a home-made bomb on the 'Nevsky Express' passenger train as it was travelling between Moscow and St Petersburg on the stretch between Aleshinka and Uglovka, not far from Bologoi; the three last carriages were derailed. As a result of this accident, 28 people died and over 90 were taken to hospital.

By March 2010 Federal and local forces were able to inflict some serious blows on the Caucasus Emirate: during the course of special operations which successfully destroyed a sabotage base of radical Muslims—all supporters of the Caucasus Emirate in the Ingushetia village of Ekazhevo—Zelimkhan Aushev and nine Kartoev brothers, who belonged to the group which planted the 'Nevsky Express' bomb, were arrested (http://www.digester.ru/Cluster.aspx?uid=2010031030&id=7).

Anzor Astemirov

Later that month on the evening of 24 March 2010, on the corner of Tarchokova street and Baisultanova street in the Gorny district of Nalchik (in Kabardino-Balkaria), Anzor Astemirov, the spiritual father and creator of the Islamic Emirate concept (for the last few years he has headed the Caucasus Emirate's Sharia law-court), and his bodyguard were stopped by law-enforcement officers who asked to see their identification papers. The former in response opened

fire and during the ensuing gun battle (http://www.izvestia.ru/obshestvo/article3140159/) Anzor Astemirov was killed.

Despite these setbacks for the Caucasus Emirate, on 29 March 2010 another wave of violence and resistance, nevertheless, reached central Russia, and this time the blow hit Moscow itself. Two Daghestani suicide bombers blew themselves up in the Moscow metro's Lubyanka and Park Kultury stations. As a result 24 passengers died at Lubyanka station and 12 at Park Kultury; 102 people received injuries of varying severity; four of the wounded later died in hospital.

Dzhanet Abdullaeva & Umalat Magomedov

Afterwards it was established that Maryam Sharipova (b.1982), an Avar from the village of Balakhani in Daghestan's Untsukulsky district and the former wife of Magomed-Ali Vagabov (a leader of Daghestan's mujahedin who was killed in the village of Gunib on 21 August 2010: see http://www.lifenews.ru/news/35320 and **Biography** p.12) was the Lubyanka suicide bomber (http://www.extra-m.ru/society/articles/245276-mnogorazovaya-smertnitsa-maryam-sharipova). The second suicide bomber was Dzhanet Abdullaeva (b.1992), a Kumik from the village of Kostek in the Khasavyurtovsky district of Daghestan – she was only 17. About a year before she had married Umalat Magomedov, who was appointed the Emir of the Caucasus Emirate's Daghestan Front in April 2009 by Dokka Umarov (Emir of the Caucasus Emirate) and known by the nickname of al-Bara. At the time photographs of the pair appeared on the Internet showing them embracing, with grenades and pistols in their hands. On New Year's Eve 2009, FSB officers stopped a car on Groznensky street, in the Daghestan city of Khasavyurt, containing Umalat Magomedov and three other fighters who tried to grab their opponents' guns but were shot on the spot. Therefore, by the time Dzhanet Abdullaeva blew herself up in the Moscow metro she was a widow, and most probably wanted to avenge her husband's death (http://www.kommersant.ru/doc-y.aspx?DocsID=1348776).

On 9 June 2010 a devastating blow was inflicted on the Caucasus Emirate: a man was arrested whom the law-enforcement agencies identified as either Akhmed Evloev or Ali Taziev, a figure widely known in the North Caucasus by the nickname of 'Magas' (see **Biography**, p.12) who was the leader of Ingushetia's mujahedin and the generally acknowledged commander of all the Emirate's military operations. There are grounds for believing that he was directly in charge of the school siege in Beslan at the beginning of September 2004. 'Magas' was captured by special forces, after six months of planning and attempts to catch him alive, in one of Ingushetia's villages, where he had been living quietly without arousing the suspicion of his neighbours. He was transferred to Moscow and is now being held in the Lefortovo prison (http://slon.ru/blogs/istamulov/post/408598/). The Emirate leadership's reaction to the arrest of 'Magas' was one of shock. Even the usually loquacious and bombastic Caucasus-Centre website (www.kavkazcenter.com) was unable to give a coherent commentary on this event, while their main leader, Dokka Umarov, preferred to go quietly to ground and remain silent.

Eventually on 7 July 2010 the website http://hunafa.com announced the execution of the man who had betrayed 'Magas'. It published an official statement from the Ingushetia mujahedin leadership which announced that on 21 June Timur Arselgov, a FSB secret agent who had infiltrated their movement, had been shot, commenting somewhat gruesomely, 'the salvo from the automatic rifle left only the lower part of the *munafik*'s [= hypocrite. *MR*] head from which hung an inordinately long tongue' (http://hunafa.com/?p=3684#more-3684):

> 'Timur Arselgov over two year ago was planted by the special forces into one of the *jamaats*[1]. In order to win the trust of the mujahedin he volunteered as a sniper. Arselgov turned out to be well-trained and a first-class shot, and spread fear among the local *murtaddy* [apostates, i.e. Ingushi who collaborated with the Federal authorities. *MR*]. But he usually only shot at low ranking police whose lives the bosses of the *munafik* exchanged for people whom the agent recommended. When the mujahedin asked why he only went for ordinary *menty* [police], Arselgov replied that they were all the same and had to be "stuffed". While not leading a *jamaat* himself, he exposed the *jamaat*'s emirs by giving away their addresses and car number plates. Thus his job as a marksman came to an end; the goal was achieved.'

The derailing of the 'Nevsky Express' and the

explosions in the Moscow metro are evidence that the Caucasus Emirate and armed Muslim opposition in the North Caucasus are much more serious problems than is currently realised in Moscow government offices and in the editorial offices of the mass media. Many who have not studied seriously the situation in the North Caucasus think that Chechnya is the main focus of conflict, whereas recent events confirm that it is actually in Ingushetia and Daghestan that Federal forces and the local law-enforcement agencies face the most serious confrontations with the Emirate's mujahedin. Violence in the North Caucasus is breeding yet more violence, and so far no way out of this impasse seems to have been found.[2]

Postscript

On 2 August 2010 Dokka Umarov announced his retirement on health grounds as Emir of the Caucasus Emirate and transferred his authority to Aslambek Vadalov, a Chechen field commander. Evidently this step was provoked by the Emirate's recent failures. On 4 August, however, Dokka Umarov withdrew this statement and confirmed his intention to lead the jihad in the North Caucasus. On 14 August a number of Chechnya's leading field commanders – Aslambek Vadalov and Husein Gakaev (both Chechens) as well as the famous Arab Mukhannad – opposed this and refused to recognise the authority of Dokka Umarov. (See weblink: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyUX4zf8tAQ&feature=player_embedded for their video address.) Meanwhile, in Daghestan and Ingushetia Umarov continues to be recognised as the Emir.

It would appear that a new stage in the radical Muslim movement of the North Caucasus is beginning: whether this indicates the disintegration and collapse of the movement and its transition to the level of virtual reality – the websites of North Caucasus jihadists are particularly active – will become evident over the next year.

1. A *jamaat* is a Muslim group devoted to the study of Islam and to mutual support. However, in the North Caucasus this term came to mean a Muslim terrorist group. *Ed.*
2. More background information on the Caucasus Emirate can be found in *Keston Newsletter* No 10, 2009, pp.4-6, 'The Caucasus Emirate and the Movement of Military Jamaats' by Mikhail Roshchin. *Ed*

Biographies

Said Buryatsky

Said Buryatsky, also known as Said abu Saad al-Buryti, was born in Ulan-Ude (Buryatia) in 1982 of a Buryat father and Russian mother. According to his Russian passport his name is Alexandr Alexandrovich Tikhomirov. The newspaper *Trud* stated: 'he was brought up from a young age by his Chechen stepfather'(http://www.trud.ru/article/10-03-2010/237733_said_burjatskij_pogib_shaxidom.html). When he was 15 he converted to Islam; he studied Islamic literature on his own initiative and took the name of Said. He later studied with a variety of authoritative academic sheikhs in Egypt and Kuwait. According to information from the 'Guraba' website, 'he was known among the students of that time to be sincere about religion and to be constantly reading Islamic books' (http://guraba.net/rus/content/view/364/105/). Buryatsky worked for the Muslim organisation 'Darul-Akram' and collaborated with the religious publisher 'Umma' (http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/158565).

From 2002 Buryatsky began writing lectures on religious subjects which were soon circulating among young Muslims (http://www.imamtv.com/vse_propovedi_Saida.htm). Among his best known lectures is the cycle 'Righteous Precursors', 'Journey into Eternal Life', 'Talbis Iblis' [= Satan's Veil] in Arabic, 'The Fate of the Unrighteous in 100 Stories'. He also translated religious documentaries from Arabic into Russian ('The Crimes of the Shiites Through the Ages', 'Description of the Prophet's Prayer'). In early 2008 he received a video letter from the famous Arab field commander Mukhannad, who is still active in Chechnya, and decided to join the North Caucasus armed resistance. After a few months he travelled secretly to Chechnya where he met the Emir of the Caucasus Emirate, Dokka Umarov, and swore an Islamic oath of allegiance (*bayat* in Arabic). Buryatsky announced: 'After the proclamation of the Caucasus Emirate my doubts evaporated. We have one Emir and one state. Today the immediate duty of every Muslim is to join the jihad and to support it through word and deed.' The Muslim writer Geidar Dzhemal, well-known in Russia, has called Buryatsky 'a symbol of the new generation in the epic struggle of the Caucasus', emphasising 'we have already witnessed preachers belonging to different ethnic groups. We have seen Avars, Laks, Karachaevs, Cherkess, Arabs.... But they were all worthy people who either came from the Caucasus region, or, at least, belonged to one or other of the traditional Muslim peoples. In this case, for the first time, someone of Eurasian origin, in whose veins runs Russian and Buryat blood, has spoken in the name of the Caucasus Emirate as an authoritative representative and ideologue' (http://islamkom.org/analitika/3818--l-r). During the following months Buryatsky took part in sabotage operations and fighters' sorties. While deep in the forest he recorded a few addresses on video, taped some lectures and articles about the jihad and the situation in the North Caucasus; they were mostly posted on the website of Ingush mujahedin, http://hunafa.com. Khamzat Tairbekov, a former top spy from the disbanded Chechen battalion 'Vostok' which was incorporated into Russia's Federal forces, stated: 'Tikhomirov [Buryatsky. *MR*] was one of the most dangerous figures in the leadership of the Caucasus Emirate – he was responsible for

the training of the *shahids* [Muslims willing to lay down their life for their faith. *Ed*] and commanded the network of sabotage training schools'(http://www.trud.ru/article/10-03-2010/237733_said_burjatskij_pogib_shaxidom.html).

'Magas'

'Magas' was once known by the name of Akhmed Evloev. He was in fact an Ingush and his real name was Ali Musaevich Taziev. Born on 19 August 1974, 'Magas' participated in the movement of armed opposition in the North Caucasus, and since the end of 2007 was the commander (Chief Emir) of the armed units of the Caucasus Emirate and head of the Emirate's Ingush *vilaiyat* [Arabic for 'province'. Term widely used in Muslim countries. *Ed*]. Before his capture and arrest, he was Dokka Umarov's second-in-command within the hierarchy of the Caucasus Emirate. There are serious grounds for thinking that 'Magas' was Sergeant Ali Musaevich Taziev, a security officer who disappeared without trace in 1998. At the time he was part of the group who protected Olga Uspenskaya, wife of Valeri Fateev, adviser to the President of Ingushetia. In October 1998 Olga Uspenskaya and the two police officers, Taziev and Dzhandigov, who were with her, disappeared. She was eventually released from captivity 18 months later. Then the body of Dzhandigov was discovered in Chechnya and buried with full honours in his homeland. Taziev was also treated as a hero who had perished in the line of duty. In 2000 a court in Ingushetia officially reported his death, but according to operational information, Taziev joined the opposition fighters, got a passport in the name of Akhmed Evloev and used the name 'Magas', based on his second name of Magomed, as his radio identification during his broadcasts (http://www.utro.ru/articles/2004/09/08/348692.shtml).

According to information from Russia's security services, Taziev organised the first detachments in Ingushetia territory with the help of the field commanders Abu Dzeit and Magomed Khazhiev. These were called the 'Jamaat-Caliphate'. The name of Akhmed Evloev first appeared in MVD reports in 2004. In April he was appointed commander of the Ingush sector of the armed units in the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria [the unrecognised secessionist government of Chechnya proclaimed on 6 September 1991. *Ed*]. On the night of 22 June 2004 more than a hundred fighters under the personal command of Basaev, Abu Kuteib and Ali Taziev ('Magas') entered Nazran (Ingushetia), captured the local MVD building and firearms depot, shot about 99 people (including workers from the office of the public prosecutor, police, and just ordinary citizens) and then disappeared.

A few years later, the investigation in Ingushetia discovered that Taziev, using the name Gorbakov, had been living since 2007 in a private house on Merzhoeva street in the Sagopshi suburbs of the Ingush town of Malgobek. He told the neighbours that he was an immigrant from Chechnya, and lived quietly and inconspicuously, arousing no suspicions. The operation to capture 'Magas' began six months before he was finally arrested. Three times he fell within the line of sniper fire, but the order was to capture him alive. On the night of 9 June 2010 his house was surrounded by the FSB; Taziev had no time to resist capture. He was immediately transferred by plane to Moscow and at the Lefortovo District Court charged and taken into custody (see http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=1383992).

Magomed-Ali Vagabov

Vagabov, known as Emir Saifullah [Arabic: 'Sword of Allah'. *MR*] a Darguin by nationality, was born on 1 January 1975 in the village of Gubden (Karabudakhkentsky district, Daghestan). He attended a Soviet secondary school in Gubden (up to class 9) but at the same time studied Sharia with local Muslim teachers, Arabic, *hadiths* [accounts of the Prophet's life. *Ed*] and *tafsir* [body of commentaries on the Koran. *Ed*]. In 1994 he went to Pakistan where he first joined a school for *hafiz* [Arabic: 'those who can recite the Koran'. *MR*] where in a year he learned the Koran off by heart, passed the required exam and was given a diploma as a *hafiz*, and then went on to study Sharia in Karachi. He learnt Farsi and Urdu. During his studies he became a convinced *salafi*. [*Salafism*: a branch of Islam which rejects incorporating elements of other religions into Islam. Its adherents believe they are preserving Islam in its original pure form. They reject Sufism which is widespread in the North Caucasus. Currently the most widespread type of Muslim fundamentalism in the North Caucasus and particularly in Daghestan, *salafism* has led to serious conflict not only with the Federal and local authorities but within the Muslim community itself. *MR*] Once Vagabov had completed his studies in Pakistan, he returned home in 1997 and opened a medresseh in Gubden for *hafiz* where he taught *hadiths*. He preached in a number of Daghestan's mosques and was an imam at one in Gubden. That year he met the well-known Arab mujahedin, Emir Khatab and Abu Dzhafar in Chechnya. He received military training (all Daghestan's Muslims were called to jihad) and brought recruits to Emir Khatab's training camps in Chechnya. In the spring of 2004 he organised a group of mujahedin in Gubden and in 2009 headed the Central Sector of the Caucasus Emirate's Daghestan Front. On 15 July 2010 he was appointed commander of the Daghestan Front and Chief Judge of the Caucasus Emirate's Sharia Court (http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/173122). On 21 August 2010 he was killed during an incident with Muslim radicals in the Daghestan village of Gunib (http://www.lifenews.ru/news/35320).

'Magas' after his arrest on a plane to Moscow

The Orthodox Evangelism of Fr Evmeni

by Vera Filatova

Fr Evmeni (Peristy) is one of the most striking and controversial figures in today's Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). From 1992-2006 he was Abbot of the Makariev-Reshemsky Monastery in the village of Reshme in the Ivanov oblast, where he was involved in social and missionary work: he set up an educational centre, a publishing house called 'Light of Orthodoxy', a drug rehabilitation centre, and ran a missionary course entitled 'Alpha and Omega', based on the Alpha course pioneered by London's Holy Trinity Brompton.

Mainly because he built up warm relations with Christians from a number of different denominations, his activity was constantly criticised in Russia, and particularly by so-called 'anti-sectarians' – campaigners against all religious groups defined by them as 'sects' which usually included all Protestant denominations and particularly Charismatics. Fr Evmeni said of these 'anti-sectarians': 'they first look for enemies among aliens, then among their own people, and then "accurately" shoot them down using, among various methods, the instrument of political denunciation.' Accused of 'behaviour unbecoming to a monk' Fr Evmeni was removed from his position as Abbot of the Makariev-Reshemsky Monastery at the beginning of 2006. He was then rescued by Archbishop Ioann (Popov) of Belgorod, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Missionary Department where he was allowed to organise a programme called 'The Way', a new version of the 'Alpha and Omega' course which he had been running at the monastery. On 6 February 2008, however, he was dismissed from the Missionary Department as well.

Fr Evmeni was condemned by his critics for his interest in the charismatic movement and for his involvement in promoting the Alpha course. Yet he was not the only member of the ROC to be interested: in December 2005 representatives from the St Filaret Institute (founded by the Russian Orthodox priest Fr Georgi Kochetkov) in Moscow visited London to learn about the Alpha course and this method of introducing people outside the church to the Christian faith. At the time a Russian Orthodox course, somewhat analogous to Alpha called 'The Way', was being used in London by Metropolitan Anthony Bloom's church, the Dormition Cathedral in Ennismore Gardens. Then in June 2006 a 'Russia Alpha Conference', organised by Holy Trinity Brompton with the support of Archbishop Ioann was held in Belgorod. A team from London, including the founders of the Alpha course, Sandy Millar and Nicky Gumbel, spent two days explaining the principles of Alpha to a Russian audience. According to Fr Evmeni, the ROC decided that it could not use the course as it stood and so, with Archbishop Ioann's approval, it was adapted and renamed 'The Way' when he worked within the Missionary Department. Another influential church leader, Fr (Protoierei) Dmitri Smirnov, head of the Holy Synod's department for relations with the armed forces and health service, also supported the course and gave space in his premises for it to be taught.

In Fr Evmeni's opinion, the Alpha course had been well thought out by Holy Trinity Brompton from a psychological point of view. Each meeting consisted of four basic components: a meal together, singing to guitar accompaniment, presentation of a topic which was expounded by a member of the Alpha leadership team, followed by open discussion in small groups. A central aspect of the course to Fr Evmeni was the sense of fellowship within the leadership group, which, he said, was just as important as the creation of fellowship among those they were trying to reach; when people encountered a friendly group of likeminded people, rather than seeing a priest preaching a sermon, people would be able to experience the reality of 'Christ among us'. Through the Orthodox version of Alpha, he hoped to get young people, who knew nothing about the church, interested in Christianity; he wanted to show that the church was not gloomy and old-fashioned, but exciting, joyful and human, able to be completely open to people rather than cut off from life and inward-looking.

Reactions within the ROC to the proposal to adapt the Alpha course were by no means all positive; nevertheless, at the conference in Belgorod in 2006 it was officially accepted, and Fr Evmeni was given permission to use 'The Way' among Orthodox believers. The most important element taken from the original course – something which was unusual in Orthodox catechetical courses – was the absence of a clearly defined hierarchy between the leader and the group of listeners. The work of the group was based on dialogue – people were able to be heard even if their ideas seemed unacceptable and silly to the rest. As a result 'The Way' was often accused

of superficiality, while the total openness and friendliness of the group leaders gave rise to accusations of sectarianism, of spreading Protestantism or even 'the Orange Revolution'! According to Fr Evmeni, one of the main arguments in Orthodox circles against the Alpha course was its provenance: it was unacceptable for the Orthodox to use the missionary experience of Protestants.

The most energetic critic of 'The Way' was Alexandr Dvorkin, well-known in Russia as someone who claimed to be a specialist on sectarianism: he considered the course to be the work of a neo-charismatic sect and was supported in this view by a number of Russian Orthodox clergy, including Fr Oleg Stenyaev and Fr Alexandr Ilyashenko. The course's critics did not distinguish 'The Way' from Alpha: they condemned the methods used by Charismatics, their teaching about the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, and saw their imprint on 'The Way' as much as on Alpha. Dvorkin ignored the missionary purpose of the course and looked at it as a method of catechising. He accused the course leaders of using non-Orthodox language and failing to include talks on Orthodox culture and church history. Fr Evmeni fully admitted that those running 'The Way' tried to use accessible language without a lot of Church Slavonic words. Leaders had to take a special training course during which they learned to talk in a lively and interesting way, without using incomprehensible ecclesiastical terminology which could put off young people. Fr Evmeni said that he tried to talk to those who came on the course as equals; he used a light touch when discussing the church, as the basic aim was not to familiarise newcomers with church rituals, but to enable them to have a direct experience of God and of the Gospel.

The angry comments of the course's critics revealed how incapable they were of understanding the new approach of 'The Way', created first and foremost for people for whom Russian Orthodox tradition and dogma were more of an obstacle than something to be valued. Alexandr Dvorkin supervised a whole dissertation (by Fr Alexandr Usatov) on 'The Way' in which the course was described as the product of a neo-charismatic sect which turned Orthodox believers away from the church. Even a film attacking Alpha called 'The Alpha Course. Hell's Trap' was produced by two Orthodox priests (Fr Oleg Stenyaev and Fr Daniil Sysoev).

Fr Evmeni believed that a knowledge of psychology was essential for any pastor and he was condemned for using it in his ministry. Widespread criticism of his 'psychological' activity was mostly focused on so-called neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) which he had studied. In Dvorkin's words, Fr Evmeni had actively advertised NLP and applied this 'dubious psychological technique in his work with young people'. This was not true, and anyway, as Fr Evmeni explained, NLP had been misrepresented and viewed negatively because the word 'programming' had been misunderstood: it did not mean manipulation or the imposition of a particular form of behaviour. In 2000 he had been interested in this method, but had never used it in his work: he saw, he said, 'the basic inapplicability of some theoretical propositions of applied psychology, and neuro-linguistic programming, in pastoral care'. He had been more interested in pastoral psychology, and when he was still Abbot of the Makariev-Reshemsky Monastery had got 'Light of Orthodoxy' to publish a series on this subject.

'Light of Orthodoxy' had also published books by various authors on subjects which concerned people in contemporary society – on family matters, the birth and upbringing of children, medicine, psychology, drug dependency and help for the mentally ill. It published books and articles by Fr Evmeni, too, such as *Pastoral Help for the Mentally Ill* and a trilogy against drug addiction which was a particularly important focus in Fr Evmeni's ministry. While Abbot of the Makariev-Reshemsky Monastery he created a rehabilitation centre, and after his 'expulsion' from the monastery, although the centre was for a time disbanded, he managed to start it up again in the village of Reshme. Rehabilitation, in Fr Evmeni's view, involved giving a person the chance to live in a different social environment – in a Christian community whose primary aim was to communicate the love of God.

In 2007 Fr Evmeni published a book called *On Victorious Christianity* in which he stressed how imperative it was to attract talented, clever and successful people to the church and to encourage Orthodox Christians to take an active interest in contemporary questions. This book aroused the opposition of Dvorkin and his supporters who accused Fr Evmeni of advocating love of money, success and other 'American' values. He was also criticised for his book in the series *Parables of an Orthodox Missionary,* which was banned by the St Petersburg diocesan missionary department whose press section officially announced that it did not conform 'with the main task of a missionary – the spread of the Orthodox faith'. As ever, beneath the criticism of Fr Evmeni lay the principle that for the Orthodox it was unacceptable to work with Christians of other denominations; and he had done exactly this when

supporting an inter-denominational rehabilitation centre in St Petersburg called 'New Life' which was initially organised by Protestants. The St Petersburg diocesan missionary department attacked him and, according to Fr Evmeni, expressed their position in a particularly unkind manner with the statement 'It is better for these drug addicts to die as baptised members of the Orthodox Church than for them to find faith through some of those psychopaths, charismatics and such like!'

In his work against drug addiction as well as in other areas, Fr Evmeni used the experience of other denominations and was happy to work with non-Orthodox Christians. Although he recognised that it was important to communicate the riches of Russian Orthodox culture to people outside the church, yet in today's world he felt it was more important for them to reconnect with the source – the Gospel – and recognise themselves as Christians first of all and then as Orthodox believers. After his dismissal from the Moscow Patriarchate's Missionary Department, Fr Evmeni remained a priest within Archbishop Ioann's diocese of Belgorod but was given no role there and worked for a time at the Church of St Nicholas in Otradnoe (a district on the edge of Moscow) where he continued to run the Orthodox version of the Alpha course. In 2009 he was dismissed yet again. According to recent information, he has been helping in a central Moscow parish but not as a member of staff, while also spending part of his time in Reshme where he has a flat. As one source commented when asked what Fr Evmeni was doing now, 'No doubt he is continuing to speak in tongues, an occupation which he loves above all else on earth.'

Zoya Krakhmalnikova
Protagonist of Spiritual Resistance

by Janice Broun

This article is based on a tribute to Zoya Krakhmalnikova (1919-2008) written by a close friend, Vladimir Ilyushenko, in *La Nuova Europa* July 2008.

Zoya was a key figure in religious samizdat and was to become one of the most trenchant critics of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in its post-communist role; she died on 15 April 2008. Born in Kharkov, she became an expert on world literature and a regular contributor to *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. In 1971 she was baptised by Fr Dmitri Dudko. Three years later she was sacked and forbidden to publish in the USSR whereupon she turned to editing a religious samizdat journal, *Nadezhda* (Hope). At this time there was little religious – as compared with civil and socio-political – samizdat. In 1982 she was arrested after the appearance of the tenth issue and sentenced to one year in prison and five in exile in the Altai.

At her trial, she claimed that if she had not taken it on herself to collect material and edit *Nadezhda* someone else would have. 'I take no credit or blame for having published it; I have only attempted to revive something which was suppressed 60 years ago.' 'Our land,' she pointed out at her trial 'was baptised a thousand years ago... *Nadezhda* is intended for those who seek a faith, for believers. There is nothing criminal involved in having ones writings published by presses abroad. Rejoice, because the will of God is manifest in everything...'

The journal contained extracts from the Church Fathers, messages and guidance from the new Russian martyrs, letters from priests and lay folk in exile, complete records of the influential sessions given in his parish church by Fr Dmitri (at that time still a dissident), answering questions about the faith. Zoya's husband, Felix Svetov, who was also condemned to exile, joined her. When after four years in exile they were told they could return home to their family if they admitted they had broken the law, they refused and were not released until July 1987 when, with the advent of perestroika, all political prisoners were freed.

Zoya had very strong opinions and she and Ilyushenko often argued, but their differences of opinion never disturbed their friendship. She was not a person who believed in compromise. After her release she found it necessary to monitor the progress of the religious revival for which she had so

longed. She was soon disillusioned. Her articles were scathing. She condemned the Russian Orthodox hierarchy for failing to confess their culpability in collaborating with an atheist state. She said that by claiming that they were in solidarity with the Russian people and their government, they were following the example of Metropolitan Sergi Stragorodsky back in 1927. She believed that the main obstacle to a genuine revival of religion was 'pseudo-Orthodoxy', the betrayal perpetrated by many of her bishops against Christ and his commandments. She warned of the threat of a Russian fascism, pagan in essence, which was using Orthodoxy as a mask.

This neo-fascism was a combination of 'a xenophobic Nazism, anti-Semitism and pseudo-Orthodoxy'. She regarded anti-Semitism as a consequence of the moral collapse and spiritual decadence of Christianity. Bolshevism evolved as a variant of Fascism. Auschwitz and the Gulag were two interlinked catastrophes and did not belong only to the past. The threat of a resurgence of Nazi and Bolshevik ideals, united by a common hatred of God and man, continued to threaten our world. The massacres of so many innocent people represented an attempt to crucify Christ yet again. Zoya saw creation from an apocalyptic standpoint, with terrible sin infecting the church, priest and lay folk alike, poisoning water and land and the atmosphere, as predicted by St John in the book of Revelation.

She expressed alarm that the virus of nationalism was becoming ever more deeply entrenched within the ROC. She noted that in recent times many theologians had expressed their regret that the church was losing its catholicity, its universality. 'Its close alliance with the nationalist state has resulted in its becoming dangerously closed in on itself. It has stifled its prophetic voices and spirit of liberty. The more it emphasises its primary commitment to its role as a national church, the more the spectre of paganism seeps into it, almost imperceptibly. Nationalism, by infiltrating the church, is starting to dominate it and make it dependent on national xenophobia, which is escalating. Little by little it has assumed the characteristics of a cult which venerate earthly idols. This pseudo Christianity is contaminating the nation, by elevating the Russian people as the basic reality given by God as a means to serve him. Two doctrines, one Christian, the other nationalistic, are mingling and trying to harmonise with each other, and as they do so, they are undermining the church. The nationalistic element is squeezing out its evangelical outreach, in its fullest sense, its availability to everyone, whatever their nationality.'

'Many people in Russia – perhaps the majority – wear a crucifix round their necks, often ostensibly. But how Christian are they? A Christian doesn't only carry a crucifix; they carry Christ, in their hearts.' Zoya was this kind of person. In prison and exile she had reflected deeply about what Christianity really meant. She wrote, 'We Christians aren't capable of living in a truly Christian way in this world. We select from the Old Testament what we can do easily but we merely dream about how we could put the New Testament into practice. Where there is no persecution, there is no faith. The salt has lost its savour and the church, in opening its doors to the world, has lost its spiritual force. The martyrs of the 20th century, whatever confession they belonged to, are the seed of the One Universal and Apostolic Church. The church isn't defined by numbers; it is a little flock; it isn't the language in which the liturgy is celebrated; it is the Body of the Lord.'

Entrance into the harbour of the Solovetsky Transfiguration Monastery from across the White Sea, June 2010 © Xenia Dennen

Keston Members Recollect

The Very Reverend John Arnold

I accompanied Archbishop Donald Coggan (*inter alia* a Patron of Keston College) on his visit to the Russian Orthodox Church 20-28 April 1975. We were received by Patriarch Pimen in the old Residence (Chisty Pereulok) in a heavy Byzantine atmosphere. The discussions were fraught by Russian disquiet about the prospect of the ordination of women in the Church of England, and by our raising concerns about dissidents and persecution in the USSR. The formidable Metropolitan Nikodim, who took the lead on the Russian side and was sitting opposite the Archbishop, leaned forward and said, 'And there is the matter of a so-called research institute under distinguished ecclesiastical patronage.' Archbishop Coggan looked him straight in the eye and said firmly and calmly, 'I agree with His Excellency that the research institute is under very distinguished patronage indeed.' There was a short, intense silence. Then Metropolitan Nikodim, like a chess player who has just realised that he has been outplayed and would do well to resign immediately, smiled through his beard, bowed his head and murmured, '*Nu ladno*', which roughly corresponds to 'Okay, you win.' I am not sure if that got picked up by the microphone in the daffodils!

Sir John Lawrence had been chairing a working group of the East-West Committee of the British Council of Churches, of which I had the honour of being chairman. Paul Oestreicher was secretary and Michael Bourdeaux was a very active member. In 1974 we published *Discretion and Valour*, written by Trevor Beeson on the basis of expertise, much of which had been supplied by Keston. It was the first trustworthy and easily available account of religious conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe, and it rapidly became a bestseller. It was also both publicly vilified and also privately highly prized east of the Elbe. Of course,

(Left to right) *Canon Michael Moore, the Very Revd John Arnold & David Gowan (member of the Council of Management) at the Keston AGM, November 2009*

we in the Archbishop's entourage took plentiful supplies, which we distributed to trusted friends in the course of the visit. During the splendid closing liturgy before a huge congregation both of believers and also of agents of the State in the Cathedral of the Epiphany, Archpriest Borovoi came up to me, got me to my feet, swung round so that his broad back clothed in a swirling brocaded cope was turned to the congregation, swallowed me in a bear-like embrace and whispered, 'Have you got another copy of *Discretion and Valour*?' I had been expecting some exotic liturgical greeting; but, by a providential chance, I did have my last copy with me in my cassock pocket, and was able to transfer it to his and return to my seat without either of us missing a beat in the ornate rites and ceremonies of the Orthodox Church. Those were the days!

Canon Michael Moore

In the 1970s I paid half a dozen visits to churches in the Soviet Union as an emissary from the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth. I went to churches in the former Soviet Republics of Armenia, Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, and Ukraine, as well as to Russian Churches. I had studied the Russian language in National Service in the 1950s, as so many young men did in those days, and later at Oxford, so I had some mainly passive knowledge of the language. Now at long last it was to become active. My first penetration of the Soviet Union was in the very early hours of Thursday 26 April 1973. I was arriving by train, a slow introduction for acclimatisation, from Warsaw where I had been celebrating Easter the previous weekend with the English-speaking congregation, and making ecumenical calls on behalf of Archbishop Michael Ramsey. On this first Soviet visit I would simply

concentrate on the Russians in Moscow, Leningrad and Novgorod, embracing other nationalities later on. What follows are excerpts from my diary, of early impressions written at the time. My first Russians were customs men on the train at Brest Litovsk.

Then the Russians arrived. They came in waves, group after group, each interested in something different. It was intriguing to hear Russian for the first time natively. I did not try to be too bright in the language... They went through all my luggage closely, looking at every book to see whether it was in Russian. They did not mind the Scriptures that I had, as all were in Latin scripts... But what really caught the Russians' interest was my coming from London: when had I last been there? I did not elaborate that I had been sprayed at Warsaw airport in the meantime. It was not that I might import Christianity from Lambeth to Moscow: 'It is your smallpox which will really interest us.' (There had been an outbreak in England.) All the particulars of my recent injections were noted (and sent on ahead, as I was later to learn).

There follows a detailed description of how the train was lifted up from the narrow-gauge European rails and bodily lowered on to the wider Russian ones. Eventually we moved off again, and I plotted our route on a map as the Russian dawn broke and day returned.

The train lumbered on through the day. Occasionally we passed little villages. I looked in vain for village churches. Sometimes we saw peasants working in fields, but usually we were passing through woods, even forest. Sometimes I thought of a Russian folk-song, 'My Barren Acres'. At last we reached Moscow.

We drew in to the Belorussky Station and came to a final halt at 4 p.m., exactly on time – as always. We had been coming into the capital city long before that. Our progress along the ever-multiplying tracks and through suburban stations became ever slower and more stately to befit a notable occasion. And it had begun to rain.

I stepped out on to the platform, a case in each hand, almost into the arms of two Russian matrons not in uniform. Whether they were actually medical I shall never know: one clutched a telegram and the other was perhaps there to watch. News of the plague had gone before me. I looked around but could see nothing of Raymond Oppenheim (the American chaplain in Moscow, who was to be my host). Interrogation began. They were very nice about it. They wanted to know where they could find me, if an epidemic broke out, and whether I felt at all ill.

Raymond met me as I made my way towards the exit. He was to be my constant guide for nearly a fortnight. It seemed to me he had put on weight. His progress through Russian circumstances was always to remind me of a battleship ploughing through a rough sea. The black Volvo with its rear windscreen wiper, warmth and easy seats awaited us, easy to see in a Russian street. It was mild and wet. There was more traffic than I had expected, and crowds coming and going on the pavements. Not many of them were shoppers. We got into the car for the first of many times, and Raymond began the first of many briefings. His knowledge of Russian life seemed vast already. He was forever imparting information, whether on churches or the system of '*razvorot*', the Russian road rule of effecting a manoeuvre by U-turns, so that you end up going in the opposite direction. How far does this reflect a style of life?

The Oppenheims (Raymond and Winifred) live in a diplomatic block in the south-west suburbs of the city near the gigantic university building, one of the seven 'wedding cakes' of the capital – a unique Soviet phenomenon which appears in imitation in a few of the East European capitals as palaces of culture. Diplomats are not encouraged to fraternise with local people, and the particular block in which we were to find ourselves was protected by a Soviet guard, and could only be approached from the back under the guard's surveillance. It was a large block, hundreds rather than tens of families, and most of them, judging from the children playing outside, were Arab or Indian.

I spent the rest of the day soaking off the journey, settling in, and having detailed discussions of our plans. After a night in a motionless bed I was rested and ready for Friday 27 April, the American Embassy, and first visits to churches.

Outside my window the traffic stirred early, tearing down a dual carriageway, with large lorries struggling up the other side. The volume did not compare with a real rush hour though. The children, still well wrapped up, were going to school much earlier than in England. We breakfasted, and then drove to the US Embassy to register me. I was technically their guest.

The Embassy is a large modern building on a main road, the wide middle ring road (such as London has now rejected). We had to make a '*razvorot'* to reach it. In front of every entrance, blocking it, two guards were standing. No one could make a dash for American territory. Diplomatic cars, having special number plates, were easy to recognise. Inside was a rabbit warren, and very overcrowded – not least by the propensity for large automobiles. There had been no Ambassador for several

months, rather sapping of morale. After visiting several offices and saying Hi to all and sundry, we found ourselves with a pillar of the church, a young man with close-cropped hair who had a lot of collection to count (from Easter services) in different currencies. I handled my first roubles. There are about two to the pound. The notes are very small, like monopoly money, which is maybe appropriate. I took 25 roubles in case I needed them, but there would not be much opportunity to spend them. They were entered on my account. At the end I would refund my expenses with a sterling cheque. We were escorted out of the secure part of the Embassy as per regulations, to where the Marine guard still sat, and then we were in free America again. After more Hi-ing we returned to Russia and set off for our first church.

This was the Orthodox Good Friday. In the next few days there would be much opportunity to see how live the Russian Orthodox Church was; but I would be able to judge only from the 'active' churches, which I saw, and I would not know how many had been closed. I would need to remember that Moscow was a 'show case', with so many Western visitors; conditions there were likely to be better than anywhere else.

We drove along wide and empty streets with few traffic lights. I contrasted average progress through London. Our way took us eastwards along the river. We came to the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Soldatskaya Street (No 35 in Raymond Oppenheim's catalogue). Climbing out of the car we put on our cassocks and pectoral crosses, which in this country would distinguish us from lay servers. A few men outside the church looked at us strangely. A drunk approached us, but we did not heed him (lest we should be accused of proselytising).

We went into the church, which was dark and mysterious and mainly full of old women. But there were a few younger faces. Immediately we were taken up into the atmosphere of worship which was to meet us so often. The service was nearly over; the chanting was coming to an end. We reverenced icons and made our way forward, the *babushki* (a more homely and devout-sounding word than 'old woman') made way for us. We went through the icon screen and were there greeted by Bishop Chrysostom of Zaraisk. He is the assistant of Metropolitan Yuvenali and No 2 in the Russian CFR (Council on Foreign Relations; I was General Secretary of Lambeth's CFR). He looked very youthful. Some say he is 32, others 39. It was the first of many kissings and exchanges of Easter Greetings: *Khristos voskrese – Vo istinu voskrese*, which were to become so much part of daily conversation. We had a brief talk, and I found to my delight that when talking to a genuine Russian, Russian would soon come to me. We had a glance at plans for the coming days, and took our leave looking forward to seeing the Bishop again.

We were not expected at the Patriarchal Cathedral until the early afternoon, and so we had some time to spare. We made our way back along the river to the British Embassy, a solid Victorian building standing in its own grounds directly on the other side of the river from the Kremlin. I noticed with some chauvinistic satisfaction that the British Embassy cars are numbered 01. The Americans are 04. The also-rans may be anything down to 99. Raymond did not knock either of the guards down standing in front of the British gate – perhaps that is not really his ambition – and we came to rest outside the Consular Section. There we met Mr Chris Ingham and he took us into the Embassy proper where I signed the Book.

Honour satisfied we went for a ride round the Kremlin. It is surrounded by an impenetrable wall. It is dominated by a golden tower with a golden cross on it. A lot of garish red decorations were beginning to appear for May Day, but they would not remain long. A secular festival would be observed, but would not a religious feast be celebrated?

We looked into the huge Hotel Rossia where all the foreigners stay. Inside it was a *beryozka* shop. These shops are only for those who can pay in hard currency. A little man stands at the door keeping out doubtful customers. Sometimes local citizens protest: they pay their taxes, why shouldn't they use the shops? – because they are not so equal. Then we went to a bazaar market, where anyone could buy... I felt uneasy: the crowd looked like a lot of pickpockets. In fact there is a lot less petty crime here than in the West; mugging is hardly known...

After lunch we went to the Patriarchal Cathedral (No 1). We were going through our act of putting on our cassocks outside the car in the beginnings of drizzle when a large long black car drew up outside the Cathedral and went round the back. The Patriarch himself (Pimen) was arriving. This was to be the 'winding sheet' service, the service symbolising the descent of the Lord from the Cross, His being wrapped in grave clothes and laid in the tomb.

The Cathedral was well full. We went beyond the icon screen to the spacious sanctuary and drank in the singing and the atmosphere of solemn worship. The Patriarch and his bishops and priests were performing solemn rites around the altar. I was

still weary from my journey and after a while I sat down around a corner and simply listened rather sleepily to what was going on. It was always interesting. Something is always happening in an Orthodox service, like an acted drama. It is not a question of stopping in one place, standing or sitting or kneeling; there is movement, a rising and falling, an ebbing and flowing like the motion of the waves, and all borne on by heavenly music such as angels sing.

After a time the Patriarch moved into the body of the Cathedral, where the 'tomb' had been set up for the 'burial'. We moved outside the screen to watch. All the congregation were holding candles. Some young children in the front were looking rather tired. The Patriarch gave a sermon, but it did not seem to me that he had anything very momentous to say. Preaching must be careful, without social or political embarrassment. Even so, Raymond remarked that some people manage to preach worthwhile sermons, for example Fr Shpiller, to whose church we would go. At the end of the service the Patriarch agreed that I should greet him. He has a great presence about him. I approached him with some awe and kissed his hand, and said in Russian what a privilege and joy it was. There was a silence, and then came back his answer, rather like a machine intoning from deep inside a bottle: 'It is a great pleasure to have you attending our services.' After that I retreated. It had been rather like consulting an oracle...

This evening the 'active' churches would be holding their services of vigil at the tomb. We should go and see them. There were three within fairly easy reach of the British Embassy. At the first Skorbyashchenskaya (the Joy of the Sorrowing – No 8), we found that the service would not start until 8 p.m., and so we decided to return. Nearly two hours before, people were already gathering. The next was St Nicholas (No 9), the church of Fr Shpiller. We stood at the back for a while. I do not think I have ever seen a church so full, with people shoulder to shoulder as at a football match. Where would one see that in England? Fr Shpiller attracts the young and intellectuals as well as the *babushki*. The third church, St John the Warrior (No 7), we could not get into at all. A couple of good-natured policemen were standing outside, apparently in case any mocking youngsters should try to break things up. The crowded congregation was tight-packed and reverent.

We returned to the first of the three, the church of Archbishop Kiprian, who was once Bishop of Berlin. Now the service was only a quarter of an hour away. We went into a side entrance and soon found ourselves beyond the *babushki*, some of whom were sitting on the floor in the growing heat (but they would all stand up with the beginning of the service) and among the vesting priests. The chief of these was the Archbishop, white-haired, short and stocky, his eyes twinkling through rimless spectacles. Here we were in a different world from the Patriarchal Cathedral and its solemn order; here there was happy chaos – nobody quite knowing what to do or what would happen next. I was presented to the Archbishop. He told me to sit on a stool beside him while he sat in an armchair waiting for the service to begin. He had been to England years ago but his chief foreign recollection was Berlin. We exchanged badinage in Russian and I at once felt at home with him. As the magic hour of eight approached he went to stand at the altar, his priests around him. A low-voiced conversation went on, led by the Archbishop, which looked for all the world like a staff meeting over the breakfast table. Was it who would do what that they were discussing, or last week's visiting?

The screen was drawn back and the drama of the liturgy ('the work of the people') began. It really was very theatrical, with priests and deacons 'going on' to 'play their part' or 'sing their piece' and then withdraw to the 'wings'. From time to time the Archbishop would turn to the people and himself contribute a blessing or a versicle. I resolved that we must return again next week, when we would not have to leave early; we were already going to be late for Winifred's supper. And so it was arranged, and in the wings we began to say Goodbye. The Deacon, an enormous man with a very deep voice which we had so much admired, and a head like the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland*, got out of his armchair where he had been resting and wiping his brow. He advanced on me and suddenly said from the depth: *semdesyat chetyre* – 74. I could only suppose he meant his age, and that he was not talking in some secret code...

This day would have no end, Holy Saturday for the Orthodox (Saturday 28 April). We began a further tour of active churches and saw the enacting of a most interesting custom. At each of the churches there were queues of *babushki*. Sometimes there were men, younger people, and children too. Each was clutching a plate full of food. This was to symbolise the end of the Lenten fast, and they were bringing the food to be blessed by a priest before making a feast of it tomorrow.

On this occasion our way had taken us to the north of the city. I caught my first real sight of the television tower soaring to an immense height into the sky. It is beautifully proportioned, but its height is difficult to tell as it is so thin and there

was nothing to measure it against. We also saw the monument to Russian space shots – a rocket at the top of a triangular column, and in the distance, an exhibition of Soviet economic accomplishment with its double statue of a peasant and an industrial worker locked in firm embrace: a nice piece of idealism.

It was becoming clearer all the time that the State was going to have a festival as well as the Church. As well as multitudes of flags and slogans on a red background, frames were going up for portraits of the Politburo. With the retiring of two members and their replacement by three, the apostolic number was spoilt and one frame and one portrait per set were being erected without much warning. It would also be interesting to see how the portraits would be arranged now that Mr Brezhnev was no longer first alphabetically. Always the biggest portrait was of Lenin (nothing of Stalin). This is very much the apostolic age of Leninism, and it is already very much a religion. Unfortunately his relics are putrefying in their place of honour. Perhaps they will be replaced by something wax before too long. There will be no Resurrection in this religion, though (perhaps to the relief of the present-day apostles!) and one can only wonder whether it will last 2000 years.

Meantime Christianity maintains a strong and obvious hold in the folk culture. The queues were undiminishing in all the churches we visited. The *babushki* patiently stood in line; when it came to their turn they and their provisions were asperged; then in some churches they passed under a fluttering canopy held by two men and symbolising the angels. It reminded me fleetingly of oranges and lemons – but nobody would have her head chopped off for this...

And so to the Easter Vigil at Zagorsk.

This evening I felt as I feel on Christmas Eve, but more so: a night on which I know I shall be up very late, and when I should like to sleep in advance; but that cannot be. Raymond and I had supper, and just as it was getting dark we left for Zagorsk.

We passed the Kremlin and took the main northern road out of the city. Once clear of the outer ring road we were soon out in the country. The surface of the road became unpredictable, and there were no cat's eyes to guide us. Every so often we passed a police check point – we had had to have special visas for this journey – but we were not stopped. Our passing was probably reported to the next point on the line, and a search party would have come to look for us if we had not arrived, a system which renders the AA dispensable.

About two hours later, around 10 p.m., we were drawing into Zagorsk, and the vague outline of the monastic buildings could be discerned in the darkness. We should see them better later. Already people were thronging into the monastic grounds, by no means all of them *babushki*. In fact the *babushki* were mostly already there. We found them in the various chapels as we made a preliminary tour, camped on the floors in the warm. Maybe some of them had been there for days, rather than hours, patiently waiting for the services to begin. Many young men and women of student age were there, walking about in groups, some believers, some enquirers, not many scoffers. None indeed would scoff openly on this night. While people might hesitate to attend their own local churches, here they could be anonymous and they came in their hundreds...

At last the bidding was given and we made our way through the crowds to the Theological Academy, and through the Academy itself to the chapel which was quite full of people standing expectant. We entered through a side door in front of the icon screen and found places reserved for us there. We exchanged bows with a Germanic-looking bishop and his wife whom we were to meet often. I later discovered him to be Bishop Held of Hesse-Nassau (of the German Evangelical Church of the Union). Apart from the party of Indians, including the Ambassador, there seemed few foreigners present.

Soon after we had taken our places we were told that Archbishop Filaret (Rector of the Academy) wished us to join him beyond the icon screen. We trooped through to greet him. Orthodox bishops, and it seems Russians in particular, are endowed with an immense presence. The Archbishop is also hardly 40, but he dominated the gathering. He has an immense black beard and eyes set very wide apart. He is a notable theologian, and an article by him, recently published in the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, on the Filioque will be good for the Anglican Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Discussions. We heard during the service, in one of the litanies, that he would soon be going to Berlin to take charge of the Russian Orthodox there. Now we greeted him and were made welcome. As I came through the door I was aware of a little yelp of delight, and there was the Romanian deacon who is always writing me letters about his studies and his ambition to study in England. It was an effort to dispel Russian, but after a little I found some Romanian for him.

The Archbishop was arranging the Procession of the Cross. Soon the incessant and insistent greeting – 'Christ is risen: He is risen indeed' – would be taken up and answered by a thousand voices,

and the Troparion (Easter Sentence) would begin to be sung: a chant which one hears so often that it enters one's subconscious, and one finds oneself waking up with it on one's lips and singing it at all hours of the day – which is of course the whole idea. It was a triumphant procession. We went all round the chapel, outside and in, greeting groups of the faithful and being greeted in return. There was no room for doubt: He is rise indeed. There is no mouldering in the grave for this Messiah.

We returned to the chapel and the service went on for hours with readings and litanies: the Easter message from the Patriarch, a sermon from St John Chrysostom, a sermon from the Archbishop, and readings of the Gospel in several languages represented among the staff and the students. But it did not seem like hours. Always something was happening and the congregation were gathered up in the movement of the liturgy. I did not feel in the least tired during the long night watch, but I was lucky with a chair to sit on at appropriate times. Some people one could see almost asleep on their feet, and two small children in the front simply lay down on the floor after a while and slumbered, curled up on one another like puppies.

Some time after four o'clock the last litany had been sung and the last greeting exchanged. And then it was time for breakfast. An immense feast had been laid out in the dining-room, and we went and sat down. Outside it was light again. True to the Gospel, when the Archbishop arrived he called us to a 'higher room' and we transferred to the top table. By this time I was hungry again, though I did not know for what meal, and I tucked into the plates of cold delicacies for a real breaking of fast. In a short speech at the close the Archbishop welcomed everybody to his table, and the Indian Ambassador replied. There was also a good lot of egg cracking after the manner appointed.

Raymond and I at length took our leave, the Romanian deacon coming out to see us to our car. The clear cold light of a new day was upon us. Turning the corner from the monastery we paused to look back. A rare sight of onion domes and crosses met our eyes. It is a holy place of Russia...

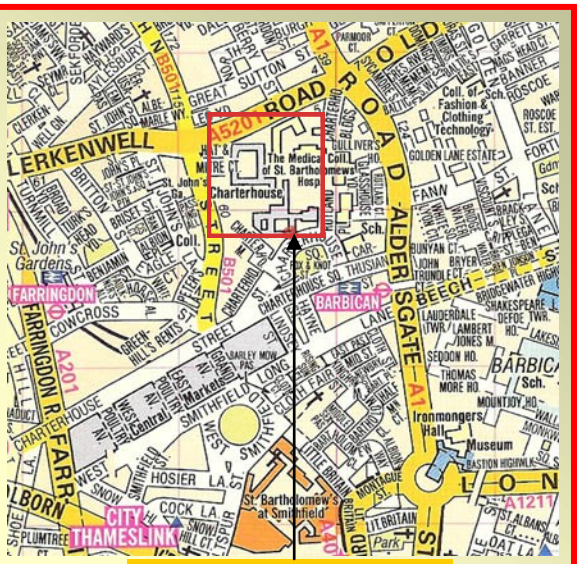
And it was the holiest Christian festival day.

Keston AGM

Saturday 6th November 2010

The Great Chamber
The Charterhouse

Charterhouse Square
London EC1M 6AN



Entrance to the Charterhouse

12.00 noon **Annual General Meeting**

12.45 p.m. **Lunch**

2.00 p.m. **'Walking a Tightrope in Cold War Diplomacy', a talk by Canon Paul Oestreicher, secretary of the East-West Committee of the British Council of Churches 1964-1980**

3.00 p.m. **'The Western Balkans', a talk by David Gowan, Ambassador in Belgrade 2003-2006**

4.00 p.m. **Tea**

In Memoriam

Kenneth Rundell 1919-2010

Sadly, I never knew Kenneth until the last phase of his life, but we immediately hit it off. Not only did we both love St Petersburg as it struggled to re-establish its western-looking identity and restore its culture after the collapse of communism; we also had the common bond of having been born and brought up in Cornwall, and we both maintained a strong connection with our homeland. I was privileged to stay, several times, with my family in his delightful Ferry Cottage at Rock. The view across the Camel Estuary to Padstow was always balm for the soul. Kenneth's spirit pervaded this place.

At the time of our first meeting, Kenneth had recently moved to St Petersburg. We met at a conference sponsored by 'Open Christianity', where lay people were seeking ways forward for the church in the 'new Russia'. Kenneth had just moved into a broken-down, but once-splendid building near the Alexander Nevsky Monastery at the end of the Nevsky Prospekt.

He told me of his plans and ideals, but his modesty concealed his past. He had dedicated his life, I later discovered, to the cause of Moral Rearmament, about which I knew little, but following distinguished service in the Second World War (winning the Military Cross for bravery under enemy fire), he worked for them without salary for many years. Now widowed, his second marriage was to Pirkko, a Finnish lady, and a call came to him to change the direction of his life completely. In the words of his son Michael, paying tribute at Kenneth's memorial service in London on 19 April, 'He set out on a completely new challenge: to bring understanding between the peoples of Russia and Europe, and, while he was at it, between the various faiths within Russia. This was, of course, a task every bit as ambitious and unachievable as his earlier mission to remake the world, but not made any trace less worthwhile due to its impossibility. And the way he felt he could best bring about this understanding was to return to what he saw was best in his previous work with the Oxford Group, and to create within Russia a community – a community whose numbers would later grow and extend beyond anyone's expectations.'

Kenneth Rundell is decorated with the Military Cross by Field Marshal Montgomery

At our first meeting Kenneth told me how difficult he was finding it (how could it be otherwise, Russia being in such a chaotic state?). But at least it was a time when a foreigner could gain a foothold unmolested. His first step on the rung of the property market met with difficulties. Already there were Russians ready to look on any foreigner as a potential provider of charity; Kenneth soon learnt not to be quite so trusting of those he met. His second effort took him to a magnificent building on the Fontanka River and to a flat which had

Kenneth Rundell in Agora May 2007

once belonged to Modest Tchaikovsky, the composer's brother, but which had been totally desecrated inside during the communist period. He managed to purchase – or gain a lease on – the building's two upper floors and raised funds to do up the top one as a library, communal room and several bedrooms for visiting Christian guests which he called Agora. The floor below became living accommodation and eventually he acquired the bottom floor and restored it as the concert hall it used to be in better times.

For a man already in his late seventies this was a remarkable achievement, not least because he was soon widowed for a second time. Kenneth had what I like to think of as Cornish grit; better, he was a rock hewn out of his native granite. His son Michael, an architect and designer, helped in the remodelling of this wonderful building. Because of the cheapness of Russian labour they could do this to a standard and a finish which would have been unimaginable for a comparable property in Western Europe.

Kenneth Rundell, at the head of the table, presides at breakfast in Agora

Like several Keston supporters, I was able to stay in this attractive and convenient place on several visits to St Petersburg. I shall always think of it as my home there. For visitors there was one obligation: breakfast was always communal. Kenneth would preside and lead the conversation, which would cover the whole range of his interests, or he would gain especial pleasure from finding out more about his guests, who would be paying only a small percentage of the cost of staying in a St Petersburg hotel.

Kenneth, too, was fit and energetic well into his eighties. In 2003 I was staying at Agora while I was making two programmes for BBC Radio 4 with the Revd Stephen Shipley to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the founding of St Petersburg. We needed his guidance on locating a second venue – a church with a superb choir – for the second programme. His local knowledge not only provided us with exactly the right contact, but he insisted on taking us there on foot. Stephen and I could hardly keep up – and Kenneth was 83!

Let his son Michael take up the story again. 'We worked together, learning new lessons, delighting in the mad anarchic life that was post-Soviet Russia. And piece by piece, person by person, he grew roots and connections all over St Petersburg, visiting a dissident priest here, supporting a struggling artist there, until he created a place for his community to grow and flourish. I well remember the first church service I attended with him at Agora, held in a small room that is now my bedroom. There were two people in attendance and that was one more than normal. Sometimes he was on his own. But by the time he left last year the number had grown, the church had moved to a more permanent home and the fledgling congregation had established itself.... Perhaps more importantly he had indeed been able to build a community quite independent from the church itself – a community that offered lectures, exhibitions and, most importantly, fellowship to a largely Russian circle. It offered friendship and support to whomsoever my father came into contact with.'

Kenneth Rundell was one of the most remarkable people I ever met – not exactly a national figure, not a man who had held high office, not a person of means, yet someone without whom this country, as well as St Petersburg, would have been poorer.

Michael Bourdeaux

Fontanka River frozen in March

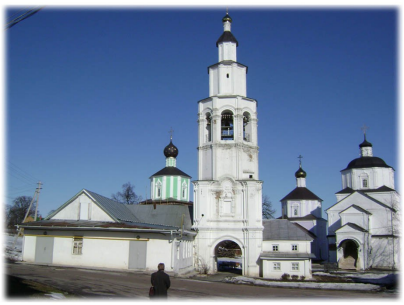
Where Nightingales Sing

by Xenia Dennen

Encyclopaedia team at Korennaya Pustyn

Last March Keston's Encyclopaedia team – myself, Sergei Filatov and Roman Lunkin – set off from Moscow on a fieldtrip to the south-west of Russia, near the Ukrainian border. One of the cities we visited was Kursk.

About 120 km west of the city in Rylsk was an interesting religious community, the only one in Russia which was involved in agriculture, called the St Nicholas Monastery. On a fine sunny day after Sergei had found a taxi driver who was happy to drive us there for a reasonable price, we set off. The great thaw was already beginning; large puddles of water were forming beside piles of dirty snow. We drove past snow-covered fields, one side melting into a vast lake in the sun, the other still glistening white in the shade. I could see no villages, no sign of life. This was the area where the great battle of Kursk had taken place during the Second World War.



St Nicholas Monastery

Rylsk was a substantial town, with a supermarket and a number of businesses; the monastery was up a hill on the edge. Beyond the belfry over the entrance rose three churches, side by side like ships in harbour, two painted and partly restored, the other covered in scaffolding. To one side was a large new accommodation block for the monks (27 of them in all). We just had time to get our driver to photograph us by the entrance when a large figure in black walked slowly towards us – this was Fr Pankrati (Zaikin), the abbot.

He first showed us round, taking us to view the three churches from the rear, and then up the hill to a large grain store where a number of tractors were parked, and where one of the monks called Ieromonakh Andronik, in charge of the farm, was talking to some workmen. The monastery had six Belorussian tractors, five combine harvesters to work 946 hectars of land, and had just bought a large new green tractor made in America; Fr Pankrati was very proud of it; when spring came it would come into its own. In addition to working the land, the monastery kept 20 cows, 17 chickens and some goats. As much of the farming equipment had on occasion been stolen, it was essential, said Fr Pankrati, to have guards on the premises.

From the grain store we walked downhill – the snow was still deep and my Moscow boots coped well – to a beautifully appointed wooden cottage which was used by the bishop when he visited. We settled down round a table and began to pose our questions. The monastery, we learnt, had been re-established in the late 1990s by Fr Ippolit, revered by many as a holy fool (*yurodivy*) – some even believed he was a *starets* – and an example of exceptional Christian love, who took in all and sundry, be they alcoholics, drug addicts, ex-prisoners, or drunks. Many came to him for advice and guidance, many sick came to him for healing. He died in 2002 and his grave now lies beside one of the three churches 'anchored' side by side at the centre of the monastery. Fr Pankrati recounted how he had been a down-and-out, living rough in Georgia, how he had then discovered Orthodoxy at Optina Pustyn and entered the Kursk seminary. While a seminarian he had often visited the St Nicholas Monastery where he loved 'the joy, the lightness of heart'. One day his bishop suggested he become the abbot: he felt he could not refuse, although, he admitted, he did not at all feel up to the job; he came there finally in 2005.

Walking down from the grain store

When Fr Pankrati arrived the monastery's churches and buildings were in a dreadful state (the previous abbot, Fr Ippolit, had focused on helping people and had left the buildings to deteriorate). The bishop insisted that he get on with restoration: 'It's important just to begin,' added Fr Pankrati, 'even if you have no money; you must have faith; the money will come.' And so it did: some unknown benefactor had put 500,000 roubles in the collection box just at a moment when money was desperately needed! The land had had to be cleaned and cleared of the detritus left over from the war, but now it produced enough wheat to make a profit and the monastery had paid off its debts. Wheat was exported to Ukraine and Moldavia, and soon the monks would start making bread to sell. At first the neighbouring farmers had been jealous, but Fr Pankrati had now built up friendly relations, after giving away grain to the elderly: 'If we are rude we will be treated likewise.'

(Left to right) *Sergei Filatov, Ioromonakh Andronik, Fr Pankrati, Roman Lunkin & Xenia Dennen*

Few novices had stuck it out; many came for two years, said Fr Pankrati, and had then left. In all things 'good judgement is essential,' he emphasised. He had established a balanced form of monastic life and had given up the draconian Orthodox monastic statutes, like the ones at the Trinity-St Sergius Monastery near Moscow, which, he added, had led to lack of sleep and irritation: 'I think one must keep to the golden mean. Some who come here are too zealous and burn out. Everything must develop harmoniously. Work should be a joy; you must not overdo work or prayer; you must respect the body. Prayer and relationships within the community are the most important; work is secondary. We don't have the resources to take on any social work. We have to admit our limitations.'

Fr Pankrati's Orthodoxy was non-aggressive, non-judgemental: 'You mustn't use force. The motive for not sinning must be love of God; not force. Don't start by judging people.' He believed in being open to the outside world, and ran a Sunday school in the monastery for 15 children, while the monks visited five local schools where they talked about their faith. Only 1% of the population attended church, he said: 'Easter is treated like Victory Day; it should not be counted in this percentage.' He felt that the Russian Orthodox Church should take care not to interfere in politics as this could lead the State to turn against the Church: 'Russians still have a Soviet mentality, they like power.' At the same time Russians were 'like children – naive and trusting – open to God. Our ideal has always been holiness.' Although he praised childlike trust, he was realistic about how to get things done in Russia – bribes were unavoidable! He was determined to improve the conditions at the monastery, to make them more tolerable for visiting pilgrims, and to introduce better food. The monks, he believed, should have more time for reading, for visiting holy places, even Mount Athos. But he admitted how hard it was to achieve all he wanted: 'When I came here I wanted to do so much, but everything is difficult.'

Shortly after our visit to the monastery in Rylsk, we visited another community called Korennaya Pustyn (Root Hermitage), about 30 km from Kursk, which was built on the spot where in 1295 a holy spring had been discovered beneath a 'wonder-working' Icon of the Sign lying among the roots of an elm tree (thus the name '*Root* Hermitage'). Kursk, we discovered, had a particular devotion to this image of the Mother of Jesus, with Christ, the Sign (Isaiah 7:10-14) within her: a much revered Icon of the Sign, originally from Kursk, was brought back temporarily to the city in September 2009 by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in the US, which had preserved it in Jordanville. Over 50,000 people processed with it to Kursk's cathedral and over 500,000, including the President and Prime Minister, came to pray before it. Korennaya Pustyn was founded in 1597 and dedicated to the Birth of the Mother of God. In 1611 it was destroyed by the Crimean Tatars and then restored in 1618. After the Revolution, in 1923, it was closed and its churches destroyed until, with the advent of perestroika, it began to be restored once again in

1989. It is now a special place of pilgrimage.

We had heard that Korennaya Pustyn was focusing its ministry on helping the deprived and needy and decided it would be worth a visit. Sergei managed to speak to a member of the community, Brother Rufin, and arranged for us to arrive in the early afternoon. We were met at the entrance and taken by Brother Rufin first to the Church of the Birth of the Mother of God, rebuilt from 2006-2009 and consecrated last year. I thought the interior rather garish, but according to Brother Rufin the acoustics were wonderful; as he was the choir master I guess this was rather important to him. The icons and iconostasis, made of carved wood, were all the work of local craftsmen. We then walked down a long flight of steps to the chapel built over the holy spring which Brother Rufin opened up for us. We were given some of the water to drink. The long line of small buildings, covering a passageway down to this chapel, enabled crowds of people to stand within earshot of the liturgy celebrated down below.

Church of the Birth of the Mother of God

Brother Rufin lifts the cover over the holy spring

The monastery had first shown concern for the world outside its gates, recounted Brother Rufin, by writing to prisoners and sending them parcels. Now some of the monks visited Kursk's large psychiatric hospital with 1,500 inmates and 1000 staff where there were 70 men in one room; the stench of urine and cigarette smoke was dreadful, he said. They also sent parcels of books to poor parishes in Ukraine and Kirgizia. At the monastery gates was a large polytechnic with 500 pupils of which 25% were either orphans or from single-parent families. So he had made contact and now taught 12 groups at the college about the Orthodox faith: 'I don't stick to a text book; I simply talk to them. The children always greet me in the street when we meet.' Sometimes the children 'have problems', he added, and he tried to help. Some had asked to be baptised although, he emphasised, 'nothing is forced on them'. Currently 15 young lads from difficult backgrounds lived in the monastery and attended services while studying at the college. A group of orphaned sisters were supported by the monastery; they had been taught to cook and now ran the kitchen which had to cater for large numbers of pilgrims who came to visit the holy spring. The church services were not attended by locals, he said; usually those filling the church and chapel had come from afar. Local people resented the monastery as many of them, when the monks returned, had been forced to leave their accommodation in what had once been monastic buildings.

Buildings covering the steps to the spring

Icon of the Sign, above an elm tree's roots, hanging near the entrance to Korennaya Pustyn

Steps down to the spring

We sat talking to Brother Rufin in the refectory where we were fed with home-made soup, kasha, honey and fruit juice, while the orphaned sisters, heads modestly bescarfed, bustled about and pilgrims came and went. As on the day when we visited the monastery in Rylsk we had again been lucky with the weather: outside the sun was shining, bringing out the colours of

Home News

Professor Davorin Peterlin, a former Director of Keston Institute (2003-2006), died tragically aged 51 on 14 June. At the time of his death he was on the staff of the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Osijek, Croatia, where he headed the doctoral program and the research and publishing department. He had previously been in charge of biblical studies at the International Baptist Theological Faculty in Prague (1998-2000) and, after his time at Keston Institute, had headed the doctoral program at Milltown Institute in Dublin (2006-2007).

Shortly after the encouraging visit by the President and Chairman to the Keston Center at Baylor University in February, the Center's Director informed the Council of Management that funds he was expecting for equipping the new premises on the Baylor campus for the Keston archive had unfortunately not materialised. At its April meeting the Council therefore decided that, as the accessibility of the archive was a priority, it would transfer sufficient funds to the Keston Center so that the archive could be used by researchers from the beginning of the autumn term.

In April the Council awarded a scholarship to Sister Tatiana Spektor from a Russian Orthodox convent in the US who has a distinguished academic record. She will spend a semester gathering material in the Keston archive for a book she is writing on the Catacomb Church. At its meeting in July the Council awarded a grant to Dr Zoe Knox, lecturer in Modern Russian History at Leicester University, studying the predicament of minority religious groups in the USSR, who will also spend some time working at the Keston Center. In August Rita Rimkiene from Redcliffe College, who used material from Keston's archive, completed her thesis on the Lithuanian Catholic Church's role in the overthrow of the communist regime and the implications for the future of Protestant mission in Lithuania.

Keston's Encyclopaedia team in front of the Solovetsky Transfiguration Monastery
(left to right) *Roman Lunkin, Sergei Filatov & Xenia Dennen*

Michael Bourdeaux, Keston's President, has expressed concern about the direction which the Putin-Medvedev Russia is following as there seems to be no end to the reversal of so much that was promised when Mikhail Gorbachev set the Soviet Union on a course of reform a quarter of a century ago. Particularly disturbing, he comments, is the unhealthy alliance between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Kremlin; there is no sign that the church and its moral values exercise any kind of constraint over government policies. However, the Moscow Patriarchate, he adds, does not always have it completely its own way. He has been closely following developments in the government's plan to introduce compulsory religious education. Experimentally, this began in selected regions on 1 April. The Patriarchate was convinced, wrongly, that the vast majority of parents would opt to enrol their children on a course of instruction on the ROC, but in fact only a minority have made this choice, 'Secular Ethics' proving far more popular (see his article in *The Times,* 31 July, p.90).

The Russian publishers of Keston's Encyclopaedia *Religious Life in Russia Today* have been very pleased with the way it has sold and would like Keston to work on a second edition. The Encyclopaedia fieldtrips have therefore been continuing: in March the team visited Belgorod and Kursk in the south-west of Russia near the Ukrainian border, and in June they visited Naryan-Mar, capital of the Nenetsky Autonomous Region (within the Arctic Circle), Archangel and the Solovki Islands in the White Sea where they were able to speak to the Prior of the Solovetsky Transfiguration Monastery. After the fieldtrip to Belgorod and Kursk, Xenia Dennen, once in Moscow again before flying home, was invited to speak on Radio Rossia which gave her an opportunity to speak about Keston's history and the saving of the Keston archive. Aware that many Keston members would like to read the Encyclopaedia, the Council has commissioned a feasibility study for an English edition, and will consider the findings of this report later on this year.

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