Keston Newsletter

No. 16, 2012

Patriarch Kirill of Moscow & All Russia

Whither Russia?

by Sergei Filatov

In the autumn of 2011 the mood in Russia changed sharply. Political passivity combined with the high ratings of Prime Minister Putin, President Medvedev and the United Russia party of the past ten years, were replaced by protests, loss of confidence in the government and in Putin and Medvedev personally. This sudden fall in popularity was triggered by Medvedev's announcement on 24 September 2011 that he would not be running for President in favour of Putin, and Putin's statement that this decision was taken by them both a few years before. Such open and cynical acknowledgement that those in power did not depend on the choice of the electorate, and that power could be handed from one to the other like a glass when there are not enough to go round at a party, shocked

Also in this issue:

many people far more than anyone expected. The dissatisfaction which had been growing about the situation in Russia suddenly broke out in protest demonstrations.

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), the largest non-governmental organisation, was suddenly faced with having to formulate its position (like all other bodies in the unfolding drama). This was necessitated too by the enormous interest shown by the media and other social institutions in what the ROC would say. For the first time since his election as Patriarch, Kirill had to choose between different political platforms in the midst of an emerging political crisis. Until then the ROC's leadership had avoided the subject of the elections and had not supported any particular party. On the day of the parliamentary elections, 4 December 2011, Patriarch Kirill spoke at the end of the liturgy in the Donskoi Monastery:

'Today, election day, is in a sense the start of a journey because our country is faced with a great deal to do. Upon what we do or fail to do hangs the very existence of Russia... Russia can be a great multinational state or she can cease to exist. Today our people are faced with a choice, and, God willing, may it be the start of a journey which leads to glory, to God's glory reflected in the lives and faith of our people, to the glory of our Motherland.... May our divisions, our political passions, our political views and convictions never destroy the unity in society upon which depends the wellbeing of each of us, of us as a people, and of our country.'

Patriarch Kirill was then silent until 17 December when after the liturgy at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour he said:

'We know to what a bloodbath and mess were the lives of our forefathers reduced in the 20th century when, in the struggle for little human truths, father rose up against son and son against father; when love and friendship were destroyed; when there were rivers of blood, and people, driven crazy by blood, tried with all their might, whatever the cost, to affirm their small, human, and to be honest, their insignificant truth! Thousands of human lives were ruined, and a great country collapsed... How important it is that we, the inheritors of a great Russia, who have experienced the terrible trials of the 20th century, should today show we have learned the lessons of the past and will not repeat the mistakes which our fathers committed on the eve of 1917.'

Thus did the Patriarch try to make the protesters stop and come to their senses. At the same time he 'demonstrated objectivity' by calling upon the government to listen to public opinion:

'May God enlighten all who hold different points of view about the political situation in our country and about the elections, and may He help them enter into a genuine dialogue with society so that our national life is not destroyed... But in order to overcome misunderstanding, re-establish trust, unite society and enable it to move forward into the future, the government must

relate to people with greater trust, contribute to this dialogue and try to overcome disagreements and misunderstandings.'

This was followed by the address of the Patriarch's spiritual father, Skhi-archimandrite Ilii (Nosdrin) – regarded as a *starets* in Russia – on 23 December which attracted much attention and was broadcast by the Moscow Patriarchate and the media. Skhi-archimandrite Ilii read out a text in front of the camera which basically banned any Orthodox believer from attending the next day's meeting on Prospekt Academician Sakharov in Moscow. The day before, the Orthodox radio station Radonezh had broadcast Skhi-archimandrite Ilii addressing Orthodox Christians about the current political situation. Ilii condemned the protesters in no uncertain terms:

'What is the essence of the current situation and of the many conversations in our country? It is no less than the action of people who want to provoke social unrest in Russia, to stage disturbances; these are people who hate our country and want to undermine its stability, wellbeing and peace... The deeds of our country's enemies draw out dark subterranean forces; they promote chaos which is more dangerous than was the so-called Orange Revolution in Ukraine. The events and speeches in Moscow and St Petersburg, which we have seen and heard in recent days, fit well into this scenario. Those outbursts which were heard on Bolotnaya Square, often paid for, according to eye witnesses, by the organisers of these events, are an expression of passion and hatred in our Motherland, a country which has embarked on a peaceful path.'

Moscow demonstrations

With every succeeding statement by authoritative representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate (MP), the church's attitude to the protesters became harsher, while its attitude to those in power was undeniably loyal. This process culminated in a meeting on 8 February in the Danilov Monastery, organised by Patriarch Kirill, between the leaders of religious organisations and Vladimir Putin, the Presidential candidate. Putin promised to increase significantly government funding for restoring church buildings, to allow Orthodox clergy to teach in schools, to promote theological courses in higher educational institu-

tions, and to give financial support to the church's social and educational projects. In reply the Patriarch expressed his complete support for Putin.

Most commentators have seen mere servility in the behaviour of the MP and direct promotion of the authorities' interests. But there is another interpretation. The Patriarch holds to a principled position which is in fact very different from that of the authorities. His political views have remained unnoticed not only because they are couched in diplomatic language, but also because they are so eccentric and therefore not taken seriously by journalists and analysts. These eccentric views were presented by the Patriarch in a sermon on 16 July 2011 commemorating Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia, exiled by Ivan the Terrible [he was canonised in 1652 when his relics were brought to Moscow from the Solovetsky Monastery, and a confession read out in which the ruling Tsar repented on behalf of Ivan the Terrible. *Ed*]:

> 'The deeds of Ivan the Terrible cannot be compared with what is happening in the modern world, with all its human suffering and injustices, with its starvation and disease, with wars fought for no clear reason, with the destruction of so many peace-loving and innocent people.' [1]

From these words it follows that our period which we are living through is more cruel, more immoral than that of Ivan the Terrible. Very few people today would agree with the Patriarch! Even Putin would not consider that under his regime life for Russians is worse than during the reign of Ivan the Terrible. So what is the intellectual basis for such an extraordinary idea?

The ROC's socio-political principles are set out in a series of official documents and in certain speeches of the Patriarch, but first and foremost in *The Foundations of the ROC's Social Doctrine*, published and adopted as the church's official position by the Holy Synod in 2000. Kirill, then Metropolitan of Smolensk and Vyazemsky and head of the MP's foreign relations department, played a central role in its preparation. This document affirms the ideal political structure for Orthodoxy to be the absolute monarchy of Byzantium with its principle of symphony between church and state, and furthermore that this ideal political structure was embodied in Russia's monarchy:

> 'The heritage of Russian monarchs was different from that of the Byzantines. For this and other historical reasons, the relationship between church and state in ancient Russia was more harmonious.'[2]

A democratic state adhering to the rule of law is seen simply as the result of secularisation which has to be accepted:

> 'The form and methods of government are to a great extent conditioned by the spiritual and moral state of society. With this understanding, the church accepts the appropriate choice of the people, or at least does not oppose it.'[3]

The ROC's leadership from time to time lets it be known that it does not consider democracy to be the right

path for Russia – they just 'do not oppose it'. The views of Fr Vsevolod Chaplin, head of the Holy Synod's Department for Cooperation between Church and Society, are typical of the church's top bureaucracy. He stated during a meeting with Duma deputies of the United Russia party, according to Interfax on 31 May 2012, that 'the people must mature in order to propose and choose a monarchical system' and 'any attempts to change radically the political structure would at worst lead to destabilisation, or at best to a parody of the ideal of monarchy which exists in the minds of our people'. The rejection of monarchy at the present time, however, does not imply that democracy would be preferable in Fr Chaplin's opinion: 'In Russia a strong centralised and personified form of rule is typical; without this nothing gets done in Russia.' He then added: 'we should also consider what should counterbalance, and has always counterbalanced, this strong central authority – the government's consultation with the people and the latter's participation in decision-making.' From other statements made by Fr Chaplin, the Patriarch and other church leaders it is clear that 'consultation' does not presuppose a parliament, elected by the people within a multi-party system, but rather some sort of cooperative consultative body appointed by the government. Here is a typical statement by Fr Chaplin: 'Such a body as the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation best suits the Russian spirit, whereas a parliament is not part of the Russian mental make-up.'[4] On 9 February 2010 he stated at a conference held at the Russian Academy for State Service that 'it is generally not clear whether a party-political system is possible in Russia'. Russia had developed its own forms of representation for the different layers of society, he continued, and so was not obliged to follow Western forms of democracy; in medieval Muscovy, *Zemskie sobory* had existed and the Tsars had consulted various social groups. The current government, in Chaplin's opinion, likewise preserved a sense of responsibility for the people, as illustrated by the creation of today's Public Chamber – a superior political institution, he claimed, to a parliament because it expressed more adequately people's views; its members were the leaders of various social groups, chosen not through an electoral campaign but appointed by the authorities. An important element in the imagined political order, as conceived by church leaders like Fr Chaplin, is their interpretation of 'civil society': the ROC claims that 80% of society call themselves Orthodox which makes the ROC the most important institution within civil society, and thus Patriarch Kirill the main spokesman for civil society.

Before the parliamentary elections Patriarch Kirill expressed his doubts a number of times about the advantages of a party-political battle. On 4 December 2011 he stated :

> 'You and I have willingly chosen a political system which presupposes a fight, the rivalry of people united in a political party, a system which divides society and the people...'

Faced with the mass protests against the falsification of the elections, the Patriarch remained silent during the following two weeks, while authoritative church leaders made various con-

Left to right: *Medvedev, Putin & the Patriarch*

tradictory statements. Fr Chaplin suggested that the church should help collect the complaints against electoral fraud and allow its representatives to help manage the forthcoming presidential election. Then on 11 December Fr Chaplin expressed the views of the rest of the ROC leadership at a conference in Germany: 'Should not the West sooner or later ask itself whether it needs to re-examine its working social models which are not based on continuous cooperation between the different branches of government, of political forces and social groups...?' Soon the church leadership banned clergy from helping to run the elections and a few democratically inclined priests, who had worked as observers, were harshly attacked in the church media and at church meetings.

The church's initial position – that the government should listen to the protesters and that the general dissatisfaction was justified – quickly evolved into something quite different. Soon the church leadership no longer mentioned the basic demands of the demonstrators (to examine the election results, to try those who had broken electoral rules, to organise new elections after the democratisation of electoral law) as if they had never existed. The ROC's official position now was that officials had failed in many ways, that the police had infuriated the people and provoked them onto the streets, and that this had been used by irresponsible politicians in the pay of Russia's enemies in the West. Sharp condemnation of the protest movement's leaders grew by the day, as did hysterical fears about the dangers inherent in the movement's future development: the leaders of the protest movement are interested in destabilising the country, they want to reduce the country to chaos! They are following the orders of Russia's enemies abroad! There is a plot to get Russia down onto its knees! The ROC's accusations that the protest leaders were anti-religious were totally misplaced: nearly all of them were in fact loyal to the ROC and the majority were practising Orthodox.

The ROC's leadership remained in principle faithful to their preference for an authoritarian government with no possibility of an alternative. The Patriarch's rhetoric every day increased the danger threatening Russia – he referred to 'chaos', 'social unrest', 'civil war', 'blood', 'the country's collapse'. In

the eyes of the church leadership Russia in the form of a legal democratic state was inconceivable, indeed horrific. Authoritative clergy belonging to the church's mainstream began one after another to warn against the dangers posed by those fighting for free and honest elections. Even church services were held in some dioceses at which prayers were said for deliverance from impending disaster (and *ipso facto* in support of Putin). Support for Putin became equated with support for a traditional Russian political order and protection from Western political infection. As the day of the presidential election approached the ROC fulfilled the role of an active and uncompromising supporter of the Putin regime as established by 2012.

What is the explanation for the ROC's somewhat original political philosophy? In today's world there are no significant Christian churches which in principle support authoritarianism. By the middle of the 20th century all Christian denominations (including those which were fundamentalist in their theological and moral teaching) except for the ROC had come to support democratisation. Is this the result of Russia's history as an autocracy? Many other Christian churches have existed within despotic, authoritarian states for nearly all their history, and yet they (often quite easily, without excessive heart searching) rejected 'traditionally structured social and political life'. Indeed the Christian faith proved the most fertile soil for the development of democracy. Why does this general principle appear not to apply to Russia? The explanation lies in the ROC's recent history as an institution within the Soviet system.

History through the hands of Joseph Stalin played a mean trick on the ROC. After its total repression in the 1920s and 1930s, which led to the liquidation of legally organised church life, Stalin decided to revive Russian Orthodoxy. The legalisation of the ROC became desirable and possible because the Stalin regime rejected the ideology of world revolution and Marxist internationalism, and evolved towards statism and Russian traditionalism. At the end of World War II when Stalin restored the Moscow Patriarchate as a tightly organised body with clearly delineated functions, the ROC was isolated from the rest of society within a peculiar ghetto. She was permitted to exist in this ghetto but not to overstep clearly defined limits; she had to show total and unconditional loyalty to the regime (as did other individuals and organisations). What was behind this loyalty to a regime which declared one of its basic principles to be militant atheism and which persecuted believers, killing thousands of them in labour camps?

Patriarch Sergi (Stragorodsky) who received his ecclesiastical position from the hands of Stalin, suggested an original concept of church-state relations: 'patriotic service'. What did this mean? The church saw itself as an ideological supporter of the authoritarian Moscow rulers, acting as a shield against 'internal disturbances' and 'destructive Western influence.'[5] The powerful Russian state, crushing everything in its path on its way to gaining total power over its people and the surrounding world, took on the qualities of a para-religious entity. The nature of this state and the values it established were secondary, unimpor-

tant because the Christian worldview was utterly alien to the Stalinist official world; patriotic service had of necessity to choose the Russian state (it had nothing in common with its ideology) as its object of love. The Orthodox people had to serve sacrificially and unreservedly its own Russian state, even though it was atheistic and murderous.

Today it is difficult to understand what fears and qualms of conscience had to be overcome by the clergy, how many moral and intellectual hurdles had to be crossed in order to love the Stalinist regime. After such self-imposed hard labour it was difficult to change. The two inseparable parts of this political position – the external (resistance to the West) and the internal (support for a one-person authoritarian political structure) – were consistently and openly acknowledged by the ROC. The emptiness of the Soviet state as an ideal, however, was gradually given a peculiar romantic content by believers: they admired medieval and pre-revolutionary Russian society and condemned all that brought progress in succeeding centuries, although this was often thanks to the initiative of the church. To them progress became regression, which would end with the complete destruction of the church[6] and then to secularisation and democratisation. As a result even many democratic and humanitarian ideas accepted by Orthodox believers before the Revolution, and in the post-soviet period, were rejected. No wonder Patriarch Kirill thinks that the age of Ivan the Terrible was better than the rule of Vladimir Putin!

From the autumn of 2011 the socio-political situation changed fundamentally. After 20 years of hibernation, Russia once more started moving towards democracy and a legal government. The ROC's leadership managed to define its position clearly: it would resist the democratic movement and support authoritarianism. How dangerous is such a position to Russian society? The many surveys of the last 20 years reveal that the ROC's authority in the political arena has sunk to an all-time low (as distinct from its authority on morals, religious teaching and even culture). The good sense of Russians tells them that to follow the church's calls to service and to stop defending their rights and freedoms will neither help save their souls nor contribute to the wellbeing of their fellows. The anti-democratic activity of the church leadership does of course help to block the country's democratisation and helps spread cynicism, apathy and all kinds of fears and phobias. But this opposition is insignificant as the ROC does not constitute an authoritative political force.

How destructive to the Orthodox Church itself is its position? This is more difficult to answer. All depends on how inflexibly the church leadership holds onto its 'romantic' political doctrine. At all events an anti-clerical reaction is unavoidable. 'Delirium', 'frenzy', 'an Orange plague' (well, maybe Orange, but why a plague?), 'a conspiracy of Russia's enemies' – all these vivid exaggerations directed at those participating in the democratic movement will not be easily forgotten. However, the anti-clerical mood will probably not erupt with much force. The ROC takes reasonable care after all. When and if the government's

conflict with the democratic movement reaches a certain point, the ROC's leadership will probably bury its current political theories in its archives before it is too late. During the recent electoral crisis a few Orthodox priests actively and publicly spoke out against the falsification of the elections. They were strongly criticised but not punished. As the democratic movement develops the number of such priests and Orthodox activists will progressively grow. If the church leadership is sensible and does not seriously persecute them, the activity of such priests could clearly dampen anti-clerical feeling. Furthermore, public opinion in Russia has a tendency to give the ROC the benefit of the doubt and to turn a blind eye on its political moves. Today's small anti-clerical circles do not sufficiently take this into account. Russian society feels a strong nostalgia for 'the old country' which Orthodoxy has come to symbolise. The state of the Russian people (weak social connections and solidarity, social atomisation, demoralisation, lack of confidence in its own strength and in existing institutions) is such that they really do need a church which is concerned about society, a church which is independent, strong and healthy both morally and intellectually, a church which has awakened from its Stalinist intellectual slumber. And there's still a chance: the ROC could meet the people's needs.

The ROC is of course not the only Christian denomination in Russia, so how have the rest reacted? The Russian religious world is divided into two groups with unequal rights: 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' religions. The traditional religions – which are supported by the government and have more rights – are Judaism, Islam, Buddhism (Buddhism can only use the benefits of its traditional status in three republics – Buryatia, Kalmykia and Tuva) and the ROC. The traditional religions value their privileged status and try to get maximum advantage from it. Until the adoption of the 1997 Law, on which this status is based, neither Judaism nor official Islam had such a privileged position within the state. Problems in relations with the state rarely face Judaism today; Muslims have more problems, although their position is far better than before 1997 and better than that of non-traditional religious groups. Jews and Muslims resolve their problems in the seclusion of government offices without any public confrontation. During the electoral crisis of 2011-2012 the Jewish and official Muslim leaders actively demonstrated their support for the United Russia party and then for Putin.

The position of 'non-traditional' religions is different; at least 80% of them are Protestants or Catholics. In the 1990s they took an active part in political and social life. Often Protestant congregations took a public stand during elections at different levels in support of democracy and supported democratic candidates in pre-electoral campaigns. But the situation changed radically after 2000. During the past 12 years 'non-traditional' denominations have been subjected to continuous pressure and all kinds of restrictions on their civil rights and on their mission. They have faced growing difficulties over renting premises for services and obtaining land for building a church, over their youth work,

religious teaching and social work projects. In addition there have been trials in various parts of Russia against Pentecostals, which have resembled in their absurdity the witch hunts of the Middle Ages. Gradually the majority of congregations of religious minorities have stopped expressing their political views in any form, and in general have isolated themselves from the surrounding world. However, with rare exceptions, they have at least not publicly supported the government in power. The most striking example of such an exception is Bishop Sergei Ryakhovsky, President of the Russian United Union of Pentecostals, Christians of Evangelical Faith (RUUPCEF). RUUPCEF is one of three main unions of Russian Pentecostals and includes among its membership a number of neo-Pentecostal communities: it is an amorphous, umbrella union which exercises little influence on its member organisations, but offers some, admittedly weak, guarantees. Bishop Ryakhovsky has publicly come out in support of Putin and United Russia, but represents strictly speaking just himself and his administration.

Yuri Sipko (right) *talking to Igor Kolgarev*

The position usually adopted by the majority of Christian minorities is well summed up by Fr Igor Kovalevsky, secretary of the Conference of Catholic Bishops in Russia, when interviewed by *Portal-credo.ru* on 29 December 2011:

> 'The church does not usually comment on political events... As a Russian citizen I can have my own opinion about the political events and meetings which have recently taken place, but I keep this to myself in my role as an official representative of the church and do not wish my opinion on such and such a political matter to be equated with the opinion of the Catholic Church.'

Against this background an unusual and brave exception is the position taken by the main association of Russian Baptists, the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians and Baptists (RUECB). From 2002-2010 Pastor Yuri Sipko, the product of generations of Baptist prisoners of conscience and an uncompromising supporter of traditional Baptist values, headed this Union. Under his leadership what remained from the Soviet period was removed: independent congregations were re-established, the level of biblical knowledge was raised, the servile attitude to the government from Soviet days was rejected. Yuri Sipko often spoke out in no uncertain terms against the undermining of democracy and the illegalities of the government. Under him the leadership of RUECB was replaced and now consists of people

who support his policies. According to RUECB's statutes its leader cannot remain in office for more than two four -year terms, and so in March 2010 a new chairman, Alexei Smirnov, was elected. He is not as outspoken as Yuri Sipko, but having been part of the underground Council of Churches in Soviet times, he is close to Sipko in his views.

Meanwhile Sipko continues as one of the most authoritative Russian Protestant leaders. In an interview with *Portal-credo.ru* on 19 December 2011, he spoke with the passion of an Old Testament prophet:

> 'As a citizen I have felt deeply disillusioned... There is no free press, no free political competition. The authorities have clobbered anyone who simply wanted to make their voice heard and to communicate their anxieties to those in power. Even before the elections we knew about various forms of falsification – threats of dismissal, orders to vote a particular way. Thinking people who spoke the truth were deprived of a voice, democratic parties were disbanded and refused registration... I judge the situation to be the most unpropitious... The cause is the immorality of those in power, at every level, in every branch of the administration – the lies of top officials supported by the Procuracy, the police, the courts, lies circulated by the press which are destroying the nation. No one trusts anyone. Tens of thousands of complaints from witnesses sent to court are ignored. The government pays no attention to the accounts of falsification on the internet. Medvedev meanwhile states that the elections were fair. The General Procurator repeats this... Can you see signs of a democratic state here in Russia? At what stage will a Russian citizen be capable of influencing what happens in his town or village?'

During the electoral crisis Yuri Sipko was the only authoritative religious leader to have criticised the government openly and forcefully, and to have called for the democratisation of Russia.

On 4 March 2012 the presidential election was held during which Vladimir Putin received 64% of the vote, and was thus elected President during the first round. The leaders and activists in the democratic movement did not recognise these results, and started to plan various forms of protest as part of their demand for the democratisation of social and political life and for early parliamentary and presidential elections. By all accounts Russia has entered a long period of struggle for democracy. Russian believers will have plenty of time to enter the fray, and indeed to change the camp to which they currently belong.

---

[1] http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1578058.html.

[2] *Основы социальной концепции Русской православной церкви.* М: Издательство Московской Патрархии, 2000 pp.50-52.

[3] *Ibid*. p.58.

[4] www.portal-credo.ru, 9 February 2006.

[5] D.E. Furman: 'Религия атеизм и перестройка' in *На пути к свободе совести*, M., 1989, pp.7-19.

[6] See Patriarch Kirill's address to university leaders in Kiev on 27 July 2011, http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/1591084.html.

Stalin Cult: its Religious Overtones

by Stephen Miles

Neo-Stalinists at St Petersburg's Victory Day celebrations, May 2011

With the death of Stalin in 1953 steps were taken to dismantle the 'cult of personality' which had grown up around him in the Soviet Union. This was accelerated after the famous 'Secret Speech' given by Khrushchev on 25 February 1956 whereby Stalin was denounced as a brutal despot who had made cataclysmic errors. In 1961 his body was removed from its place in Lenin's mausoleum and an insidious state sponsored *damnatio memoriae* instigated. This was an unusual about-turn, however, for there had been an enormous outpouring of grief at his funeral, marking the intensity of a cult which had affected very large numbers of Soviet citizens. The Stalin cult is remarkable because of its strong quasi-religious characteristics and the mystical appeal of the Leader (*vozhd*) which chimes with the age-old Orthodox nature of Russian society.

In 2011 I travelled through northern Russia during a magnificent early summer. On 9 May I joined the enormous crowd at St Petersburg's Victory Day celebrations, and within the festive atmosphere witnessed the deep levels of pride and respect modern Russians feel towards the heroes and survivors of the Second World War (or as they prefer to call it, the Great Patriotic War). Simple yet determined cries of thanks reverberated through Nevsky

Procession of the Cross, St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod

ceded by a lantern, are taken in circumambulation three times around the cathedral. It was accompanied by the choir's beautiful polyharmonic *Trisagion* interrupted only by the congregation chanting the Paschal greeting: 'Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!' Periodically a priest asperged the crowd with holy water, prompting surprised laughter from the children.

Prospekt, and the orange and black ribbon of St George, Russia's highest award for military honour, was being widely worn. Vantage points were as rare as hens' teeth and even the lamp-posts were occupied by precarious watchers undertaking risky balancing acts. At the end of the long procession I took a photograph which shows a group of Communist sympathisers holding a placard of Stalin whom they venerate. Such placards are not uncommon in these processions and are often seen in May Day parades.

I was struck by the similarity between these two processions. The Stalin cult borrowed many aspects of the Orthodox tradition, including iconography and ritual. The image of the deity in the form of the icon was paralleled by that of the Leader (*vozhd*) with the same emphasis on the power of the visual to help develop a numinous sense of awe. The image was used as a

Procession of the Cross, St Sophia Cathedral

In contrast, a week later I was in Novgorod at the St Sofia Cathedral where I witnessed a magnificent religious procession. This was a procession of the cross (*krestnyi khod*) where the cross and accompanying icons, pre-

Nevsky Prospekt, Victory Day celebrations

focus for veneration; it was also a source of reassurance that a benevolent and omnipresent superior was there who had the interests of the worshipper at heart. The neo-Stalinist banners which I saw were really a kind of icon with all the mystical powers associated with the deity; they mirrored highly idealised images of the man which portrayed him high and lifted-up like a god. At the parade Stalin would have conferred his benediction upon the faithful in a quasi-Orthodox manner. And central to Stalin's image was the power of his name (*imya*), with its symbolic and mythic associations. This was closely entwined with Soviet patriotism: during the war soldiers were said to have fought and died in battle proclaiming Stalin's name, which to my mind conjures up a rather uncomfortable comparison with the 'name of Jesus'. Those wounded in battle were encouraged not to despair but to 'press your wound, dry your tears and repeat the sacred name aloud'.[1]

The Stalin cult both borrowed aspects of Orthodoxy and rejected others. Music was important in Soviet processions but tended to employ the collectivist and regimented military tradition, a departure from the intimate spirituality of Orthodox church music. Soviet official processions tended to be more ostentatiously grandiose, with their imposed discipline, tight organisation, and vast marshalled crowds, than their religious predecessors. In Orthodox processions the clergy's liturgical robes contribute to the spectacle (as does the use of incense) while also distancing the clergy from the laity. This was eschewed by the Soviet regime which preferred a more egalitarian form of collective dress and spectacle, based upon homogeneity rather than visual complexity.

Today, in continuing this cult the neo-Stalinists are tapping into a visceral tradition embedded within Russian culture. As a country dominated by

ethnicity and localism Russia has always needed a vehicle for consensus which was provided by the worship of the saints and the father figure of the Tsar – a cult linked to rural societies with their strong patriarchal respect for the elder (*starosta*).

In a previous *Keston Newsletter* Fr Pankrati, the abbot of the St Nicholas Monastery in Rylsk, stated that 'Russians still have a Soviet mentality, they like power' although they 'are like children, naïve and trusting – open to God'.[2] This dual deference to authority and simple trust was effectively harnessed in Soviet society in the 'cult of personality' where the Leader had to symbolise something greater than himself. The focus on the example of the Leader could be used to concentrate attention on a uni-dimensional political system, although original Bolshevik tenets always regarded the Leader as only *representative* of the Party. It is ironic that Stalin himself adopted a lukewarm attitude to his own cult, at times referring to it as 'unbolshevik' or 'philistine'. Despite this, the Stalin cult was promoted and borrowed convenient parts of the Orthodox tradition, exploiting a powerful, if not primeval, nerve in Russia's collective psyche. Fr Alexander Men thought that Russians suffered from a spiritual sickness, a kind of longing for God which had been perverted into the deification of the dictator in Soviet times.[3]

At the end of the procession on Nevsky Prospekt I tried to cross over to the Kazan Cathedral through a dense mass of spectators 25% of whom, I later learnt, according to a recent poll, would vote for Stalin if he were still alive.[4] Whether this reflects simply a desire for strong governance or a genuine nostalgia for old times is unclear. What is certain is that Russia faces new challenges with an increasingly autocratic President, and only time will tell whether those with a simple and trusting nature will maintain their patience and resilience. Perhaps more ancient Orthodox values, expressed through a time-honoured liturgy, have a new role to play in Russia's modern situation?

---

[1] Quoted in Roberts, E. & Shukman, A. (eds.): *Christianity For The Twenty-First Century: The Prophetic Writings of Alexander Men*, New York, Continuum, 1996, p.134.
[2] Dennen, X., 'Where Nightingales Sing', *Keston Newsletter*, No 12, 2010, p. 26.
[3] Roberts and Shukman, *Ibid*., p. 108.
[4] Mendelson, S.E. & Gerber, T.P., 'Failing the Stalin test', *Foreign Affairs*, January/ February, 2006. Available from: http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/61367/sarah-e-mendelson-and-theodore-p-gerber/failing-the-stalin-test.

Stephen Miles *has just finished a PhD in Heritage and Tourism at Glasgow University. His research interests include ideas of meaning and place at heritage sites and the concept of the* numen*. He has conducted fieldwork at historic battlefield sites in Britain and France, and aims to investigate the politico-social impact of the centenary of the First World War from 2014.*

Religious-Philosophical Seminar in Leningrad

by Milutin Janjic

Soviet culture did not allow room for independent creativity and so many nonconformists among the Soviet intelligentsia, who did not support the official Communist Party line in their intellectual or artistic work, began to look for alternative outlets. They set up groups where they could present the works of what they called 'the second culture'. One such group was a religious-philosophical seminar named #37 which was founded in Leningrad in 1973[1] and continued its activity until 1986. It represented one of the few Russian Orthodox Christian movements among the laity, and existed on a semi-illegal basis. Its members were young members of the Soviet intelligentsia in Leningrad, who mostly disagreed with official Soviet ideology and wanted to explore other worldviews. Since the Seminar #37's participants were interested in art and literature as well as theology, the subjects studied by the Seminar particularly focused on areas where culture and religion interwove.

Although Seminar #37 lasted for 13 years and played an influential and active role among certain circles of the young and rebellious Soviet intelligentsia, as well as among liberal artists in Leningrad, it remains mostly unknown to the public at large. In the historiography focusing primarily on themes related to nonconformist factions and activities in Soviet society after Stalin's death in 1953, there are not many works about Seminar #37.[2] Thus, the goal of this article is to bring to light relevant sources on the Seminar, and to list for the first time the documents and published articles about the Seminar which are held in the Keston Center's archive and library at Baylor University. These documents offer important information for further academic research on the whole religious underground movement in the Soviet Union. Acquaintance with the primary documents from the Keston Archive should offer an incentive to other scholars to continue this research and improve academic understanding of what is an important subject.

The primary documents and other sources found in the Keston Archive can be divided into four periods:

1973–1978: documents related to the beginning and early stages of the Seminar.

1978–1980: documents on the development of the Seminar.

1980–1991: documents written outside the Soviet Union, before the fall of Communism, and published in various journals.

Post-1991: articles written in the post-soviet period.

All the above documents are separated into two groups: the first contains

documents (unpublished and published) which were written by Seminar participants; the second includes secondary sources written about the Seminar, its participants and activities. Mostly published articles written by scholars and authors interested in the life of the Seminar relate to the last two periods, 1980–1991 and post-1991.

By following this outline of the Keston Archive material it is possible to trace the gradual development of the Seminar and to observe its ideology and structure. Through these documents the ideas, themes, interests, questions, and challenges which faced writers and Seminar participants can be analysed. The documents also present other aspects and activities of the Seminar, which gradually formed its ideological response to official Soviet ideology.

First Period (1973-1978)

The Seminar, as did many other similar unofficial movements and groups in the former Soviet Union, issued its own *samizdat* journal named *Journal #37*. *Samizdat* (self-published) literature played an important and influential role in Soviet society, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. As an underground movement, the Seminar used the journal to inform the broader public in the Soviet Union, especially certain social groups such as young intellectuals and artists in Leningrad, about alternative views that differed from the official Communist Party line. Viktor Krivulin (1944-2001), one of the Seminar's leaders, states in his article about *Journal #37* that 21 issues were published by the Seminar[3] between 1973-1981. Unfortunately only five issues are in the Keston Archive. Two of them belong to the first period.

The first issue of *Journal #37* held in the Archive is No 5 for May 1976.[4] Its contents are divided into several sections: philosophy and religion, poetry, prose, documents, translated texts, and chronicles. The section on philosophy and religion contains two articles: *Anonimnoe Khristianstvo v Filosofii*[5] (Anonymous Christianity in Philosophy) by Tatiana Goricheva and *Gegel i ekzistentsialnaya filosofiya* (Hegel and Existential Philosophy) by Boris Glebov. The poetry section contains two works: a *poema* (epic) named *Dva vvedenia v igru stekliannykh bus* (Two Introductions to the Glass Bead Game) written by Aleksandr Fedorovich Ozhiganov (it is divided into two 14-part cycles); and another *poema* entitled *Shestnadtsat skreplennykh listkov so stikhami vesny sisokosnogo goda* (Sixteen Stapled Sheets of Paper with Leap-Year Spring Verses) in 17 parts by Viktor Krivulin, written during March and April 1976. In the prose section of *Journal #37* there are also two works: *Rasskaz o smerti i pokhoronakh* (Story on Death and Funerals) written in May 1969 by F. Chirskov; and *Chertova dyuzhina rasskazov* (A Baker's Dozen of Short Stories) by V. Danin (in 13 parts) written 1967-1970. The documents section contains three letters, written in 1915 by Second Lieutenant Petrovsky, which were found by Yuri Olshanky and Nal Podolsky in a Moscow apartment and published for the first time. This is followed by an article about the letters, *Tri pisma podporuchika Petrovskogo, posledstvie k publikatsii*, by Arkadi Dragomoshchenko. Lev Shestov's article *Borba protiv ochevidnostei*

(Struggling against the Obvious) is the first article in the translation section, followed by a translation of Martin Heidegger's 1929 lecture in Freiburg, *Shto takoe metafizika?* (What is Metaphysics?). This first issue of *Journal #37* also lists lectures due be given at the Seminar during May 1976: two on theology ('The works of St Gregory the Theologian' and 'Religion of the Old Testament'), and two on Russian/ Soviet literature ('Poem as a genre in poetry at the beginning of the 20th century: Andrei Belyi's *Christ is Risen*' and 'The poem in modern Leningrad poetry').

Another issue of *Journal #37* in the Keston Archive which belongs to this first period is No 6 for June-August 1976.[6] This issue follows the same structure as No 5. The first section is devoted to philosophy with an article by Boris Ivanov *Existenzialismus?-Vorlei* (Existentialism and Intermediate Consumption). The next section contains 30 poems by Elena Shvarts and eight short stories by Nikolai Konyaev. The translation section contains three works by Jiddu Krsishnamurti (1895-1986): *Problema obrazovania* (The Problem of Education); *Problema svobody* (The Problem of Freedom); and *Svoboda i lyubov* (Freedom and Love). The last part of issue No 6 on chronicles contains an article, *Khristianstvo i etika* (Christianity and Ethics), by Tatiana Goricheva, followed by comments from other seminar participants.

The Keston Archive also holds several documents written by Seminar participants which belong to this first period. Tatiana Goricheva and Viktor Krivulin are co-authors of *Evangelskie dialogi* (Evangelical Dialogues) which was published in *Vestnik RKhD*[7] No 118 (II, 1976), pp.84-86. In October 1977 Tatiana Goricheva presented her article *Khristianstvo i kultura*[8] (Christianity and Culture) to the Seminar and on 17 February 1978 her article *Khristianstvo i kultura, zdes i teper*[9] (Christianity and Culture, Here and Now).

From this first period there are two secondary sources about Seminar #37 in the Archive: *Vestnik RKhD* No 121 (II, 1977) contains two articles, *Religiozno-filosofsky seminar v Leningrade* (The Religious-Philosophical Seminar in Leningrad) pp. 169-174, by E. Giryaev, and *Obzor materialov opublikovannykh v samizdatskom zhurnale "37"* (Survey of Material Published in the Samizdat *Journal #37*) pp. 294-302, by N. Giryaev.

Second Period (1978-1980)

The second period covers the stage when the Seminar was developing and goes as far as the enforced exile of Tatiana Goricheva[10], one of the Seminar's main leaders. During this period the Seminar continued publishing *Journal #37*: the Keston Archive has two issues, No 17 dated February 1979 (222pp)[11] and No 19 dated September and October 1979.[12]

No 17 reveals the names of the editorial board: Tatiana Goricheva, Viktor Krivulin, Evgeni Pazukhin and its secretary Natalia Malakhovskaya. There are some structural differences in the contents which reveal the gradual development of the Seminar and its activities. The first section entitled *Stikhi i o stikhakh* (Poetry and about Poetry) is dedicated to Soviet/Russian

literature and begins with the article *Poezia, kultura, i smert v gorode Moskve* (Poetry, Culture and Death in the City of Moscow). This is followed by *Stikhi* (Verses) by Vsevolod Nekrasov (1934-2009) and then a third work in three parts containing introductory explanations and poems by another Russian dissident writer and artist, Dmitri Prigov (1940-2007).

The second section of issue No 17 is devoted to the philosophy of creativity and includes three works: *Zhivoe ili mertvoe vremia v romanakh Dostoevskogo ili bezumie protiv besov* (Living or Dead Time in the Novels of Dostoevsky, or Madness versus the Devils) by Viktor Dmitriev Azarian; Vladimir Nabokov's text *Nash gospodin Chichikov* (Our Mr Chichikov) from his book on Gogol; and *Zametki o proze A. Platonova* (Observations on the Prose of A. Platonov) in five chapters by S. Berdukhin. The third section of No 17 is dedicated to philosophy and religion, and contains one article, *Psikhoanaliz i askeza* (Psychoanalysis and Asceticism) by Tatiana Goricheva. The section on publications contains, again, only one work: *Sizifov kamen* (Sisyphus' Stone) by Golov. The last section in No 17 on chronicles starts with an article by the editors of the journal *Obshchina* (Community) which is followed by Evgeni Pazukhin's interview with Vladimir Poresh. Mention is made of another important Orthodox religious seminar, the *Christian Seminar*, in which Vladimir Poresh played an important part. Several answers to a questionnaire conclude both this section and the journal itself.

Issue No 19 contains the following sections: on poetry, prose, religion and philosophy, Moscow conceptualism and chronicles (the last section is missing). It begins with 33 poems by A. Mironov and Elena Shvarts. The next section is devoted to a piece of prose by Elena Shvarts, *Semeinye predaniya* (Family Traditions) in four chapters. The section on religion and philosophy contains two articles: O. Genisaretsky's *O lichnom tvorchestve v tselostnosti srednevekovoi kultury* (On Personal Creativity within the Integrity of Medieval Culture) and Tatiana Goricheva's *Paradoksy zhenskoi emansipatsii* (Paradoxes of Female Emancipation). In the section on Moscow conceptualism, the editors chose to publish an article by the Russian painter Francisco Infante-Arana (1943) *Vvedenie k "artefaktu" – igre osnovannoi na sootvetstvii iskusstvennogo i prirodnogo* (Introduction to "*Artefact*" – a Game Based on the Relationship between the Artificial and the Natural).

The Keston Archive has several articles by Seminar participants from the second period of which some appeared in journals published outside the Soviet Union. The Archive contains an article by Goricheva entitled *Ob ekzistentsialno-religioznom znachenii neofitsialnoi kultury*[13] (On the Existential Religious Meaning of Unofficial Culture) and another by her from 1979, *Khristianskoe vozrozhdenie i ideologia* (Christian Revival and Ideology) which was written for a potential collection which the Seminar wanted to publish in 1979.[14] That year Seminar participants wrote two appeals against the imprisonment of Vladimir Poresh.[15] On 27 December 1979 *Russkaya Mysl* (No 3288, p.5) published Goricheva's article *Khristianin i*

mir (The Christian and the World).[16] In the same year an article was written about a meeting between Seminar #37 and the Christian Seminar, *Vstrecha dvukh zhurnalov* (Meeting of Two Journals), and is dated 12 December 1979.[17] The following year some Seminar participants published a petition for the return of the Soviet Red Army from Afghanistan (this appeared in *Russkaya Mysl* No 3297, 29 February 1980). In 1980 Goricheva published two articles in Posev's *samizdat* journal *Volnoe slovo*: the first entitled *Raduisya, slez nevinnykh izbavlenie* (Rejoice, Solace of the Innocent's Tears) appeared in No 38 (pp. 27-33); the second entitled *Khristianstvo, kultura, politika* (Christianity, Culture, Politics) appeared in No 39 (pp. 13-19).

Third Period (1980-1991)

The third period begins in 1980 rather than 1981 because of the enforced exile of Tatiana Goricheva from the Soviet Union in the summer of 1980. The Keston Archive has one issue of *Journal #37* for this period, published in August-October 1980. The entire issue should consist of 200 pages, but Keston's copy has only 117 pages.[18] It begins with an editors' introduction followed by a section on philosophy containing an article entitled *Filosofia i vremia* (Philosophy and Time) by I. Suitsidov. The next section on history contains an article by B. Konin, *Sokrat i Boris* (Socrates and Boris). The third section is devoted to two articles about the visual arts: *K ponimaniyu kontrrelefov Tatlina* (Understanding Tatlin's Counter-reliefs) by A. Rappoport and *Dve kultury v odnoi kulture* (Two Cultures in One Culture) by Boris Grois, a prominent Seminar member. The next section is devoted to translations – four in total: the first is by George Orwell, *Statii o literature* (Articles on Literature); the next two are interviews – one with Mircea Eliade, *Poiski absolyuta* (In Search of the Absolute); the other with B. A. Levi, *Tverdynya monoteizma* (The Stronghold of Monotheism); while the fourth article is entitled *Postigaya nepostizhimoe* (Attaining the Unattainable) by D. Grizoni. The articles from the sections on culture, reviews, and chronicles are missing.[19]

The next group of documents from the third period consists of interviews given mostly by Tatiana Goricheva to various journals after her exile to Western Europe. Thus they can be found as published articles in Western journals. As stated earlier, these documents do not belong to the category of unpublished archival materials, but are nevertheless listed here as they were found in various journals at the Keston Center.

An article belonging to this group of sources is Goricheva's interview[20] entitled *Tserkov i tvorchestvo* (The Church and Creativity) but Keston's file includes no information on where or when it was published, although it is clear from the content that Goricheva gave this interview after her exile from the Soviet Union. One of the first published articles from this period is another Goricheva interview given to the journal *Obzor*, but also republished in the journal *Religia i ateizm v SSSR* (No 12, December 1980). Another article summarises a lecture given by Goricheva in Paris which was published in *Russkaya Mysl* (No 3350, 5

March 1981, p.12) entitled *Problemy religioznogo vozrozhdeniya v Sovetskom Soyuze* (Problems of Religious Revival in the Soviet Union). In 1981 Goricheva also published *O nashem religioznom opyte* (On Our Religious Experience) in *Veche* (No 1, 1981, pp.27-40). The following year on 1 April 1982 Boris Grois reviewed for Radio Free Europe current *samizdat* journals (including *Journal #37*) and described Leningrad's 'second culture' in *Zhurnaly vtoroi kultury v Leningrade* (Journals of the Second Culture in Leningrad). In 1983 Goricheva published *Mechta o garmonii i dukhovnaya bran* (A Dream about Harmony and Spiritual Warfare) in *Beseda* No 1 (1983, pp. 98-110) and *Yurodivye ponevole* (Reluctant Holy Fools) in *Beseda* No 2 (1984, pp.54-86). In *Beseda* No 4 (1986, pp.84-98) she published *Epokha post-nigilisma* (The Age of Post-Nihilism). In 1987 she published *O religioznom v postmodernizme* (On the Religious Element in Post-Modernism) in *Kontinent* (No 53, pp.277-89). The final document held in the Keston Archive which belongs to this third period is the presentation given by Alyona Kozhevnikova to a symposium entitled 'Relationships between Churches and Governments in the USSR and other Eastern European States' which was held at Baylor University on 1-2 April, 1985. The title of her presentation was 'Religious Revival in the Russian Orthodox Church: Fact or Fiction'.[21]

Fourth Period (post-1991)

The Keston Archive only has two articles about Seminar #37 and its participants for this period: both of these were published in Keston's journal *Religion, State and Society* which can be found in the Keston Center's library. The first, *Charting the Russian Religious Renaissance*, is by Evgeni Pazukhin, one of the active members of the Seminar,[22] while the other, entitled *Religious Experiences of the Soviet Dissidents*, is by Philip Boobbyer.[23]

Conclusion

The chronological listing of the primary archival materials and other relevant sources on the Religious-Philosophical Seminar #37 offers further researchers easier access to the documents held at the Keston Center's archive and library. At the same time, this pioneering work intends to introduce an interdisciplinary approach, and to encourage scholars from various disciplines to explore the religious seminars in the former Soviet Union. The religious seminars can be analysed from various perspectives. In order to gain a complete picture it is necessary to work simultaneously on three projects: 1) to analyse materials held in various public or private archives; 2) to create a network of scholars and researchers who are interested in this topic in order to facilitate the exchange of databases with relevant sources; 3) to record stories by and about people who were directly involved in religious seminars in the Soviet Union. Such people are the most important primary sources and need to be interviewed while they are still alive. Their personal stories offer vital information about the intellectual, socio-economic, religious, ideological, psychological, and historical contexts in which religious seminars were created in the Soviet Union.

[1] Tatiana Goricheva, one of the Seminar's leading figures, wrote in her diary, *Talking About God is Dangerous*, that the first meeting of the Seminar took place in 1973. See Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of a Russian Dissident* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), p. 48; Jane Ellis in *The Russian Orthodox Church, A Contemporary History,* quoting Ye. Giryaev's article 'Religiozno-filosofsky seminar v Leningrade', *Vestnik RKhD* No 123 (1978), p. 169, writes that the first meeting took place in October 1975. See Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church, A Contemporary History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN; Indiana University Press, 1986), p.391.

[2] The subject is discussed in the following: Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous*; Philip Walters, 'The Ideas of the Christian Seminar', *RCL* Vol. 9, No 3-4 (Autumn, 1981): pp.111-126; Lyudmila Alexeeva, *Istoria Inakomyslia v SSSR* (Moscow, Russia: Vest, 1992); Olga Tchepournaya, 'The Hidden Sphere of Religious Searches in the Soviet Union: Independent Religious Communities in Leningrad from the 1960s to 1970s', *Sociology of Religion* 64, No 3 (2003): p.381; Philip Boobbyer, *Conscience, Dissent and Reform in Soviet Russia* (BASEES/Routledge series on Russia and East European studies, London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2005); M. V. Shkarovsky, *Russkaya Pravoslavnaya Tserkov pri Staline i Khrushcheve* (Moscow, Russia: Krutitskoe Patriarshee Podvore, 1999).

[3] Viktor Krivulin, 'Zhurnal #37', *Samizdat po materialam konferentsii 30 let nezavisimoi pechati 1950-80 gody,* ed. by V. Dolinin and B. Ivanov, (St Petersburg, Russia: Nauchno-Informatsionnyi Tsentr (NIC) Memorial, 1993): pp.74-81.

[4] Filed in the Keston Archive as SU 12/11.1 S '37 Group' 4 of 4.

[5] The same article was published in *Vestnik RKhD* No 123 (IV, 1977): pp.70-85.

[6] The Keston Archive file reference for this issue is SU 12/11.1 S '37' Group 4 of 4. The entire issue has 215 pages; however, the copy in the Keston Archive is missing 95 pages: pp.78-156 and pp.166-83.

[7] Articles published in journals are also presented as sources because they were found in journals or newsletters held in the Keston Archive.

[8] Filed in the Keston Archive as SU 12.11.1 S 37 Group 4 of 4.

[9] Filed in the Keston Archive as SU 12.11.1. S 37 Group 3 of 5. The article was published in *Russkaya Mysl*, No 3222 (21 September 1978): p.5.

[10] In 1979 Goricheva founded the first Soviet feminist movement with its journal, *Maria.*

[11] This is filed in the Keston Archive as SU 12/11.1 S '37 Group' No. 17 1 of 5.

[12] This is filed in the Keston Archive as SU 12/11/1 S '37 Group' 2 of 5. In the same file there are several articles which do not form part of the journal. These writings discuss the first Leningrad exhibition of geometrical art. The articles are: Sergei Sigitov, *Formalnyi metod v sovremennom prostranstvennom iskusstve dvukhmernoi ploskosti;* Leonid Borisov, *O vospriatii novykh yazykovykh form iskusstva;* Viktor P., *Problema khudozhestvennogo samoanaliza;* Sergei Sheff, *Monolog ob iskusstve;* Yu. V. Novikov, *Kritika i sovremennoe nonkonformistskoe iskusstvo.* An article by Evgeni Pazukhin, *Zerkalo slavy,* written in 1988, can also be found in the same file with the above-mentioned articles.

[13] See Keston Archive file SU 12.11.1 S '37 Group' 3 of 5.

[14] See Keston Archive files: SU Orth. 11. 22S, SU Orth. 15S, SU Orth. 15.1.S, SU Orth. 20S statistics, SU Orth. 21S, SU Orth. 22S.

[15] The appeals are filed in the Keston Archive under SU 12.11.1. S Christian Seminar 2 of 2.

[16] This article is filed in the Keston Archive under SU 12.11.1 S '37 Group' 4 of 4.

[17] This document is filed in the Keston Archive under SU 11. 10 PUBLICATIONS.

[18] This issue is filed in the Keston Archive under SU 12.11.1. S '37 Group' 3 of 4.

[19] The following articles are missing: from the culture section, *Kultura "Dva" Glavy iz knigi* by V. Paperni and materials from a discussion called *Iyudaizm i Khristianstvo.*

From the review section all three articles are missing: *V. Trostnikov. Mysli pered rassvetom* by K. Levin; *V. Sidorov. Vozvrashchenie* by A. Berezhnov; and *V. Rabinovich. Alkhimia kak fenomen srednevekovoi kultury* by B. Rozenfeld. Also, the single article *Otezd T. Gorichevoi* from the chronicle section is missing.

[20] Filed in the Keston Archive under SU 12. 25. 1 RELIGION AND INTELLIGENTSIA.

[21] Filed in the Keston Archive under SU BRHO No. 3-4. 1987S *Bulletin of Christian Public*. Sept-Oct. 1987.

[22] *RSS* Vol.23, No 1, 1995: pp.57-74.

[23] *RSS* Vol.27, No 3 & 4, 1999: pp.373-87.

***Milutin Janjic** is a PhD student at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California. He was awarded a Keston scholarship in 2011, and worked for six weeks in the Keston Center at Baylor.*

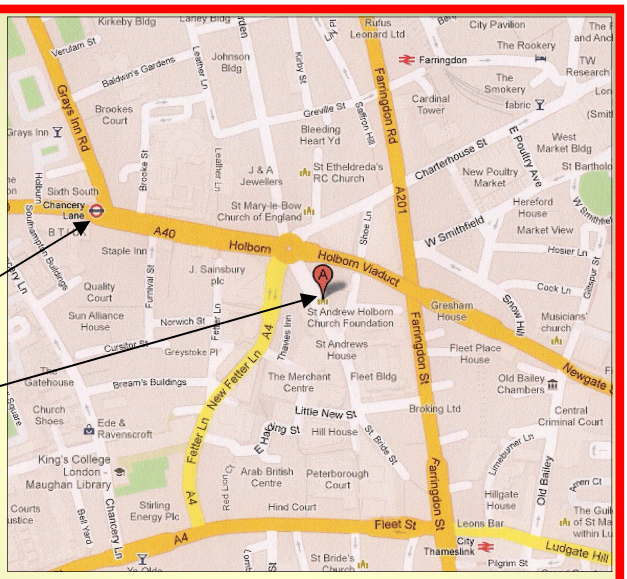
Keston AGM

Saturday 3rd November 2012

St Andrew's Holborn
7 St Andrew Street
London EC4A 3AB

Nearest underground: Chancery Lane

Entrance to 7 St Andrew Street



12.00 noon AGM

12.45 p.m. Lunch

2.00 p.m. 'The Romanian Orthodox Church before and after Communism', a talk by Alina Urs, specialist on church-state relations in Romania, working for the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

3.00 p.m. 'See No Evil? Soviet Religious Persecution, the Timber Gulag, and the British Labour Government, 1929-1931', a talk by Giles Udy, an independent academic and member of Keston's Council of Management.

4.00 p.m. Tea

Is This a Return to the Cold War?

by Michael Bourdeaux

Left to right: *Ekaterina Samutsevich, Maria Alyokhina, & Nadezhda Tolokonnikova in the dock (behind glass reflecting police uniforms) on 17 August, awaiting their sentence*

This article was published by the Church Times *on 3 August, and is reprinted with kind permission. In a letter published in* The Times *on 4 August, Michael Bourdeaux observed: 'The extent to which the outrageous trial in Moscow of the Pussy Riot group mirrors Soviet practice against dissidents is uncanny. The report that the three Pussy Riot defendants were denied both sleep and food (2 August), causing one to collapse, replicates the experience of Baptist Pastors Georgi Vins and Gennadi Kryuchkov, when they were put on trial on 29 November 1966.' The three defendants, Ekaterina Samutsevich, Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova were sentenced to two years in prison on 17 August. Ed.*

Riot it certainly was. The 30 seconds of the protest, recorded with an extra minute added on YouTube, are explosive, but the still photos in the British press gave no idea of the atmosphere of the desecration of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow on 21 February. The girl members of Pussy Riot, their faces concealed behind ski masks or balaclavas, set out to cause a scandal and they certainly succeeded. Three of them (more were involved) have appeared in court and a full trial is imminent.

They use the one name only, usually written in English (not Cyrillic) lettering. The girls, two of them young mothers and all three in their 20s, went free after this event, but were arrested over a week later. The defence claims that they were not the ones who demonstrated. The mothers should have been given bail, but the court refused. What exactly were they trying to achieve? The aim was laudable, even though many – outside Russia as well as inside – question the method. The girls consider that President Vladimir Putin's re-election – with its alleged irregularities – has signaled a retrogression towards the authoritarianism of the past. In particular, they aimed to pillory Patriarch Kirill and those form-

ing a phalanx around him in the Moscow Patriarchate for their open support of Putin, before as well as after the recent election.

They chose their location carefully. The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour is only a stone's throw from the Kremlin and opposite the Pushkin Museum, an area where tourists throng. It is deeply symbolic of current church-state co-operation, having been built in the 1990s to replace its predecessor destroyed by Stalin in 1931, an act of violence captured on film. The original, begun in 1839, was a monument to Russian nationalism, celebrating victory over Napoleon in 1812.

The violation of what, to the Moscow Patriarchate, is one of its most sacred spaces, could not have been more raucous or visually provocative. Four are visible in the group. They began by crossing themselves, then launched into a punk song, with recorded backing, crying, 'Virgin Mother, banish Putin… Your corrupt church leaders go in procession in black limousines – bring in the money. The Patriarch believes in Putin; better to believe in God.' In between, some expressions earn four stars for obscenity.

On 18 March Patriarch Kirill sent a circular letter to all Moscow churches to be read out after the liturgy. It was an 'Appeal to the Procurator General' encouraging parishioners to sign, requesting the maximum sentence for the girls, five years, for blasphemy and aggravated hooliganism (a nebulous concept originating in Soviet law). Then he conducted a service in which some 20 bishops in full regalia lined up to purge the blasphemy.

In preparing this article I spent several hours surveying the 723 entries on YouTube (the editors say they have omitted many others which are repetitive). I was immediately struck by this fact: the Patriarch has intensified the scandal he had hoped to nullify. The entries may not contain the names of world statesmen or church leaders, but by the time I had looked at the first 100, there was already evidence, with video clips, of popular protests in London, Germany, New York and San Francisco, Prague, Paris, Havana, Austria, Finland – the list goes on. Most surprising, perhaps, were one in Tel Aviv and reportage by Al Jazeera. Pop groups are being galvanized worldwide and foreign musicians have been voicing their support while on tour in Russia. On 22 July Franz Ferdinand the Red Hot Chili Peppers wore Pussy Riot T-shirts when they gave a concert in Moscow.

What of the more restrained protests in Russia? The circulation of appeals and documents asking for support in the West for the imprisoned girls takes us right back to the days of the Cold War and our attempts at Keston College to make the facts known. This time, though, the world's press seems to be taking the lead, but there are many appeals which have not achieved publicity and, as considered responses to the Moscow scandal, some need analysis here.

One which has been reported briefly in the press was signed by 203 representatives of the arts: theatre and film directors, actors, writers, publishers, musicians and artists, with more than 30,000 adding their names electronically. The list is impressive. It is one

that even the revived FSB (formerly KGB) will not be able to silence. They consider – in a brief statement – that what the three did was not a serious crime and pursuing it as such undermines the Russian judicial system.

One open letter by a retired priest, Fr Vyacheslav Vinnikov, is of great significance. He is 74 and studied for the priesthood in the difficult times of the late 1950s. He likens the baying of the mob for the blood of the three, led by the Patriarch, to those who called, 'Crucify him!' He goes on to ask whether the suffering of these girls who are 'completely innocent' does not move the heart of every Christian. This leads him on to a reflection – and it is here that the action of the Patriarch and the bishops has already caused serious internal harm to the cause of the church – that during the persecution in recent Communist times church leaders were silent. Their only protests, he says, were against those who did raise their voice in defence of the church. He names, in particular, Fr Gleb Yakunin, who wrote the most complete exposé of the persecution and who, for his pains, was drummed out of the priesthood and into prison. The church, *de facto*, aided the atheist state rather than its victims, says Fr Vinnikov. There has never been expiation or apology for this betrayal and the Patriarch's action shows that old attitudes are still prevalent.

The first organised protest letter in Moscow was addressed to the Archbishop of York and to Mrs Xenia Dennen, as well as to the Council of Keston Institute. The letter comes officially from Russia's most significant human-rights activists, the Moscow Helsinki Group, one of whom is Gleb Yakunin, now a priest of another jurisdiction. The signatories include Fr Vinnikov and another priest, as well as journalists, academics, 18 in all. They invoke the ancient Russian tradition of the 'Holy Fool', who was able, with impunity, to criticise the Tsar. St Basil was one of them and 'today his well-educated and courageous followers are kept behind bars'. Elena Volkova, a respected believer who is active in the women's defence, confirms that they are well-educated and active Christians, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, having been one of the highest flyers of her year in the Philosophy Faculty of Moscow University. They have written impressive letters in the degradation of their prison cells, and in a snatch of their interrogation on YouTube they come across as quiet and modest people.

While Keston is not – and has never been – a campaigning organisation, Xenia Dennen, its chairman, commented: 'Keston has always tried to illuminate the background to events in Russia concerning the church, and is actively attempting to put on record a broader picture than what has appeared in the press so far. The Moscow Patriarchate's support for the case against the three women does it no credit and denies the central command of the Gospel to show love and compassion.'

Patriarch Kirill, already the subject of much criticism for his lavish lifestyle, might have let the whole episode blow over quietly, and then he would have done far less harm to the cause of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Baptists in Kostanai, Kazakhstan

by Yuri Bondarenko

Evangelical Christians and Baptists (ECB) were united in one Union during World War II in 1944 when Stalin was in power. Evangelical Christians had appeared on Russian soil in the 1870s; their roots go back to the arrival in northern Russia of Lord Radstock, a graduate of Oxford University and a participant in the Crimean War. The Baptist movement dates its existence in Russia back to 20 August 1867 when their first baptism took place in the Kura River in Tbilisi (Georgia). One of the Baptists' hymns used the words of a Georgian song, much loved by Stalin! This was called 'Suliko' and included the words 'I looked for peace of soul/I prayed long and much travailed/And far I went in my search'.

Baptists in Kazakhstan, 1946

Baptists first appeared in Kazakhstan in the late 19th and early 20th century and founded their first congregations in Aulie-Ata. In 1902 a congregation began to meet in the village of Nikolaevka, and in 1907 a congregation was founded in Pavlodar.[1] The church built in Smirnovka in 1902 (now the Karabalyksky district) celebrated its centenary this year with much splendour and many guests.

In Kostanai the Baptist congregation was founded in 1908 with just eight members, two of whom, Nikita and Ekaterina Vysotsky, were from the same family. They held their services in their homes to start with. Then in 1910 some Evangelical Christian families moved to Kostanai from the village of Annovka, and the one-time photographer Nikolai Ivanovich Karnaukhov moved there from Samara. By 1914 there were 50 in the congregation with a prayer house which they built themselves on Bolshoi Street (later called Lenin Prospekt and then Al-Farabi Prospekt).

After the Revolution during the first two decades of Soviet power, the Baptists and many other minority religious groups were able to develop their work and increase their membership. This was partly because the position of the Russian Orthodox Church had been weakened and because the Bolsheviks

saw in 'sectarians' their allies in their struggle against tsarism. Religious youth movements were founded such as the Baptist Youth Union (*bapsomol*) and the Christian Youth Union (*khristomol*) which were almost as big as the *Komsomol* (the Communist youth movement) with nearly two million members.[2]

Towards the end of the 1920s the situation began to change with the development of an aggressive form of anti-religious propaganda. The Kostanai Baptist church, however, managed to increase its membership during this period, and by 1955 had 110 members. By 1972 the number had grown to 215. According to local Baptists 'In 1956 on Trinity Sunday in the Tobol River' they baptised 85 people, and the next year on the same Sunday '55 people in nearby districts and in the Tobol River received baptism. The next year 30-35 people were baptised. During these years about 500 pledged their commitment to the Lord through holy water baptism' and this was when, to use the simplistic language of propaganda then current, the word 'baptism' was often equated with the word 'sect', that is with what denoted something dark and vaguely dangerous. In fact the Evangelical Christians and Baptists became in time one of the most numerous religious denominations in the Kostanai *oblast*. According to data from the year 1976, out of 39 registered associations in the Kostanai *oblast* 14 were Baptist. The Baptists (there were no statistics for Muslims) were the next largest group to the Russian Orthodox (3,100 Orthodox, 845 Baptists, 10 Lutherans, 4 Adventists). By the middle of the 1980s the Baptists in the Kostanai congregation alone numbered over 400, but due to emigration abroad the number dropped to 250 by the early 21st century; then with the addition of people from Zatobolsk (a town 3 km away) the number increased to 300. By the beginning of February 2012 there were 37 Baptist congregations in total in the Kostanai *oblast* according to local official figures – in Rudnyi, Lisakovsk, Zhitikar, Amankaragai, Kushmurun, Borovsk, Arkalyk – with a total of about 700 members (many less than in Soviet times because of emigration, which, though not as high as during the 1990s, still continues today). According to

Kostanai's (formerly Kustanai) Baptist choir celebrating their 25th anniversary on 12 August 1979

the local press (*Kostanai News*, 1 February 2012) on the basis of figures for 2011 from the Kostanai *oblast* Statistics Department, 2,318 people arrived from outside Kazakhstan and 3,760 emigrated. All told there are over 350 Baptist congregations in Kazakhstan which try to coordinate their work.[3]

expert, A.I. Artemev, there are members of the Council of Churches [sometimes known as Reform Baptists or *Initsiativniki. Ed*] and others who have remained autonomous.[5] Such independent ECB believers also exist in the Kostanai *oblast*, mostly (according to A.I. Zhuravlev) in the

The Kostanai Baptist choir, May 1979, with the words 'God is love' on a banner above their heads

After the collapse of the USSR, the Kazakhstan Republic Union of ECB Churches was created on the territory of Kazakhstan. In 1995 an institute for training Baptist pastors was opened where both foreign and local preachers teach. Since 1992 a Bible correspondence course is run from Almaty.[4] In addition some of the leaders of Baptist congregations have the chance 'to improve their qualifications' a few times a year in Moscow, where well-known preachers and biblical experts from abroad teach. Kazakhstan also has associations of Baptists which do not belong to the Kazakhstan Republic Union: according to the data gathered by the respected Kazakhstan religious

city of Rudnyi, but they are not numerous. It is not easy to make contact with them although the Council of Churches, whose teaching does not diverge from the Union's, maintains good relations with registered Baptist associations.

According to the words of a leader from the Kostanai ECB congregation, 'The church depends on voluntary donations. The believers try to help those in need, like the elderly, the disabled, children in care, the sick in hospital... In order to be an example of goodness, the church teaches its members to be honest, law-abiding citizens of their country.' Unfortunately hu-

manitarian work, although permitted, has today become somewhat difficult. Last year, for example, because of difficulties at the customs Baptists had to reject humanitarian aid sent from Germany.

It is striking that in Soviet times many Baptist sermons and addresses exhorted the faithful to be loyal towards the authorities and to perform their duties honestly, a good example of which is given in the research of Larisa Prikhodko.[6] Here are some examples of such exhortations: 'A real Christian is someone who willingly serves God both in the family and at work' (Rudnyi, October 1970); 'We must shine always and everywhere with the beauty of Christ and dazzle those around us.' (Karaganda, August 1986); 'We must be exemplary citizens of our country in all respects' (Rudnyi, August 1987).

Pastor Alexandr Ivanovich Zhuravlev is an example of a Baptist pastor who was able to work within the Soviet system without compromising his faith, and illustrates the many twists and turns in the lives of believers in our country. He became a pastor in 1988 and for many years looked after the congregation at the Kostanai Baptist church. Today he is 69 but still looks strong with thick hair which has hardly begun to turn grey, powerful arms and shoulders which make him look stocky although he is quite tall. 'Even now if I got hold of someone, they wouldn't be able to get away. But my legs, I must admit, do ache now and then!' How did his life turn out at a time when religion, to put it mildly, was not welcome? He arrived in Kostanai with his parents, who wanted to protect him from bad company, when he was a teenager. He had grown up as a Baptist and then served

Baptist church in village of Amankaragai, Kazakhstan, announces its 50th anniversary celebrations on 17 September 2006

three years in the army – in a rocket division – where conditions were particularly tough. He was promoted to the rank of sergeant and commanded a platoon; as a believer he could get no further promotion. As by then he had learnt joinery he was asked to do up a 'Lenin room' – *de rigueur* for every military unit, and intended for rest and education. Thanks to his good work done in the name of the proletariat's leader (an atheist to boot) this earned him – a believer – a holiday!

After leaving the army he worked most of his life on the railways. He was good with his hands and intelligent so was allocated the job of equipping containers and carriages. He could not remember any particularly severe persecution during those years. He went on working, and his wife, after finishing medical college (during those years

it was no easy matter to get into one of them because of the competition) got a job as a nurse. Why complain? He worked conscientiously; he neither drank nor smoked nor swore. When I was once talking with colleagues at table I heard a railway manager – a Party member naturally – say: 'If all my conductors were Baptists, the carriages would always be in good order.' Of course there were cases of discrimination, such as when the boss of one railway section did not want to put down Alexandr Ivanovich for a copy of *Izvestia* because he was a Baptist. Undeterred he went to see the manager and the newspaper was ordered. Such cases were exceptional, however.

To this day Alexandr Ivanovich continues to be interested in learning new things. Without any formal higher education he has frequently attended classes run by qualified biblical scholars and teachers. He has a well-chosen library containing quite a number of valuable reference works and other publications on Christianity. At the same time, in conformity with the spirit of his denomination, Alexandr Ivanovich has a good critical sense. When asked for example about his attitude to what happened not long ago in Moscow, when there was an 8 km-long queue of people, desperate to get into an Orthodox church where a piece of the Mother of God's belt was being revered, simply replied: 'I don't want to offend anyone, but we don't believe in that sort of thing. We don't believe, as many of those in the queue were hoping, that a piece of her belt could heal them. In the same way we find it hard to believe that Elena could have found, hundreds of years afterwards, the very cross on which Christ was crucified.'

In the example of Alexandr Ivanovich, pastor of the Kostanai congregation of Evangelical Christians and Baptists, we see someone who was able to observe his religion throughout his life: this made his life more interesting and rich, not only on a spiritual level, but also on a purely human level. My example is no idealization; it simply shows how complex are matters where life and belief interweave, and how carefully this needs to be unraveled by someone who tries to grasp what is at the root of a particular religious faith.

[1] В. Иванов, Я. Трофимов, *Религии Казахстана. Справочник*. Алматы, 1989, p.100.
[2] *Наука убеждать*, M., 1969, p.473 : see the article by the famous Soviet religious specialist L.N. Mitrokhin.
[3] Абуов А.П., Смагулов Е.М., *Религии в Казахстане: Костанай*: ТОО «Костанайский печатный двор», 2011, p.147.
[4] For details see В.Иванов, Я.Трофимов, *Религии Казахстана. Справочник*, Алматы, 1989.
[5] Артемьев А.И., *Религиеведение*, Алматы, 2002, p.401.
[6] Приходько Л.С., *Методические рекомендации по теме «Современная проповедь в протестантской общине». (На примере ЕХБ)*, Кустанай: Кустанайская областная организация общества «Знание», 1988, p.14.

Yuri Bondarenko *was for many years a member of the Council for Relations with Religious Associations within the government of the Kazakhstan Republic. He is now a professor at the Kostanai State University and member of Kazakhstan's Congress of Religious Specialists.*

Protest and the Russian Orthodox Church Today

by Mikhail Roshchin

The mass protests against the falsification of the Duma elections on 4 December 2011 could not but affect Orthodox believers and wide circles within the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). It was, after all, the first time in post-soviet Russia that the very legitimacy of the existing regime (today, the personal authority of Putin) had been questioned.

When speaking of the ROC one should bear in mind that, on the one hand, there is the top hierarchy, which historically, in tsarist times, became accustomed to being close to the government and serving its interests to a significant degree, and on the other hand, there are the ordinary laity and parish clergy who together form the many parishes all over Russia. Among the latter there are both conservatives and liberals, and as a rule each parish tends to belong to one or other camp.

During the early months of the widespread popular protests against the Putin regime, Orthodox liberals became very concerned. The most striking statement came from Fr Andrei Zuyev, a highly educated priest in the Moscow church of St Nicholas '*v Tolmachakh*' [in an area where *tolmachi* = interpreters/translators lived in 17th century Moscow. *Ed*] who translated St Gregory the Theologian's religious poem, *De vita sua*.[1] In his sermon on 22 December 2011, later published on the internet, Andrei Zuyev said:

'Owing to the particular way government is run in our society today, it has become the ugly norm to treat ordinary people with arrogance.

Fr Andrei Zuyev

Those in power are not only arrogant but also do not permit anyone apart from themselves to decide what is good and what is bad, thus depriving people of the chance to decide on the general direction of their country... Today's political leaders are corrupting Christians, particularly the young and those who have just become believers. Often when a church is full, they cross themselves, venerate icons and, in my view, even receive com-

munion as 'part of the job', that is as a show, and publicly announce what denomination they belong to. What does this say to people? Well it tells them that you can betray your conscience, deceive and degrade others; this becomes, as it were, acceptable to the Christian, permissible, even just 'all in a day's work'. But this is not so. The Christian life does not consist in just attending Easter services, but in the daily work of repentance, in acknowledging one's sin as part of a desire to overcome it, in an effort to rise above what is base within oneself towards what is best.'[2]

Fr Alexei Uminsky

A popular television presenter, Fr Alexei Uminsky, another Orthodox priest, was also critical of the situation:

> 'Today people of many different faiths are gathering outside, but one thing unites them all – they don't want to go on living like this. The same is happening today in the church.'[3]

Fr Uminsky, I think, accurately identified a trend which only became apparent in December 2011 and which has grown over the summer into a serious crisis within the church.

The young Moscow priest, Fr Dmitri Sverdlov, was an observer in one of the electoral districts on 4 December, election day. He posted his vivid account of his work on the internet.[4] Fr Dmitri and observers from opposition parties discovered that the electoral commission had falsified the results in favour of the ruling party, United Russia, so Fr Dmitri reported this to the police. What was his amazement when a month later he received a reply from the police which was like something out of the theatre of the absurd! This is what he was told: Fr Dmitri and the other complainants are not guilty of any offence, and they will not be subject to prosecution, i.e. you dare be electoral observers again and you'll hear from us! Then facing varied reactions from his parishioners and other Orthodox believers, Fr Dmitri asked

Fr Dmitri Sverdlov

himself 'For the sake of what did I as a priest take on the job of observer during the elections?' His answer, published in an important internet journal, *Orthodoxy and the World*, seems to me to be important and instructive:

> 'This is a difficult question to answer if you want to avoid falling into self-justification. We are given a stereotype of the church portraying it as outside politics; but this is not true.
>
> The truth is that the church's highest goal is *above* politics but not *outside* politics. Politics is part of the life of society, of people's lives. In this context any socially significant action of the church as a whole and of its individual members, one way or another, directly or indirectly, influences or impinges upon political processes and society's life. But not only action has an influence; inaction has too – action and inaction, of the church as a whole, and of individual bishops, priests and laypeople – never mind whether they are vocal, or quiet and inconspicuous.'[5]

Patriarch Kirill spoke about the popular protests and the evolving political situation in the country during the Christmas celebrations [Orthodox Christmas is in January. *Ed*] on 8 January when giving an interview to the state television channel 'Rossia-1'. He emphasised that:

> 'the aim of legitimate protests is to correct the political course... If those in power remain impervious to the expression of protest, that is a very bad sign – a sign that those in power are not in touch with what is going on. Those in power must be attuned and this involves hearing signals from outside.'[6]

It seemed at this point that the Patriarch with these words was sending a cautious signal about the distance which lay between the ROC and the Putin regime.

However later, on 8 February, Patriarch Kirill made quite clear that he supported Putin's candidacy for the Presidency:

> 'I must say quite clearly as Patriarch who is called to speak the truth, purged of propaganda and political considerations, that you personally,

> Vladimir Vladimirovich [Putin], have played an enormous part in straightening out the distortions of our history. I would like to thank you'[7]

Yet on 8 January the Patriarch had spoken differently:

> 'The church's word must not be politicised, it cannot be unbalanced in the most basic meaning of this word. I don't mean in the sense of duplicitous diplomatic balancing, but in the sense that the church's word must bear the truth which can be accepted by all. And the truth is that falsehood must be removed from our life.'[8]

Exactly a month later the Patriarch actively began to support the presidential campaign, something which his predecessor Alexi II would never have allowed in principle. The former world chess champion, Garry Kasparov, wittily observed that the Patriarch's words of gratitude to Putin resembled the Prime Minister's reply in the play by Evgeni Shvarts based on Hans Christian Anderson's *The Emperor's New Clothes*:

> 'Your Highness! You know I'm an honest, straightforward old man. I speak the truth to someone's face, even if it's unpleasant... Let me tell you with the honesty and directness of an old man: you are a great man, an emperor!'

It is important to realise that the one-sided, politicised position of Patriarch Kirill definitely does not reflect the great variety of views held by members of the ROC, and has already provoked serious discussion among both clergy and laity. The complex and contradictory Pussy Riot case, and the sentence imposed by the court in August, have led to a profound crisis within the ROC.

---

[1] http://e-vestnik.ru/reviews/de_vita_sua_2932/
[2] http://jarki.ru/wpress/2011/12/22/2918/
[3] http://www.blagovest-info.ru/index.php?id=44885&s=7&ss=2
[4] http://www.echomsk.spb.ru/blogs/bakush/2819.php
[5] http://www.pravmir.ru/xomyachok-v-pole/
[6] http://www.pravmir.ru/intervyu-patriarxa-o-rozhdestve-mitingax-pereformatirovanii-prixodov-i-tex-kto-koshmarit-cheloveka/.
[7] http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/2004759.html
[8] http://www.pravmir.ru/intervyu-patriarxa-o-rozhdestve-mitingax-pereformatirovanii-prixodov-i-tex-kto-koshmarit-cheloveka/

Mikhail Roshchin *is an Arabist and member of Moscow's Oriental Institute. He has contributed to Keston's Encyclopaedia and participated in fieldtrips to the North Caucasus.*

Fieldtrip to Kalmykia

by Xenia Dennen

Encyclopaedia team in Kalmyk yurt
(left to right) *Xenia Dennen, Sergei Filatov & Roman Lunkin*

In January this year Sergei, Roman and I left Moscow for Elista, the capital of Kalmykia. Our plane had a firebird on a red background painted on its tail and flew the 2000 km to Elista without a hitch. Once over Kalmykia I noticed the steppe below powdered with snow, a river with sharp bends, and rather stunted trees covered in frost which looked like white-haired gents standing on either side of tracks running very straight across the bleak flat land. We landed at Elista airport in the late afternoon: this was a solitary small building in the steppe with a pagoda on its roof, some way from the city. Eventually we were able to ring for a taxi and get to our hotel, a remnant of the Soviet past and thus extremely cheap. I noticed a photograph of the Dalai Lama on the reception desk. Our rooms with high ceilings were on the second floor; there was no lift, no restaurant; but I did find a perfectly friendly cockroach in my bathroom.

The nomadic Kalmyks, the western branch of the Mongolian ethnic group from north-western China known as the Oirats, began moving westwards in the 14th century and by the beginning of the 17th century settled along the lower reaches of the Volga and in the Urals. Buddhism had been the religion of the Oirats since the late 16th and early 17th century. Once settled on Russian territory the Kalmyks retained close ties with Tibet and the Dalai Lama. In 1609 the Kalmyks were given the right to settle on Russia's southern steppe and until 1771 were governed by their own Khanate. By the second half of the 18th century the Russian gov-

ernment, which until then had not interfered in Kalmyk affairs, began encouraging them to join the Russian Orthodox Church and began ruling them from Astrakhan where in 1776 an Orthodox mission to the Kalmyks was set up. About three quarters of the Kalmyks at this point left Russia and returned to north-western China. Buddhism declined as contacts with Tibet waned; then in the late 19th century and early 20th century a Buddhist revival movement began, inspired particularly by the Buryat Lama Agvan Dorzhiev who in 1907 founded a Buddhist spiritual academy on Kalmyk territory. The imperial manifesto of 17 July 1905 with its act of toleration gave further support to the revival of Buddhism among the Kalmyks, who by 1914 had 26 large and 53 small *khuruls* (temples). The repression of Buddhism after the Revolution only began in 1927 following an All-Union Buddhist Council: all contact with Tibet was banned and in 1929 the secret police organised the expulsion from Kalmykia of 'all exploiting elements' including religious leaders. In 1931 *khuruls* began to be destroyed, lamas arrested, and in 1935 the leading centre for the study of Buddhism closed. By the early 1940s all organised Buddhist religious life was destroyed in Kalmykia. During the German occupation in 1942 Orthodox, Baptist and Buddhist worship was permitted until in December 1943, with the re-establishment of Soviet control, all the Kalmyks were deported and the Kalmyk Autonomous Republic liquidated. The Kalmyks were rehabilitated in 1957 and the republic restored.

Bishop Zinovi

Only two Russian Orthodox churches were open in Kalmykia after the war, although by the time the Kalmyks were allowed to return in 1957 there were almost as many Russians in residence as Kalmyks. Revival of religious life began in 1984 when another Russian Orthodox church was opened and a number of Baptist and Pentecostal congregations began to meet openly. In 1988 the first Buddhist group was registered, in 1989 a Buddhist temple (*khurul*) was opened, and in 1991 the Association of Buddhists of Kalmykia was founded. The revival of religious life, both Christian and Buddhist, gathered momentum after the election as President in April 1993 of Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, who began channelling considerable government funding to religious organisations.

On our first day we were able to arrange a meeting with the local bishop, Bishop Zinovi of Elista and Kalmykia who had been appointed to this diocese in March last year (the diocese had only existed since 1995). To my surprise when we arrived at the episcopal residence the bishop himself opened the door. Never in my experience had such a thing happened before! He was a young 63-year-old, sprightly with sparkly eyes and a warm smile. He sat

us down beside him at a table where there were cakes and fruit laid out, and soon cups of tea were brought round.

About 30% of Kalmyks, he said, attended the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) but he did not advocate any open missionary work as he aimed to encourage dialogue with the Buddhists, who, he believed, 'loved holy things' like bees attracted to honey. Buddhists started with interior exploration, he added, asked basic questions about the meaning of life, and could move without great difficulty to the Christian faith. There was a missionary department in his diocese, but it was not publicised as this could lead to problems. He got on well with the leader of the Union of Buddhists of Kalmykia who had said to him, 'Dear brother, let us take down the fences between us; maybe we'll find common ground.' You had to start by drinking a cup of tea together and then go on to public dialogue, said Bishop Zinovi; Kalmyks were simple people, soft and quiet.

Of his 13 priests (4 served in Elista) one was a Kalmyk (he also had a Kalmyk who was a server). In his diocese he had 20 churches, but only 13 were functioning parishes, as well as a number of chapels in hospitals and prisons. His clergy 'must grow wings to do their work,' he said, 'I simply don't interfere'; they regularly gathered together and most had higher education. His priests were able to go into schools and were doing splendid work, he said, in the Sunday schools. Bishop Zinovi believed that if a child was taught to care for the elderly this would enable him or her to 'become good', so he encouraged Sunday schools to get involved in local good works. There was an Orthodox Youth Movement in Kalmykia, which organised groups of young people interested in sport, or art or music; and even a bikers' group who went on a 'procession of the cross' carrying icons on their motorbikes. The ROC held services in a strict regime labour camp, and, added the bishop, he had visited it on Christmas Day. While we sat at table a prisoner rang him, and I noticed how he gave him his full attention – and quoted Dostoevsky! To us he later said, 'a prisoner can become a saint'. His diocese, he continued, was very poor: there was no industry; the clergy were paid very little; and there were neither monasteries nor a seminary.

Kalmykia, he went on, was an 'interconfessional paradise': 'in the framework of cultural dialogue we respect each person and their choices.' His relations with the local government were 'very pleasant' and he liked the new President, Alexei Orlov, who was 'wise' and whom he trusted. He approved of the President's aim to promote 'a flourishing Kalmykia'. The past persecution of the church by the Soviet authorities had been 'a humiliation'. He felt that the moment when Putin and the Patriarch had together laid the foundation stone at the Butovo memorial, where 70,000 murdered Orthodox had been buried during Communist days, was a 'turning point of repentance', after which Russia would never return to a dictatorship. Russia, he believed, would be able to withstand moral disaster and preserve 'the values of holiness'.

Bishop Zinovi clearly loved Kalmykia, and related how he had felt intense joy

when first driving into the country – at 180 km per hour! The police had stopped him for speeding, but when he had told them that he was their new bishop, they were thrilled, he added with a chuckle, and let him go without a fine.

Our next port of call was the Catholic church, a small wooden building. I had expected to meet a lively group of three Franciscans, but they had been moved to Astrakhan. The current priest was Fr Vladimir Lytasov, from Voronezh and trained in St Petersburg, who had arrived in Elista in March last year. He first took us into the church, heated by a minute stove which he would light before a service; it would take two hours to warm up the building. On the wall was an icon of the Virgin and Child, painted in a Kalmyk style by a contemporary Italian painter Paulo Bocci; it had been commissioned by a Kalmyk Catholic convert Alexei Kikshaev, who in the early 1990s had decided that Catholicism was the true faith. He lectured and wrote on Catholicism, and discovered local Poles and Germans who had lost all touch with their religion. Thanks to him the President provided some land and the church was built. By autumn 1993 he succeeded in getting the Franciscan Order involved: priest monks were supplied and the parish built up to about 60 people. By 2000 it had grown to 100. Now, however, with little employment for the young, many were leaving (most of the Germans had returned to Germany) and, according to Fr Vladimir, the parish was dying. There were about 25 -30 regulars, mostly russified Poles, five Kalmyks and a few Armenians. Mass was always said in Russian, as no one understood Polish or Latin. He did not experience any serious difficulties from the local authorities, although they checked whether his parish was receiving money from abroad. The previous President, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov (in power 1993-2010), had attended the Catholic church sometimes, he said, but the current one, uninterested in the non-Orthodox, never appeared. 'Our parish carries no weight in our society.'

Elista's Catholic church

From the Catholic church we walked to the main Buddhist *khurul*. It was a grey day, cold with a biting wind and on entering the *khurul* – an enormous building, all carpeted, with many side rooms where meetings and even conferences were held – we were told to remove our boots. There was a large gold Buddha at one end of the vast worship space, a number of benches along the sides and masses of false flowers. People walked out backwards. I noticed an advertisement offering classes in Tibetan as I hovered by the main entrance while Sergei removed his boots and went off in search of whoever was in charge. After about 15 minutes he returned: Anzha Gelug Lama would see us straight away, so off came my boots.

Main khurul *in Elista*

From earlier research we knew that two main Buddhist organisations had existed – the Association of Buddhists of Kalmykia and the Buddhist Union of Kalmykia, the latter formed in 2000 in opposition to the Association with which it disagreed. The Association was founded in 1991 when the Dalai Lama had first visited Kalmykia and selected Telo Tulku Rinpoche, a US citizen, but a Kalmyk, to head the new organisation. Telo Tulku Rinpoche supported close links with Tibet and advocated following the Gelug school of Buddhism, bringing Tibetan monks to teach the Kalmyks; but many of the latter preferred home-grown forms of Kalmyk Buddhism which did not fit neatly into Rinpoche's Tibetan philosophy. For Kalmyks, long cut off from the outside world, from both Tibet and the West, had mixed elements of shamanism into their religious practices, and developed beliefs in a personalised God dating back to early Kalmyk culture which was influenced by Zoroastrianism and Tengrianstvo (worship of *tengra* = sky). Furthermore, many educated Kalmyks believed their country was part of Europe and wanted to link up with Buddhist organisations in the West. The conflict between the Association and the Buddhist Union, we discovered on this visit, had now died down: the Association had become more tolerant towards local Buddhist traditions, while understanding and respect for Tibetan Buddhism and the Gelug school had grown. Before the vast new *khurul* was built in 2005, the Dalai Lama had blessed the ground on which it was to stand and expressed the hope that it would become the European centre for all Buddhist traditions.

The revival of Buddhism in Kalmykia owed much to the religious policies of the republic's first President Ilyumzhinov who was interested in unifying all world religions. He had ensured that a number of large *khuruls* had been built, but had also provided funds for Russian Orthodox churches, while at the same time treating Protestant groups in an even-handed way. His successor, President Alexei Orlov, appointed in October 2010, did not have the same interest in religious matters, but was nevertheless continuing his predecessor's policies.

Anzha Gelug Lama received us in his office which had large windows on two sides and so was full of light. The *khurul*, he said, was used by many different groups and offered courses for teachers of religion. The Association of Buddhists of Kalmykia included 36 local organisations. There were now 30 monks – mostly Kalmyks. Initially monks had been sent to

Tibetan monasteries in India to train, but more recently a group had been sent to Mongolia, while one was currently studying in Buryatia. Anzha Gelug Lama hoped that a religious institute would soon be opened where monks would spend five to eight years studying; 'a person can take the best from such study and use it in his life, even if he leaves the monastic life.'

I asked him how he had become a Buddhist: he was brought up, he answered, by his grandmother who always had an altar at home. His parents had been born in Siberia after the deportation of the Kalmyks, and when they returned had encountered many difficulties. 'My forbears took a Buddha with them to Siberia rather than shoes.' The old did not like talking about their sufferings, so I could not get him to talk about what it had been like for his people during their exile. Later when we visited the Elista museum I was taken aback when all I could see were stories about the heroic involvement of Kalmyks during the war, and not a word about the deportation!

He confirmed that Kalmyks see themselves as part of Europe but had integrated pre-Buddhist shamanism and Tengrianstvo into their religion. 'We'd like to work with the West. Our leader maintains Western contacts, but there is the language barrier. We belong traditionally to the Gelug school, but we welcome all Tibetan Buddhist traditions and their leaders. There are many roads to the same goal – stillness of mind. I would like to see a committee set up with representatives from the different Buddhist regions of Russia. People here long to see and hear the Dalai Lama. Despite current difficulties (I assumed he meant Putin's support for Chinese policies in Tibet) we still hope and look forward to a visit.'

Anzha Gelug Lama recommended that we contact Elizaveta Petrovna Bakaeva, a scholar of Buddhism at the Humanities Institute, so Sergei rang her and fixed a meeting for the next afternoon. It took us some time to find her Institute, tucked behind other high rise buildings, but eventually we discovered it, a brand new building, with modern windows and clean tidy offices.

Elizaveta Petrovna had been able to study Buddhism before the 1988 liberalisation of Party policy towards religion under Gorbachev (she began her studies on 1982) because she had been at the Institute of Ethnology in Moscow which was relatively liberal and had contact with the West; even academics from the West were allowed to give lectures there. She confirmed that the Buddhist Union of Kalmykia no longer existed and that the Association of Buddhists of Kalmykia was now the only central Buddhist organisation. Many schools of Buddhism were now expounded through lectures at the *khurul*. Before 1989 just a few secret monks had managed to survive and there had been no *khuruls* in Kalmykia at all, she said. Before the deportation everyone had spoken Kalmyk, but now it was dying out, especially in the villages near the main towns, though a number of institutions of higher education were now trying to revive it.

Buddhism in Kalmykia was older than in Buryatia, she said. Everything connected with Kalmyk religion and cul-

ture had been destroyed between 1943-1957; in exile it had been impossible to observe Buddhist rituals and most Kalmyks had become very ignorant about their religion; a 'dual' form of belief had developed and, partly thanks to russification, by the early 1990s it was not unusual for icons to be placed beside Buddhist images, for parents to have their children baptised in the Russian Orthodox Church, and for Kalmyks to observe the main Russian Orthodox religious festivals. A movement called 'Revival', founded after perestroika, aimed to resurrect ancient Kalmyk beliefs, including Tengrianstvo which, Elizaveta Petrovna said, was difficult to define – it 'revered the sky' was her phrase. A form of 'people's Buddhism' existed with a 'White *Starets*' who, as a link between the sky and the earth, protected the Kalmyk nation and was revered as a local god by Kalmyks and Mongols; an icon of him was often placed on the left of the Buddha. Local holy men and woman with special gifts including healing were held in high esteem, she said: one called Ggaha, had only died in 2000 and had had many followers; she was a healer and 'everyone's auntie'.

White Starets *in front of main* khurul

From the Humanities Institute we went on to a Dharma Centre, run by Zinaida Galzunovna Antonova. This was in a basement and somewhat ramshackle. Zinaida Galzunovna was homely and rotund in a large red jumper; beside her stood a kettle and a few mugs which she soon filled with tea. Her Centre had 25 members, she said, and was supervised by a Tibetan teacher, Eshe Lodoi Rinpoche, who travelled round Russia; his lectures were attended by hundreds of people, she added. Twice a month all the members performed a ritual which she called an 'offering', commenting 'you cannot achieve much all alone; you need a group'. Meditation was for those who were more advanced: 'Once a year in July we gather near Lake Baikal and learn from our teacher, we learn about meditation; many there are Russian.' In 1991 she had seen the Dalai Lama: 'The crowd separated and I saw him. I felt cleansed. That was when I started to get interested in Buddhism.' A Tibetan monk had encouraged her to attend his lectures: 'I now help in the *khurul.* It is our joy that we have two enlightened ones – the Dalai Lama and Rinpoche. They help us along the path to enlightenment.' Her Centre followed the Gelug school, but she added, 'there is no difference between the different schools.' Sergei decided she did not really know much about Buddhism! When he tried to find out whether her group followed the local Kalmyk 'people's Buddhism' which Elizaveta Petrovna had mentioned, she replied 'there are many different sorts of people; let *babushki* believe in Buddha as a god; that's all right. Kalmyk Buddhism is no different from the rest of Buddhism.' It was all right too to attend the Orthodox Church – 'Some Kalmyks have a

karma which leads them to Orthodoxy' – and she knew a woman who had been born on Easter Day and always attended the Orthodox Easter liturgy.

Roman had meanwhile been interviewing various Protestant pastors. He talked to the senior pastor of the Evangelical Christian Missionary Union (ECMU), Vladimir Gololobov, who told him that the ECMU had been working in Kalmykia since 1995 and now had three churches. Partly funded by American Koreans, Pastor Gololobov's team regularly held evangelising meetings, rock concerts against drug use, and organised seminars for doctors, businessmen and computer programmers. Most members of ECMU were young people from the Kalmyk University and numbers were increasing all the time, said Pastor Gololobov, although there was a frequent turnover as many went abroad to study never to return.

Roman also found that there was a large ECB (Evangelical Christian and Baptist) congregation in Elista, registered in 1991, with a few hundred members, a third of whom were young. Their pastor, Timur Busygin, told Roman that there were a further four prayer houses in the republic and five congregations. The Church of Christ the Saviour, a conservative evangelical church, founded by a Ukrainian mission, cooperated with the Baptists. Roman also discovered groups which belonged to the All-Russian Union of Evangelical Christians, as well as the Kalmyk Bible Society which by 1997 had translated part of the New Testament into Kalmyk. Another large group in Elista were the Pentecostals who included the conservative Russian Church of Evangelical Christians, the Word of Life church, the Kingdom of God church, the Golgotha Chapel, God's Ambassadors and the Bread of Life mission. Even the Salvation Army had a branch in Elista, founded in the 1990s but not yet officially registered. It had 50 members – 60% young people, 80% Kalmyk.

With our heads buzzing from all this new information for the section in the Encyclopaedia on Kalmykia, it was now time to move on, this time to Astrakhan, at the mouth of the Volga where it flows into the Caspian Sea, some 3½ hours away by taxi across the steppe. Above the sky was grey, light-brown tufts of grass which peeped out of the snow provided fodder for herds of small brown cattle. Often flocks of sky larks would land on the road ahead of us, so our driver hooted to make them fly off. I noticed lots of black sheep, and when the sun suddenly came out we decided to stop and photograph ourselves with the sheep grazing behind us, while a suspicious Kalmyk shepherd kept watch.

Xenia & Sergei in the Kalmyk steppe

Home News

Michael Bourdeaux writes:

Following my visit to Ukraine (on which the Chairman reported in the last *Newsletter*), less than two weeks later (early December) I was underway again to the former Soviet Union, this time to Chisinau, Moldavia, which to me on my only previous visit was 'Kishinyov, Soviet Moldavia'. Sadly, the Soviet heritage is only too obvious: yes, Russian – rather than the native Romanian – is widely spoken on the streets, which is all right by me; but those streets look as if nothing has been done to them, nor to the architecture, since the departure of that power now over 20 years ago. Moldova is a sad sight and an economic basket-case, but the people are wonderful. Rarely have I received a warmer welcome. I was lecturing at a conference on Christian democracy, sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, which is doing wonders for this part of the world. Over 100, mainly young people, came to my talk and I felt inspired by the visible rise in interest in Keston's work.

I was invited to be chaplain on a cruise to the West Indies in the New Year and, during two long crossings of the Atlantic, gave several talks to introduce people to Keston. In July I spoke to the Baptist History Society's conference at Regent's Park College, Oxford. I 'revisited' the work I did on the schism in the Russian Baptist Church, starting 50 years ago now. I found it moving to look back at these testimonies from prison (and much else), now so carefully preserved (and conserved) at Baylor University. It was stimulating at about the same time to be invited by *The Times* to write the obituary of one of the leading figures, Mikhail Khorev, who survived a lifetime in and out of prison, to end his life in his eighties, full of years and honour. His son Venyamin once visited Keston and I was in touch with him again at the time of his father's death.

Writing – yes, Pussy Riot has taken much of my attention over recent weeks. So many reporters writing from Moscow got so much wrong, but Xenia Dennen and I have both been able to make correctives in our various ways. This story will run and run and, as I write, I'm preparing to take part in a discussion on Radio 4 in the 'Beyond Belief' series. I've also been writing a new text for a lecture in Mexico, on which I'll report next time, after my visit to Querétaro University for the last week in September. This will be a new experience.

Now halfway through my 79th year, I continue to be grateful to God for the good health I enjoy and contact with so many of you keeps up my spirits; I am so thankful for your prayers.

Keston Institute
PO Box 752, Oxford OX1 9QF
Tel: +44 (0)20 8133 8922 admin@keston.org.uk www.keston.org.uk