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Albanian Orthodox cathedral – the Resurrection of Christ – in Tirana, capital of Albania

Religious Persecution in Albania: the Greek Minority and Orthodoxy

by Maria Panayiotou

The most repressive Communist regime in Eastern Europe was that of Albania, where religious persecution was targeted towards all religious denominations. Communist rule lasted from 1944-1990 and for over 40 years the country suffered under the iron fist of Enver Hoxha. Because of its prolonged political isolation, Albania has been the least known country of Eastern Europe. It is situated in the Balkans, a highly volatile area where few borders have any long-term historical justification or permanence. Many nations in this area feel that their identity has been violated because their territory has frequently been invaded by other nations,

Also in this issue:

Theological Education in the fSU. *p.10*
The Memory Keepers, Past and Future . . *p.22*
Gorbachev and the Church after 25 Years *p.27*
Tengiz Abuladze's Film Repentance *p.37*
Appeal from Ukrainian Evangelicals *p.41*
Home News *p.44*

thus contributing to the explosive nature of the area. It is bordered by Montenegro and Serbia in the north and northwest, by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the east, and by Greece in the south and southeast. Albania has three main religions – Islam, Orthodoxy and Catholicism – with a population of 3,255,891 (1993): according to official figures 60% are Muslim, 30% Orthodox, and 10% Catholic.[1] Previous statistics showed a population which was 70% Muslim, 20% Orthodox and 10% Catholic.[2]

Enver Hoxha's regime

By 1967 Enver Hoxha's regime declared that Albania was the first atheist state in the world. The Albanian Orthodox Church, the denomination to which the Greek ethnic minority belonged, came under attack like all other religious groups, but the effect on the Greek minority was particularly devastating in that for them their cultural identity, customs and language were interwoven with their religion. Under the Communist regime the Greek minority faced religious, social and ethnic oppression.

The attack on religion was not immediate to avoid a backlash or confrontation with the people. It started slowly with measures curbing religious worship, leading in 1967 to a complete clamp-down. The Communist regime saw religion as a divisive force, a potential source of popular resistance and foreign interference from Albania's neighbours – from Italy with its Roman Catholicism, from Serbia and Greece with Orthodoxy and from Turkey with Islam. The land reform law of August 1945 deprived religious organisations of most of their property – monasteries, libraries and seminaries. A further law followed in November 1949 which obliged all religious communities to develop a sense of loyalty towards 'popular power' and the regime. The first religion to be targeted was Islam as it was the least organised. Mosque attendance and Islamic teaching were first discouraged, restricted and gradually banned.

As for the Orthodox Church, only bishops loyal to the regime and willing to establish close links with the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow were appointed, while others were imprisoned or executed. The Archbishop of Tirana resisted this collaboration with the Moscow Patriarchate, was removed and then murdered. Subsequently the last Primate of the Albanian Orthodox Church, Archbishop Damian, was imprisoned in a concentration camp in 1967 where he died six years

later aged 80. The Orthodox Church's leadership was literally eliminated.

In 1945 the Roman Catholic Church in Albania was attacked as an instrument of the Vatican, the latter accused by the regime of collaborating with the Nazis, and Albanian Catholic clergy were put on trial for subversion, imprisoned or executed. Eventually in 1951 a government decree outlawed the independence of the Roman Catholic Church and severed its links with Rome; a 'national' church, subservient to the state, was established and any dissident clergy were labelled class enemies.

Albania and China: the Cultural Revolution

After the Second World War Albania at first aligned itself with the Soviet Union, but during the Khrushchev period, owing to Soviet de-stalinisation policies, Enver Hoxha broke off relations with the USSR and aligned Albania with China. This led to disastrous results both for Albanian society as a whole and for the Greek minority: in 1967 Albania's regime decided to imitate China's Cultural Revolution.

Albania's special relationship with China, her dependence on China for economic and technical aid, the strong political and ideological support she received from Peking, as well as implicit Chinese pledges and military assistance should she come under attack, made it almost inevitable for Albania to react more or less positively to Mao's Cultural Revolution.[3] Although Albania and China differed in size, culture and geography they also had some common traits. Both had known poverty, shared a respect for Stalin and resented 'revisionist Khrushchev'. They also both saw themselves as encircled by enemies – Albania by Yugoslavia, Greece, the United States' Sixth Fleet and Italy; China allegedly by the United States, the Soviet Union, India and Japan.

In seeking officially to close the gulf between ordinary people and the Communist Party, Enver Hoxha adopted with enthusiasm the doctrines of Mao Tse-Tung and set about adapting them for use in his own country. The time had come, he announced 'to widen the links with the masses, to win them over, to mobilise and to re-educate them' and to ensure finally that everyone rigidly followed the Party line. According to Amnesty International:

> 'state education inculcated atheist doctrine and a strong nationalism in the younger generation; religious belief was officially attacked as having impeded progress and national unity.'[4]

Albania's Cultural Revolution began in 1966 and with it the anti-religious campaign intensified. In a speech on 6 February 1967, Enver Hoxha encouraged a movement by young people across the country to close down mosques and churches. Some of these buildings were destroyed, others converted into warehouses or cultural centres. A decree in April 1967 turned over all the fixed assets of religious communities to the Executive Committees of the District People's Councils or to agricultural cooperatives, without compensation. On 13 November 1967 Decree No. 4337 annulled the decrees of 1949, 1950 and 1951 on religious communities; the latter were thereby deprived of legal status and their clergy prohibited from exercising their office. Decree No.4337 contravened Article 18 of the 1946 Constitution then in force, which not only guaranteed freedom of conscience and of faith but also stated:

> 'All religious communities are free in matters concerned with their faith as well as in their practice and outward expression.'[5]

But the 1946 Constitution was to be replaced in 1976 with a Constitution which contained Article 37:

> 'The state recognises no religion whatsoever and supports atheistic propaganda for the purpose of inculcating a scientific, materialistic world outlook in people'.

18th century Orthodox Church of St Athanasius near Moshopolis (Voskopojë) in south-eastern Albania with a predominantly Orthodox population

In addition the 1977 Criminal Code contained severe sentences for 'religious propaganda'.[6] Article 55 dealt with 'anti-state agitation and propaganda' and stipulated:

> 'Fascist, anti-democratic, religious, warmongering or anti-socialist propaganda, as well as the preparation, distribution or the possession for distribution of literature with such content intended to weaken or undermine the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat are punished by deprivation of liberty for from three to ten years.'[7]

In September 1967, the Albanian literary monthly *Nëndori* announced that all religious buildings in Albania, including 2,619 churches, mosques, monasteries, and other religious institutions, had been closed and that Albania had thus become 'the first atheist state of the world'. Among these were 630 Orthodox churches (mainly in southern Albania where most members of the Greek minority lived and which they called Northern Epirus) which were either destroyed or converted into buildings for secular use.[8] The 42 Orthodox priests still alive in Northern Epirus in 1967 were dragged to the city of Delvino by Albanian red guards, where they were insulted, spat upon, and forced to 'apologise' to the Albanian people; they then had their vestments removed and their beards shaved. When one of the priests, Fr Theodore Zisis, resisted he was viciously beaten and imprisoned for ten years.[9]

Religious holidays and private religious practices were suppressed. During the anti-religious campaign red guards were sent out into the countryside on a wave of destruction. In conversation with members of the ethnic Greek minority I was told about the extent of the destruction: groups of young people accompanied mainly by their teachers were sent on missions to destroy; in Greek minority villages all evidence of religious worship was obliterated, churches were attacked and many religious buildings of great historical and archaeological importance were destroyed or converted into stables, warehouses, hotels or army depots. Personal religious possessions such as bibles, icons and crucifixes were confiscated; even tombstones were vandalised – no one escaped not even the dead. By 1971 Hoxha described the abolition of religious organisations as 'a decisive victory' which prepared the ground for the

Desecrated frescos on the walls of St Nicholas Orthodox Church in Moshopolis (Voskopojë)

'complete emancipation (of the people) from religious beliefs'.

Religious belief can never truly be abolished – it remains in the heart of believers, it goes underground. The elderly continued to light candles late at night in the ruins of churches, or they would discretely make the sign of the cross when walking past a former shrine. Many priests were imprisoned for performing religious services in secret, and no one was allowed to grow a beard lest they resemble an Orthodox priest! Even the few visitors who came into the country were ordered to shave.

According to Jim Forest:

> 'no religious services were permitted anywhere at any time. Priests were killed by firing squad or tortured to death for such actions as having baptised a child. During the Hoxha period, 335 Orthodox priests died – some executed, many of the others died because of maltreatment, untreated illnesses and exhaustion. Only 22 Orthodox priests were still alive when Communism at last collapsed in Albania. Many thousands of Christians had been jailed or sent to labour camps, often dying as a consequence. Of approximately 1,600 Orthodox churches, monasteries and cultural centres existing prior to 1967, less than 5% were still standing in 1990.'[10]

Suppression of Greek culture

Education was controlled by the state and religious instruction was banned. In Greek minority schools, textbooks were Communist Party publications translated into Greek, with no material on Greek history, geography or religion. The Greek language was closely associated with the

minority's Orthodox faith, and their faith was intimately linked with their cultural and ethnic identity, so the limits placed on the use of Greek, coupled with restrictions on religion had far-reaching consequences for this group.

In 1975 a further blow deeply affected the Greek minority: the government ordered name changes for 'citizens who had inappropriate names and offensive surnames from a political, ideological, and moral standpoint'[11] and local civil affairs offices were supplied with lists of government-approved names (the government had circulated a list of 'acceptable' names to the Greek community as early as 1967-69). All Greeks with religious names had to change them. Muslims, however, were not affected by this order as Hoxha, whose surname meant a Muslim imam, would himself have had to change his name! This name-changing campaign disrupted the longstanding traditions of the Greek minority who named their children after their grandparents, or saints and martyrs, or other religious figures. While registering an Albanian name for their children with the government, many parents at home, however, continued to call them by Greek names. At school the children had to use their Albanian names.[12]

Another decree, No. 225, was also issued in 1975 stipulating that place names with religious connotations had to be changed.[13] Thus all towns named after Christian saints were renamed. In addition, some non-religious Greek town names, anything that sounded inappropriate or Greek were changed as well. Communism wished to eliminate all traces of Greek identity.

Ruined Orthodox church in southern Albania used as an army depot during the Communist period

Prisons and labour camps

During Hoxha's years of oppressive rule, the regime maintained an extensive network of 29 prisons and labour camps which held over 30,000 'enemies of the state' year after year. While ethnic Greeks in Albania were estimated to comprise about 10% of the population, the proportion of Greek prisoners in Albania's Gulag during the Hoxha years averaged 40%.[14]

Apart from the United Nations, Enver Hoxha refused to permit Albania to participate in any international forum. Its UN membership, however, did not alter Albania's decision to ignore the commitments of the UN Charter of Human Rights, and due to its self- imposed ideological isolation following its break with China, Albania's human rights abuses were not scrutinised and went unpunished:

> 'It is estimated that between 1945-56 an estimated 80,000 political arrests were made; 16,000 of these died in prison. By the mid 1970s some 18 Gulags or prison camps existed.'[15]

Post-Communist Albania

The introduction of 'democratisation' in Albania after the collapse of Communism had some welcome results for minority rights. Yet although freedom of religion was introduced, the Albanian authorities continued to be highly suspicious of the Albanian Orthodox Church which they saw as the 'powerhouse' of the ethnic Greek minority's national aspirations, a view strengthened by the fact that the Albanian Orthodox Primate was Greek like many Orthodox missionaries at the time. Since Albanian independence in 1912, the idea of an autocephalous Albanian Orthodox Church – independent of the Greek Orthodox Church – had been a part of the Greek minority's quest for national identity. By 1922 the Albanian Orthodox Church had announced its autocephaly and this had eventually been recognised by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1937.

In 1992 the Albanian Orthodox Church began to encounter government hostility. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, with the approval of the Albanian government, appointed a Greek citizen, Anastasios Yiannoulatos, as Primate because at this time, due to past persecution, the Albanian Orthodox Church had no suitable candidate for the post. On the 11 July 1991, permission was given to Archbishop Anastasios to enter Albania, but thereafter the government treated him with great suspicion. He was forced at first to live in a hotel in Tirana until December 1991, and then his rented apartment in the city remained, 'under surveillance 24 hours a day by the Albanian secret service'.[16]

In the summer of 1993 Greek-Albanian relations became particularly strained: the Albanian government expelled Archimandrite Chrysostomos Maidonis for allegedly disseminating pro-Greek propaganda.[17] Then in 1994 the government proposed a new Constitution which was to be voted in by a referendum: Article 4 was a direct attack on the Archbishop and stated that only Albanian citizens could be bishops or archbishops. This requirement was unfair in the circumstances since, thanks to the former relentless persecution, there were no qualified Albanian churchmen suitable for these positions. Some argued that the government wanted the Archbishop to leave because under his leadership the Albanian Orthodox Church began to flourish and grow.

Fr Jani Trebicka, an Orthodox priest, gave an account of events at the time:

> 'All our clergy met at the seminary in council where we wrote a letter to the people saying that we were not against the state's laws but opposed to Article 4 because our Church does not yet have an Albanian citizen who is able to be Archbishop. The Albanians who would have been suitable candidates were all dead or too old and in poor health. It would take years for the church to nurture a person of the maturity and experience needed for such a responsibility. Article 4, we explained, would mean that we would be a church without a leader […] The letter was distributed to all parishes, but the government did all it could to prevent it being published or read in public. Police tried to prevent me reading it aloud in the church where I was celebrating the liturgy that day. They told me they could arrest me if I read the letter, but I did so all the same.'[18]

Archbishop Anastasios like Fr Jani thought there was little hope that the Constitution would be defeated and so prepared to leave the country. He could do little to change the situation; he could not address the Church about the Constitution and the approaching referendum. A man of lesser faith and diplomacy would not

Church of the Archangels Michael & Gabriel at Moshopolis

have survived the continuous pressure placed on him. I remember at the time hearing one of his sermons in which, unable to advise his flock on how to vote, he said simply, 'when one goes to the cardiologist one does not ask about his nationality; one asks whether he is a good cardiologist.' And then he gave his blessing. To his surprise the Constitution in the end was defeated with an overwhelming percentage opposing from the south of the country where the majority of Orthodox Albanians, i.e. the Greek minority, live.

On-going tensions

The government, composed mostly of Sunni Muslims, has been unsympathetic towards both Orthodoxy in general and towards the Greek minority.[19] While international pressure forced Tirana to allow the re-establishment of the Albanian Orthodox Church, the government was reluctant to help the Orthodox rebuild the many churches destroyed by the Hoxha regime, or to return the property and church land which had been confiscated during Communist rule. The Albanian authorities refused to allow three bishops appointed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate to dioceses in Albania to enter the country because they were not Albanian citizens, although non-Albanian clergy of other religions had been accepted. Some members of parliament even proposed a law to require the head of the Orthodox Church to be a 'third-generation' Albanian citizen.[20]

Albania's decision to join the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in December 1992 has had consequences for the Greek minority and their religion. The Islamic schools (madrassas) which were established in Albania have been producing students who are hostile to Christianity (especially to Orthodoxy). Some of them began to roam the countryside, attacking Orthodox churches in, for example, Moshopolis (Voskopojë) near Koritsa (Korçë) and in Himara where churches of great historical importance were destroyed by them. By 1996 Islamic fundamentalism had taken hold and in August a group of fanatical Muslim students vandalised the Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel in Moshopolis, an 18th century building which even under Hoxha had been protected and which was located in an area where the majority of the population were Orthodox. These extremists desecrated the Byzantine frescos digging out the eyes of saints in icons and writing 'Allah is great' on the walls while demanding that a mosque be built in the area. [21]

In the autumn of 1995, during a field trip, I visited Koritsa and met Fr Christos, one of the few remaining Orthodox priests from the pre-Communist era. He explained with tears in his eyes how with the closing of the churches in 1967, he

had been defrocked, shaved and obliged to work as a carpenter in a labour camp. He insisted that he had never lost his faith and had always tried to help his fellow men during the long years of Communist rule. Compared to those days of persecution, today the religious situation has improved dramatically: what was inconceivable 25 years ago is now possible. The Orthodox in Albania have been able to construct a new cathedral in the capital, Tirana, on a plot of land given to them as compensation for land seized by the Communist government. At the same time there has been little progress on other property claims in different parts of the country, as well as difficulty in recovering icons and precious manuscripts. Both the Albanian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church are still trying to regain possession of archives seized by the Communist government and held in the national archives.

Whilst the Greek minority have regained much, they still feel threatened by the fragile nature of inter-faith relations in the country, and by some of the negative attitudes towards them which can be found within institutions of government.

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[1] Edith Harxhi, *An invitation to Albania: An Overview of Albania's Economy & Resources,* Besa, Tirana, 1995, p.9.
[2] ibid., loc.cit.
[3] Peter Prifti, *Socialist Albania Since 1944: Domestic and Foreign Developments*, The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1978, p.144.
[4] ibid, p. 143.
[5] *Amnesty International, Albania, Political Imprisonment and the Law*, Amnesty International, 1984, p.13.
[6] Derek Hall, *Albania and the Albanians,* Printer Publishers Ltd., London, 1994, p.45.
[7] Amnesty International, op.cit., p.10.
[8] Hugh Poulton, *The Balkans' Minorities and States in Conflict*, Minority Rights Publications, London, 1993, p.196.
[9] Nicholas Gage, *The Greek Minority in Northern Epirus. Their History and Legal Status,* New York, 1992, p.20.
[10] Jim Forest, *The Resurrection of the Church in Albania*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2002, pp.25-26.
[11] Hugh Poulton, op.cit., p.197.
[12] ibid, p.199
[13] ibid, p.200.
[14] Nicholas Gage, op.cit., p.19.
[15] ibid, p.20.
[16] Jim Forest, op.cit., p.57.
[17] *Transition*, Vol.1, No.15, 25 August 1995, p.14.
[18] ibid, p.58.
[19] James Pettifer, *The Greek Minority in Albania in the Aftermath of Communism*, Conflict Studies Research Centre, July 2001, p.11.
[20] Nicholas Gage, op.cit., p.23.
[21] *Eleftheros Typos*, 28 August 1996 and *Athesmeftos Typos*, 30 August 1996.

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Learning from the Past to Reimagine the Future: Theological Education in the (Former) Soviet Union

by Joshua T. Searle

Introduction

View of Donetsk, Ukraine, from the Christian University's campus

My aim in this article is to draw on the research material that I collected during a recent trip to the Keston Archive at Baylor University in order to outline the tasks that confront theological education in the contemporary post-Soviet context. Although my primary focus is on theological education within evangelical contexts, I am also concerned about learning from other traditions (particularly Orthodoxy) and understanding how evangelical models of theological education can be renewed, reformed, contextualised and – if necessary – abandoned in the contemporary, post-Soviet setting. I will endeavour, wherever possible, to draw on my own experience as a theological educator working in Ukraine and the Czech Republic, as well as on the research findings that I gained from the Keston Archive.

The Soviet legacy of crisis

Anyone who has lived in or even visited Eastern Ukraine recently will perceive that in this part of the world the Soviet Union as a public mentality has far outlived the USSR as a political entity. The period between 1917 and 1991 has left an enduring critical legacy of crisis throughout the nations of the former Soviet Union (fSU). Although the manifestations of the crisis are primarily social, political and economic, there are also spiritual dimensions to the current predicament.

The monstrously unattractive buildings and unsightly slag heaps, which I could see from my classroom windows in Donetsk, are part of the melancholy legacy of a malevolent ideology that asserted control not only over the outward appearance of the buildings, but also over the inward direction of people's innermost thoughts. The eyesores that blemish the scarred urban landscape in this region are a throwback to a materialist, atheist, functionalist worldview, which regarded architectural beauty and any sense of aesthetic appreciation as signs of 'bourgeois decadence'. The scars of the Communist legacy are not merely aesthetic; they penetrate through to the collective national consciousness of the Ukrainian people. The enduring influence of Soviet ideology on

the public mentality in this region of Eastern Ukraine creates a social situation to which the label 'post-Soviet' can be cautiously attached.

Evangelical theological education today shares in the crisis that is affecting the wider society. Throughout the territory of the fSU, from the Baltic to the Pacific, seminaries and other institutions of Christian education are closing their doors with alarming frequency. The veteran missiologist, Walter Sawatsky, comments that, 'Beautiful campuses built largely with largesse from the West, including many thousands of sweat hours by volunteers from America, are standing nearly empty'.[1] Several lucid and persuasive accounts of the factors that have contributed to the current crisis in evangelical theological education in the fSU have been published by a variety of authors, and it is not my intention to rehearse or add to these discussions in this article. For our purposes, it is sufficient to note that the crisis is real and is widely acknowledged not only by foreign observers,[2] but also by Christian academic leaders throughout the fSU.[3]

One of the basic principles of history is that events have causes; conditions are as they are today because circumstances were as they were yesterday. Since contemporary phenomena cannot be properly explained or understood without recourse to the diverse developments in the past that created them, it is necessary to offer a brief description of some of the historical factors that have given rise to the current crisis in evangelical theological education in the fSU. By looking to the past we can also derive encouragement and wisdom as we look critically but appreciatively at the successes and failures of those who faced similar challenges in times past. In this respect the Keston Archive is an invaluable resource, not only for historical analysis, but also for theological reflection.

Christian theology and Marxist atheism in the (former) Soviet Union

It is generally well known that the Soviet authorities set a premium on education. Lenin remarked that, 'Without teaching there is no knowledge, and without knowledge there is no Communism.' Mass education was regarded as an essential prerequisite for building up a utopian, classless Communist society, and was therefore used as a political tool to promote the official Marxist-Leninist worldview.[4] According to Soviet officials, 'The role of Soviet education is to assist in the building of a Communist society, in shaping the materialist world outlook of the students, equipping them with a good grounding in the different fields of knowledge and preparing them for socially useful work.'[5] All subjects, from literature and history[6] to mathematics[7] and physics,[8] were taught from the perspective of dialectical materialism.[9]

In the USSR a metanarrative was propagated, according to which the advance of science and human reason would culminate in the universal acceptance of dialectical materialism as the only legitimate philosophical paradigm. One of the main perceived obstacles to the development of this process in the eyes of the Soviet ideologues was religion. As a result, religion was completely divorced from education. Moreover, theology was defined officially as 'a scholastic teaching of religious dogmas' and was scorned as a useless and illegitimate pursuit that was 'not a science and [had] nothing to do with science.'[10]

Although the USSR no longer exists as a political entity, Ukrainian higher education today, in common with the education systems of many nations of the fSU, is still largely determined by its Soviet past. Despite the apparent 'religious renaissance' and 'a rebirth of faith'[11] that ostensibly occurred in Ukraine following the

demise the USSR, the education system, from primary school to university, is essentially secular and little thought is given to how theological insights are reflected in theories about science and human life in society.

Theological education initiatives in the Soviet Union

Within the rigid structure of the centralised Soviet education structures there was very little room for manoeuvre for believers (particularly evangelicals) who wished to obtain a theological education. Although some evangelical theological seminaries struggled on into the late 1920s – most notably Leningrad Bible College led by Ivan Prokhanov which, according to one source, helped to graduate more than 600 preachers and pastors before the Soviet authorities closed the college down in 1927[12] – the Stalinist purges and the new wave of persecution under Khrushchev resulted in the closure of all evangelical residential seminaries and Bible schools throughout the USSR.

Although, on the whole, the Soviet system in relation to theological education tended to be more tolerant of Orthodoxy than of evangelicalism, many Orthodox theologians, apart from those officially sanctioned by the State to discredit religious belief,[13] were forced underground. Thanks to the Keston Archive, we know that the curricula of those seminaries which were allowed to remain open – namely those in Zagorsk, Leningrad and Odessa – were forbidden from including any aspect of theological critique of culture. Instead the curricula were focused on internal church doctrine and practice and included modules on such topics as 'Historical and Dialectical Materialism', which seem rather out of place amid the other modules on more traditional topics in a theological curriculum, such as Patristics, Canon Law and Greek.[14]

Referring to government interference in determining the content of courses in theological education, the Orthodox professor, Vladimir Fedorov, noted that, 'During the Soviet period, theological schools were prohibited […] from discussing contemporary issues of mission and those of the relationship between church and state, that is, beyond the limits of official ideology. Discussing such topics as "Christianity and Culture" was impossible. Yet students could not help thinking and talking about them.'[15]

The Christian Seminar

This situation gave rise to a series of creative underground initiatives, in which believers organised themselves into informal discussion groups and secret communities, which discussed the theological contributions of Christian faith to culture. One particularly significant group was the 'Christian Seminar', founded by young Orthodox intellectuals in 1974.[16]

Explaining the founding of the Christian Seminar, one of the key early leaders remarked that:

> 'As we were dissatisfied with the mere "performance of a religious cult", had had no opportunity to receive a religious education and needed to establish brotherly Christian relations, we began in October 1974 to hold a religious and philosophical seminar […] Our thirst for spiritual communion, religious education and missionary service [ran] up against all the might of the state's repressive machinery.'[17]

The Keston Archive contains a wealth of information on the origins and development of the Seminar and the subsequent brutal persecution of its leaders by the KGB.[18] Concerning its ultimate goals, the Christian Seminar aimed to become part of a mass youth movement that would

Joshua Searle working in the Keston Center at Baylor

contribute to the building of 'a new type of human community'. A document from the Keston Archive dating back to 1979 expressed the utopian aspirations of those who founded the Seminar:

> 'We are all in need of a deeper and warmer type of communication: the force of active love must transfigure the world around us […] It has become impossible to go on living in falsehood. An unbearably aimless existence in a frenzied world, dull attendance at useless jobs, meaningless debilitating disputes, faceless socialist culture, newspaper pathos and lies, lies, lies. Corrosive, destructive, humiliating lying motivated by fear, which some justify as caution, others as inevitability, others as wisdom […] From the moment we are born, socialist culture presents us with a complete, finished, essentially absolutely false image of the world. This world, excluding tragedy, compassion and in effect all Christian values from life, sets the pattern of one's life from birth to death with the inevitability of fate.'

Despite this deeply pessimistic appraisal of their situation, the leaders of the Christian Seminar looked to the Christian faith, in particular to the peculiar synthesis of Christian eschatology and nationalistic messianism that was expressed in the so-called 'Russian Idea', associated with Dostoevsky and Solovyov:

> 'We feel that we are that living material out of which Christ will make all things new: a new community, a new culture, a new family, a new kind of man and a new

Left to right: *Joshua Searle & Larisa Seago (Keston Center's archivist)*

> kind of woman. Essentially, He is creating a new people out of us. But at the same time this is a return to the primal roots of the Russian national soul, which is trustingly thrown open to receive God's world and all the nations which live in it.'[19]

The literature produced by the Christian Seminar testifies to the philosophical sophistication and theological erudition of its authors. Topics for discussion in the Seminar ranged from 'The Fate of Contemporary Humanism' to 'Husserl's Theory of the Crisis of Contemporary Science'. The second issue of the Seminar's *samizdat*[20] journal, *Obshchina*,[21] likewise contained articles with such daunting titles as 'The Ontological Problems of Russian Sophiology' and 'Konstantin Kavelin on Nihilism'. Perhaps owing to the erudition and sophistication of its academic content, the Christian Seminar never became a mass movement.

It did however represent a lucid and cogent cultural critique of the official Soviet ideology. This critique drew heavily on the resources of Christian theology, particularly eschatology and utopia, and can serve as a model and inspiration for contemporary faith-based critiques of post-Soviet society. Humanity and spiritual values of truth, integrity and community, according to this critique, had been engulfed by an overbearing, intrusive ideology and the absurd formalities of a stifling, cumbersome and corrupt Kafkaesque bureaucratic system which cared a lot more about abstract notions of Science and Progress than it did about human beings. These mainly young Orthodox dissidents were drawing on the resources of Christian theology in search of a new set of values, which would confer 'a life-giving sense of purpose, a pivot around which existence can organise itself.'[22]

Perhaps recognising the grave threat to their ideological hegemony posed by these cultural critiques, the Soviet authorities suppressed these educational initiatives with disproportionate brutality which involved detaining their leaders,[23] allegedly torturing them, and forcibly confining them in prison psychiatric hospitals.

Impressions of Orthodox theological seminaries and academies in the USSR

Although dissident activity was suppressed by the authorities, Orthodox theological seminaries and academies were, at least, allowed to function throughout the period of the USSR and many seminaries were able to graduate hundreds of priests and future church leaders during this period.

Sources from the Keston Archive offer conflicting accounts concerning the state of Orthodox theological education in the USSR in the 1970s and 1980s. After delivering a series of lectures at Zagorsk and Leningrad, the Indian Orthodox theologian, Dr Paul Varghese, reflected that,

> 'the intellectual life in the academies struck me as being inadequate to cope with the problems of contemporary society. Increasingly theological books in English, French and German are becoming available in academy libraries, but most students do not have access to anything but books in the Russian language, most of which date from before 1917.'[24]

According to another source, the situation seemed not to have improved by the late 1980s when Orthodox seminaries continued to suffer from 'inadequate theological training', 'under-resourced theological libraries' and a 'lack of church personnel'.[25]

On the other hand, one British theologian, O. Fielding Clarke, who went to teach a series of courses at Odessa and Leningrad, referred to the Russian Orthodox seminary graduates as 'the best educated clergy in the world'. He observed that:

> 'in a country where Marxist atheism is the established philosophy, there is no room in the Christian ministry for men who have a merely sentimental or conventional attachment to the Faith or who have psychological defects.'

He went on to make the revealing observation that the sermons he heard preached at the Orthodox seminaries and academies consisted of 'good, simple Gospel stuff that could, in most cases, be preached in a Baptist chapel without raising an eyebrow.'[26]

Evangelical theological education: the AUCECB Bible Correspondence Course

It was not until 1968 that the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB) were able to launch a part-time theological correspondence course for trainee evangelical pastors. Topics included in the first curriculum were Christian Doctrine, Exegesis, Introduction to the Bible, Preaching, Pastoral Care, History of the ECB, and the Constitution of the USSR.[27] The correspondence course appears to have enjoyed considerable success, despite the threatening backdrop of hostility and intimidation against which it was carried out. The *Keston News Service* reported that between 1968 and 1980, 207 people had successfully graduated from this course and that the new programme had helped provide the impetus for the publication of new academic theological literature.[28]

During the period when every kind of formal evangelical education was prohibited, theological training was carried out through the official publication of the AUCECB, *Bratsky Vestnik*, and by the *samizdat* publications, *Vestnik Spasenia* and *Vestnik Istiny*.[29] Although *Bratsky Vestnik* contained many devotional articles, it also published material that was explicitly educational in nature and intention.[30] The thematic content and theological quality of these educational articles

varied considerably. There are articles in *Bratsky Vestnik* devoted to issues ranging from abstract analysis of the Trinity to mundane descriptions about the need to maintain personal hygiene.

The editors used their journal to educate readers about the dangers of alcohol and cigarettes. In one amusing article – although the author was presumably dead serious at the time – an evangelical author ingeniously links an old Orthodox prohibition on smoking in church to the biblical teaching on the body as the church or temple of the Holy Spirit. 'Is it proper to smoke in the temple?' asks the author rhetorically. 'Of course not!' comes the predictable reply.[31] The author assumed that since the believer's body is itself a temple of the Holy Spirit, he or she should refrain from smoking at all times so as not to sin against this biblical prohibition.

This kind of practical, mundane advice and simple, proofreading exegesis was a far cry from the sophisticated cultural critique exhibited in the texts of the Christian Seminar. Moreover, in contrast to the comprehensive curricula of the Orthodox seminaries and academies, which aimed to provide students with knowledge of philology and grounding in philosophy and logic, the Baptists and evangelical Christians were more focused on preparing students in practical ways for pastoral ministry. According to my friend, Dr Alexander Popov, who teaches theology at the Moscow Theological Seminary, evangelical theological education in the USSR was 'first of all focused on training preachers and, secondly, it addressed certain specific questions about particular ministries in the church.'[32]

Furthermore, although evangelicals and Baptists (particularly the dissident evangelical group known as the *Initsiativniki*) were an important part of the dissident movement, there is no evidence to suggest that evangelical Christians established informal academic theological communities comparable to the Christian Seminar or the Orthodox-initiated dissident group known as '37'. The Baptist texts on theological education and mission do not exhibit the same kind of idealistic or utopian tendencies that were common to groups such as the Christian Seminar or '37'.

Theological education since the collapse of the USSR

Despite its considerable achievements, evangelical theological education under Soviet Communism suffered from many of the problems that continue to afflict religious education, particularly at university level, in the contemporary post-Soviet context. In his book, *Baptism bez kavychek*, Mykhailo Cherenkov identifies several problems which confronted theological education in the USSR, such as Soviet atheism, inter-church conflict, and anti-intellectualism, as well as new challenges in the post-Soviet era, such as global consumerism, popular post-modernism and resurgent paganism. Theological education cannot be unaffected by these broader social, political, economic and religious challenges. It is, as yet, uncertain how the churches can best respond to these various and multifaceted challenges.

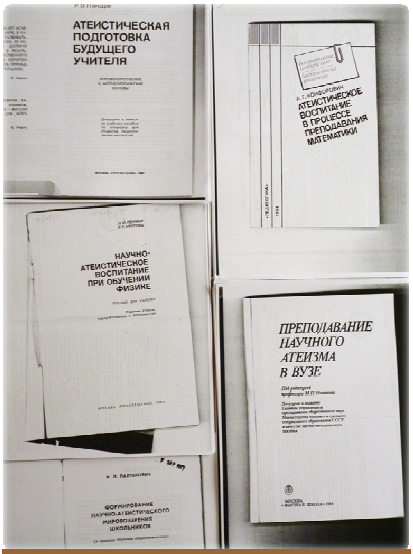
One thing that does seem quite certain, however, is the need for a rigorous system of theological education, which is attuned to the contextual realities and challenges of real life and real people in the countries of the fSU. The evangelical churches will be better able to respond to the challenges if they can build up a generation of dedicated and well-educated Christian men and women. The evangelical churches in Ukraine today need not only 'professional Christians' (i.e. pastors, missionaries, evangelists, etc.) but also

'Christian professionals' (i.e. Christian doctors, nurses, lawyers, entrepreneurs, architects, journalists, broadcasters, etc.), who are able to bring their Christian worldviews into these various spheres.

It is on this point that the leaders of evangelical seminaries would gain considerable insight and wisdom from reading about the history, not only of their predecessors in the AUCECB, but also of educational initiatives which originated in different traditions, such as the Christian Seminar. Unlike the Bible Correspondence Course, which began in 1968 – and in contrast to other previous short-lived evangelical theological residential courses established in the early years of the USSR[33] whose educational aims were limited to the training of pastors and preachers – the Christian Seminar offered a more comprehensive vision of holistic theological education.

It is regrettable that the Christian Seminar was neglected for so long, but thanks to the Keston Institute and a few recent publications, the Seminar and the heroic leadership of its founding members are being revived. It is important that the vision of the Christian Seminar should be revived, because its social critique and profound connection to the history and spiritual reality of Russia and Eastern Europe are as relevant and necessary today as they were at the height of Soviet power.

Similarly, however, a valid criticism can be made that the Christian Seminar was too idealistic and utopian in its outlook and that its aims – of building 'a new community, a new culture, a new family, a new kind of man and a new kind of woman' – would have been unfeasible, even in the most auspicious social and political conditions, and utterly impossible in the adverse context of Soviet oppression. The evangelical leaders of the AUCECB may have set out fairly limited educational aims (such as training pastors and preachers), but they were at least achievable, even in the unfavourable circumstances created by the Soviet regime.



Soviet atheist textbooks for teachers which have been preserved in the Keston Archive

Learning from the past

The challenge for the next generation of educational leaders is to learn from the example of groups such as the Christian Seminar and the AUCECB, and to develop new and creative programmes of theological education which will equip people with the conceptual resources to engage in cogent and contextually-relevant philosophical critiques of culture (i.e. in the tradition of the Christian Seminar), whilst still attending to the immediate pastoral and mission needs of local churches (i.e. as the AUCECB sought to do).

Most of the Western-funded evangelical educational initiatives in the 1990s were woefully inadequate in this regard. Pragmatism and short-term initiatives aimed at

conversion[34] prevailed over the more costly and time-consuming need to learn from the successes and failures of historical precedents and to construct creative and culturally sensitive models of theological education which would connect with the spiritual, social and economic realities of life in the post-Soviet context.[35] The failure of these well-intentioned but half-baked initiatives is clear to anyone with any experience of theological education in this region.

One way of redressing the effects of these initiatives would be to develop programmes of theological education which are directed towards equipping people to relate effectively to the hopes, fears, anxieties and aspirations of the people whom they serve and the society in which they live. Mykhailo Cherenkov insists that the evangelical communities of the fSU require a new mission paradigm that 'responds to the needs and questions of people beyond the walls of the church.' Moreover, theological education has a vital role to play in 'bringing together the inner world of the church and outer world of culture, overcoming the spiritual and social dichotomy.'[36]

Conclusion

Given the constraints of this article, I have only been able to offer a brief overview of two specific educational initiatives – the Christian Seminar and the AUCECB Correspondence Course. Theological education in the USSR is a huge topic and the Keston Archive at Baylor is a veritable goldmine which will reward the patient researcher with an abundance of theological and historical insights. The Archive contains a wealth of information on educational initiatives among other groups and confessions, including Catholics, Orthodox, and unofficial Baptists (*Initsiativniki*) which have not been addressed either in this article or in other publications, but which should be brought to light by future research.

As well as acquainting me with the publications of dissident academic groups, the time that I spent perusing the *samizdat* journals on theology also reinforced my long-held intuitive conviction that the most valuable theological reflection is produced not in the armchairs of theological faculties which are occupied by tenured, comfortable academic professionals, but by those outside mainstream academic life who recognise with Dietrich Bonhöffer that 'theology means struggle'.

The compelled apartness of believers under Soviet Communism enabled them to produce works of theological reflection, which – however seemingly crude or unpolished by contemporary academic standards – nonetheless, in many cases, represented the genuine cry from the heart of a people in crisis, who knew all too well what it meant to be 'persecuted for righteousness' sake'. By becoming a 'voice for the voiceless', the Keston Institute continues to render the invaluable service of preserving the memories and communicating the living faith of believers, from various confessions, during the era of Soviet Communism, for the benefit of those of us who have the awesome and humbling privilege of continuing their legacy in the present day.

1. Walter Sawatsky, 'Reflections on the Urgency of Theological Education in the Former Soviet Union – After 20 Years', *Religion in Eastern Europe* 30 (May 2010), 25.
2. Mark R. Elliott, 'Current Crisis in Protestant Theological Education in the Former Soviet Union', *Religion in Eastern Europe* 30 (November 2010), 1-22.
3. One of the most lucid (and controversial) recent assessments of this crisis is offered by my friend and former colleague, Dr Mykhailo N. Cherenkov, in his *Баптизм без*

кавычек: Очерки и материалы к дискуссии о будущем евангельских церквей (Черкассы: Коллоквиум, 2012).

4. Mark Popovsky, *Science in Chains: The Crisis of Science and Scientists in the Soviet Union Today*, trans. Paul S. Falla (London: Collins and Harvill, 1980); Loren R. Graham, *Science and Philosophy in the Soviet Union* (London: Allen Lane, 1971).
5. Y. P. Yelyutin, quoted in Nigel Grant, *Soviet Education*, (London: Penguin, 1964), 23.
6. Я. Н. Мараш, *Вопросы Атеистического Воспитания на Уроках истории СССР и БССР* (Минск: Издательство Белгосуниверситета им. В. И. Ленина, 1961).
7. А. Г. Конфорович, *Атеистическое Воспитание в Процессе Преподавания Математики* (Москва: Педагогика, 1984).
8. Д. Н. Пеннер и Р. Г. Кротова, *Научно-Атеистическое Воспитание при Обучении Физике* (Москва: Просвещение, 1982).
9. Dialectical materialism was a philosophical perspective, associated with Karl Marx, which posited the external world as a product of the organising activity of communal experience. According to this perspective, social reality is determined by the relationship between 'man' (*Mensch*) and 'nature' (*Natur*). For a comprehensive exposition of dialectical materialism in the Soviet context, see Gustav A. Wetter, *Dialectical Materialism: A Historical and Systematic Survey of Philosophy in the Soviet Union*, trans. Peter Heath (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964).
10. 'Theology', *Ushakov Dictionary* (1935-1940) Archive file <USSR/Religion/General>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
11. Catherine Wanner, *Communities of the Converted: Ukrainians and Global Evangelism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 2. Wanner's optimistic predictions, unfortunately, are not grounded in the socio-religious realities of post-Soviet Ukraine and do not take sufficient account of the diversity of theological and social convictions within Ukrainian evangelical subcultures.
12. *World Vision Magazine* (March, 1971). Another source puts this figure at 400 graduates: *European Baptist Press Service* (18 August 1977). Archive file <USSR/Bap.15/18>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
13. A notable example of an apostate Orthodox priest who disavowed his faith was Alexander Opisov, who was Master of Theology and Archpriest. See Michael Bourdeaux, *Opium of the People: The Christian Religion in the USSR* (London: Mowbrays, 1965), 109-115.
14. Gerd Stricker, 'Orthodoxe Priesterausbildung in der Sowjetunion', *Hintergrund* (May, 1987), 21-26. Archive file <SU/Ort.15/18>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
15. Fedorov, 'Mission, Missiology, and Orthodox Theological Education' (n.d.). Archive file <SU/Ort.15/18>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
16. Jane Ellis, 'USSR: The Christian Seminar', *Religion in Communist Lands* 8 (1980), 92-101; Michael Bourdeaux quotes the impressions of one participant concerning the setting and content of the meetings of the Christian Seminar. See Bourdeaux, *Risen Indeed: Lessons in Faith from the USSR* (New York: St Vladimir's, 1996), 35.
17. Ogorodnikov, quoted in Michael Bourdeaux, *Risen Indeed: Lessons in Faith from the USSR* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983), 30.
18. The most useful material is contained in the folder marked, <SU/Ort 12>. For a helpful recent account of the activities of the seminar which focuses on the biography of one of

its leaders, see Koenraad De Wolf, *Dissident for Life: Alexander Ogorodnikov and the Struggle for Religious Freedom in Russia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).

19. These quotations are excerpts from a letter written by five members to sympathisers in North America, dated November/December 1979. Archive file <SU/Ort.21/1/80>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
20. '*Samizdat'*, from the Russian word meaning 'to self-publish', referred to a miscellaneous variety of uncensored work on various religious, literary and journalistic topics and current affairs, as well as some creative work such as poems and novels. *Samizdat* was written by dissidents in the USSR and often appeared in typed or mimeographed form. *Samizdat* was circulated clandestinely throughout the Soviet Union. The Keston Archive tells the heroic stories of those involved in the risky and arduous work of printing and distributing *samizdat* material.
21. This word, often rendered into English as 'community', is better translated as 'the inborn spirit of collectivism'. It is a word that carries deep connotations in Russian history and culture.
22. Tatyana Goricheva, 'The Religious Significance of Unofficial Soviet Culture', *37*, 19 (September-December 1979). Republished in *Religion in Communist Lands*, 8 (1980), 230-232.
23. Alexander Ogorodnikov, one of the main leaders of the Christian Seminar, was only 28 years old when he was arrested in November 1978. He was sentenced to a forced labour camp for six years, followed by five years' exile. Another female founder member of the seminar, Tatyana Shchipkova, was likewise arrested in 1980, charged with 'malicious hooliganism' and sentenced to three years in a labour camp.
24. 'The Flame of Faith Is Not Out in the USSR', *Christian Century* (12 May, 1971). Archive file <USSR/C/9>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
25. 'Zur Lage der Geistlichen Lehranstalten der Russischen Kirche', *Glaube in der 2. Welt* 17 (1989), 23-24. Archive file <SU Ort 15/18>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
26. O. Fielding Clarke, 'Best educated clergy in the world', Christian Weekly Newspapers (20 July, 1973), 8. Archive file <USSR/Orth C/ 9>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
27. *Bratsky Vestnik* 4 (1968), 77.
28. *Keston News Service* 90 (25 January, 1980), 4. By 1985, the number of graduates had reached 300; see, *European Baptist Press Service* (16 July 1985), 4. Archive file <SU/Bap/15/18>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
29. The Keston Archive contains a comprehensive collection of all of these important publications.
30. An example of explicitly educational material is a series of articles entitled, *Thoughts for Preachers*, by A. V. Karev, which appeared periodically in *Bratsky Vestnik* between 1955 and 1958. Many other articles are devoted to a systematic analysis of a particular biblical theme or doctrine, together with a discussion of its ethical implications and contemporary application.
31. *Bratsky Vestnik* 5 (1946), 44.
32. Popov, 'The Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the Soviet Union as a hermeneutical community', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Wales, IBTS, Prague: 2010), 164.

33. These initiatives are summarised in Popov, 'Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the Soviet Union', 162.

34. Although many thousands of conversions did result from these kind of evangelising efforts, the long-term consequences for the Ukrainian evangelical community were, on the whole, detrimental, and have, at least, not resulted in the much-anticipated 'revival' in this region.

35. For more details on these initiatives and a critical analysis of the role of Western missionary activities, see Mark Elliott, 'Theological Education after Communism: The Mixed Blessing of Western Assistance' in *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 3 (Winter, 1995); Wes and Cheryl Brown, 'Progress and Challenge in Theological Education in Central and Eastern Europe', *Transformation* 20 (2003), 1. A very critical account of Western missionaries can be found in Johannes Reimer's controversial and thought-provoking article, 'Mission in post-perestroika Russia', in *Missionalia* 24 (April, 1996), 16-39. Walter Sawatsky offers a more balanced perspective in his, 'Return of Mission and Evangelisation in the CIS (1980s-present): an Assessment', in Penner and Sawatsky (eds.), *Mission in the Former Soviet Union* (Schwarzenfeld: Neufeld, 2005).

36. Cherenkov, *Баптизм без кавычек*, 34.

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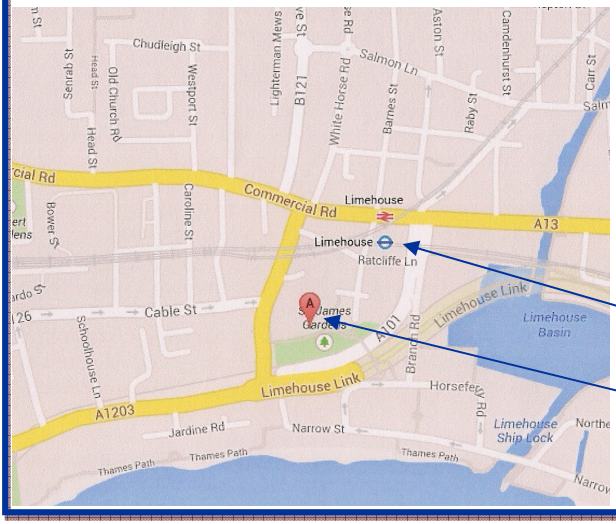
Keston AGM

Saturday 1st November 2014 at 12 noon

The Royal Foundation of St Katharine
Butcher Row
London E14 8DS



The Royal Foundation of St Katharine is on the Docklands Light Railway. It is within easy walking distance of Limehouse station.

DLR Limehouse

St Katharine's

Keston Symposium

Baylor University

The Keston Center at Baylor organised a symposium entitled 'Religion and Political Culture in Communist Countries: Past, Present and Future' in November 2013, at which Professor Wallace Daniel and Canon Michael Bourdeaux gave keynote addresses. Wallace Daniel, University Professor of History at Mercer University (Georgia), helped engineer the transfer of the Keston Archive to Baylor in 2007 when he was a senior Baylor faculty member, and today serves on the Keston Center's Advisory Board. The complete programme and video recordings of the two keynote addresses can be found at http://www.baylor.edu/kestoncenter/index.php?id=99707. We print below the text of both addresses.

The Memory Keepers, Past and Future

by Wallace Daniel

I want to begin with a word of gratitude to Michael Bourdeaux, who is an inspiration and helpmate to me, and, more broadly, to everyone working in the field of religion and politics, church and state in Eastern Europe and beyond – in global affairs.

In the West, in the popular press, but also in many academic studies, there is a widespread view that the Orthodox Church – and religion in general – have played little strategic role in national affairs. The church, it is often claimed, is and has been a tool of the state, allied with the Soviet government earlier and with the Russian government presently. Joseph Stalin revived the church in 1943, during the worst days of the Second World War, to inspire the national spirit, to connect the Soviet effort in the war to Russia's national heritage. Afterwards, the government used the church as a propaganda tool, its carefully selected clergy appearing at international disarmament conferences, stressing peace initiatives and demonstrating the government's forward-looking thinking. The picture we gained, a widespread view, portrayed a compliant church, a lifeless clergy, lacking energy, creativity, and vigour – a handmaiden of the state, firmly in its grasp.

I became interested in these issues in the mid-1990s, in part driven by a suspicion of these stereotypes, a sense that the reality was much more complex than we were led to believe, and, in part, because of meetings in Moscow with two very different people: one, a young scholar named Sergei Filatov, a sociologist of religion at Moscow University, whose work opened up for me a much different world, about which I will say more later.

The second person was an eighty-one year old nun, a former award-winning molecular chemist, appointed to lead the restoration of one of Russia's most famous women's monasteries, Novodevichy women's monastery in Moscow. When I first met her, in her office in No-

vodevichy Monastery, the late afternoon sunlight streaming through the window beside her, she took down from the shelf a photograph album, opened it, and showed me a picture of her father and mother, standing beside Tsar Nicholas II and the Tsarina Alexandra. The second photograph was her grandfather, Leonid Mikhailovich Chichagov, a priest, an author, an artist, with whom she and her sister lived until 1937, when he was taken away by the police, during that awful year, and shot, his memory erased from the history books and from the public memory. I came away from these meetings believing that the memory was what had been most under assault, that the parts of that memory would be recovered and restored, and would have a large impact, a shaping influence, on how religion and politics would play out.

Professor Wallace Daniel delivering his keynote address at the Keston Symposium

If memory is to be recovered, then who are the memory keepers? In this fast-paced, instantaneous world in which we now live, who holds the keys to family memories, to the stories that give us connections? Photographs, Michael Ignatieff reminds us, are a family's 'court of memory'; they provide a sense of connection and rootedness in a time of migration and expatriation. In a secular culture, photographs 'are the only household items, the only objects that perform the religious function of connecting the living to the dead, and of locating the identity of the living in time.' In a famous essay on this subject, Susan Sontag describes photographs as a 'new kind of inheritance,' a figment of identity; they recall the past; they are often all that bears witness to connectedness. In my interviews with her, Mother Serafima told me she often looked at the photographs of her grandfather: she often saw his face; his eyes, she said, seemed to call her, to reach out to her.

Russia, as many other places, including to some extent our own, has suffered from a kind of collective amnesia. Shortly after becoming Patriarch in 1990, Alexi II described the loss of memory and the need for its recovery, as well as the rediscovery of culture and spiritual heritage as the most important issues facing his country. On the success of that venture, he said, a large part of his country's future would ride.

But where are those rich sources that connect the past to the future to be found? Might they offer a different way of reading church and state than the one we have come to know? Where are the memories kept, memories that, in Patriarch Alexi II's words, will connect the past to the future, and upon which the future will be built?

When Mother Serafima sought to reconstruct Novodevichy Monastery in the late 1990s, she knew that she had first to confront the past. She had to learn the fate of her grandfather, on whose memory she hoped to build. She went to KGB headquarters where she requested the files on her grandfather, but was met with silence. She admitted her despair of ever learning what had happened to him. It was then that a friend mentioned to her an elderly woman who lived in a small apartment in Moscow. One day Mother Serafima went to the woman's apartment, seeking her out, not believing she would learn anything. She located the woman's small, one-room flat in the Moscow suburbs. She found there an old woman, living alone in cramped quarters, her apartment filled with boxes of index cards. This person, Serafima soon discovered, had worked many years collecting the names of people who had been shot, and she had transcribed the information, preserving the record and fleshing out the story of those who had disappeared into the death camps. She had learned about these people from various sources, including people who had worked in the archives of the police, and some of the files she had seen herself.

'She had the names of 20,000 people written on the cards,' Mother Serafima said; she had these boxes of cards lining the shelves of her apartment. She told Serafima that she 'feared all this work she had committed herself to, had worked on for many years, would be lost from view, because no one heretofore had ever requested from her this information.' The boxes that filled her small apartment in Moscow gave vital testimony to her desire to preserve for history the details of one of the darkest periods in the 20th century.

Similarly, the materials contained in the Keston Archive are also part of that story. A great deal of the narrative remains still to be explored, to be told. They will give us a richer, deeper account of the intersection between politics and religion than we have for most of the 20th century. I think of a young British exchange student, Michael Bourdeaux, studying in Moscow and buying on the street a copy of the first number of a journal entitled *Nauka i religia* (Science and Religion), not then, of course, realising its importance or how rare that issue would become. I think of a house in Chislehurst, England, where the collection began, then a building in the village of Keston, and then in Oxford, and now at Baylor, today one of the richest, probably the greatest, collection of primary source materials in the Western world on politics and religion, on church and state in Eastern Europe. And since both Great Britain and the United States are intertwined in those subjects, the collection is also global in its outreach.

The materials in the collection belie the stereotype of a docile, apathetic Orthodox clergy mentioned at the beginning of this talk. They present a much more complex, multi-faceted picture. There are examples of socially active, dynamic men and women, who reached out to the people and presented alternate ways of seeing and believing to the existing order. There is, for example, the charismatic parish priest Fr Aleksandr Men', who captivated the public and was murdered in September 1990, and whose legacy is revered in Russia and in other places today. There is Fr Gleb Yakunin, the courageous dissident, the human rights leader, who would not be silenced, despite the Soviet government's relentless attempts to do so. There are the works of the sociologist Sergei Filatov and his team, whose multivolume, detailed studies of religious life and beliefs in every corner of this vast country, are still not as widely appreciated as they deserve. They give us a picture of life that we have not had in over a century. There is much more.

The past, as the distinguished geographer David Lowenthal has superbly shown, is never immutable, never set in stone, or fixed forever in the imagination. It is always alive, changing, part of the present, and also part of the future. Whose version of the Russian past will be most widely accepted is a question that is still evolving. But we might project outwards some ten or twenty years into the future, and ask how the memories stored here will be relevant to that future, might have direct bearing on what lies immediately ahead, only dimly visible at the present time. Historians are notoriously bad at predicting, as we know. Yet several trends are already taking shape, etched in the landscape, and seem likely to become even more prominent over the next two decades or so.

If I may, with some trepidation, project five of them. Several go beyond our present holdings, but they could, with vision and a little work, be added easily to what is already here. First, we very much need a study of a remarkable woman, Margarita Morozova, who lived in Moscow in the first half of the 20th century. Widow of a wealthy Moscow merchant, she held in her mansion, in the Old Arbat section of Moscow, a weekly seminar, given to discussion of religious-philosophical issues, in which participated many of Russia's finest young intellectuals, including Evgeni Trubetskoi, whose book, (*Icons: Theology in Colour*), is a *tour de force*. She used her wealth to finance a publishing house, Put' (The Way), in which a lively, spirited debate took place, a multi-sided debate, on issues that are very much with us now – namely, the relationship between religion and culture, the secular and the sacred, and the church and the state.

Second, we have no scholarly biography of one of Russia's greatest religious dissidents, Fr Gleb Yakunin. Courageous, outspoken, superbly intelligent, unbroken by years in prison, he offers a very different picture of the Russian clergy from the one we normally get. He posed a challenge not only to the state, but also to the church hierarchy as an alternative spokesperson for their faith.

Third, we are seeing a significant change in the social composition of Russian Protestants. A generation ago, as Sergei Filatov's studies show, they were mainly workers and peasants, people with little education. In the last ten years, he has found, this is no longer the case; a Protestant intelligentsia has emerged, including many humanists and economists. They are becoming a real cultural force, capable of evolving into a strong political force in the next decade.

The fourth concerns a large global issue. The Columbia University scholar Miroslav Wolf calls it one of the two most important problems we presently face: the problem of how different religious faiths, occupying the same space, can learn to live together peacefully. Given the rapidly changing religious landscape of the last two decades, the need for dialogue between different religious faiths has never been more important, more pressing. As one looks outward, to the future, the significance of dialogue becomes ever more essential, if we are going to flourish, even to survive. Dialogue between the church and society, between different faiths, is one of the central themes of the work of Fr Aleksandr Men'. It is not incidental that he loved the novels of Graham Greene, which deal with that subject, and whose novel, *The Power and the Glory,* the Aleksandr Men' Foundation has translated and published this year. The Keston collection contains a wealth of material on the importance of such dialogue. It is a topic that projects directly into the future and on a global scale, one much larger than Russia.

Last, when looking at Russia, in my view, we have paid far more attention in the past to the surface, to the ocean and the white-caps on top, than to what lies underneath the political hierarchy, 'to the rise and fall of tides that move the waves and the white-caps'. Keston invites us to explore beneath the surface, inviting us to ask again the question, 'Whither Russia?', the question Gogol posed at the end of his novel *Dead Souls*.

Left to right: *Professor Wallace Daniel, Canon Michael Bourdeaux & Pattie Orr, Dean of University Libraries & Vice President for Information Technology at Baylor University*

In looking to the future, we don't want to miss the recent emergence of an Orthodox intelligentsia that has come into being following the controversial 2012 Presidential election. What is so striking about this group is that it is not connected directly to the church, but is nourished by the ideals of Russian Orthodoxy. The members of the group express strong disagreement with the church hierarchy and its political alliance with the government. As historian Nadezhda Kizenko has recently pointed out in an important article ('Russia's Orthodox Awakening: The Fraying of Russia's Church-State Alliance'), they are young Orthodox professionals – academics, journalists, business people, mass media personnel – who hold a diversity of views; they do not, at all, fit the mould we hold of a unified church or society.

A large number of the most active in this group, Kizenko shows, are female. Women, as she claims, now command the expanding field of religious media – social networks, blogs, bookstores, television and movie production studios. Among the most noteworthy are the editor-in-chief of the leading Orthodox web site, the editor-in-chief of the theological journal *Alpha and Omega*, and the leading documentary filmmaker.

They, and others, are directly challenging the close relationship of church and state. They are raising some major questions about the creation of a system of law that puts the flourishing of citizens as its preeminent goal. What is perhaps most important, Kizenko maintains, these new 'critical voices have no intention of stopping until they spark a national moral awakening.'

This is a story that must be seen and must be told, if we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear.

Gorbachev and the Church after 25 Years: Some Facts and Personal Reminiscences

by Michael Bourdeaux

Today I want to scan the church in the Soviet Union, touring some of the horizons as though from an aerial perspective. I have two theses: the first is that religion played a greater role in the collapse of the Soviet system than is generally realised. The second is that the role of religious dissent in the Russian Orthodox Church in the 1970s and 1980s awaits full and honest evaluation, not least on the part of the Moscow Patriarchate.

There is no time today to discuss the role of the Baptist Church, the persecution of which remained a constant factor in the 1960s to the 1980s. For the first part of our tour, we focus on the Soviet Baltic republics of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. I pass over as a given your knowledge of the persecution of religion under Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev. The imprisonment of church leaders, the widespread closure of places of worship, the abolition of religious education, the banning of charitable work and – later – the collaboration of some religious bodies with the regime was a feature which had long been imposed on the Soviet Union, and after the second occupation of the Baltic republics towards the end of the Second World War the Communist authorities had to bring the region 'up to the mark' in short order. I omit to dwell on the deportations and their associated horrors – they have been thoroughly documented. I want to move immediately to the later consequences of this: the attempts by the religious communities in the Baltic republics to regain their lost liberty in the 1970s and especially the 1980s. Much of this needs further examination in the archives and publication in English. I made a hurried attempt to do so in my book, *Gorbachev, Glasnost and the Gospel*, published – when the issues were far short of resolution – in 1990.

Latvia

Except for a significant Catholic minority in Latgalia, the majority of the Latvian population had been Lutheran before the inroads of enforced atheism. The rump of the church survived, but with a passive leadership which appeared content with the limited degree of liberty permitted by the state. The authorities granted leave to the bishops to attend international conferences, such as those organised by the World Council of Churches; they gave assurances that they enjoyed 'freedom of worship,' so all seemed quiet on the Baltic front.

This was to change significantly in 1985, just at the time of Gorbachev's accession. The Soviet authorities controlled church life partly by monitoring the students who applied to the one Lutheran theological seminary now allowed to operate. A bright young student, Maris Ludviks, was in trouble with the local Council for Religious Affairs for his energetic youth work. Traditionally, the authorities would always win such a battle and remove the unruly element. This time it was different. Although the Latvian Lutheran leaders weakly caved in, a much bolder Lutheran bishop, a rare species from Lithuania, where the Lutherans were in a tiny minority, stepped in and ordained him. Pastor

Canon Michael Bourdeaux delivers his keynote address

Ludviks could scarcely imagine that this would set in train a series of events which would lead to the reopening of Riga Cathedral (it had been transformed into a concert hall) and a national revival of the church. The 'Rebirth and Renewal' movement came into being.

There was, coincidentally, a hiatus in the leadership of the church. Archbishop Matulis had just died and his successor, Eriks Mesters, equally acceptable to (or appointed by?) the regime, had not yet been consecrated. Archbishop Mesters caved in and refused to appoint Pastor Ludviks to a parish. In typical form, the Latvian newspaper *Padomju jaunatne* (Soviet Youth) published a scurrilous attack against him, calling him a black-marketeer and a work-shy parasite, thereby shooting themselves in the foot. Enter Pastor Modris Plate, still in his early thirties, who organised a group of five clergy to visit the editorial offices of the newspaper to protest against the calumny.

The rest, as they say, is history. Eduards Kokars-Trops, head of the Latvian Council of Religious Affairs, leant on Archbishop Mesters to dismiss Pastor Plate, which infuriated more and more people. Nineteen clergy signed a petition for the reinstatement of Pastor Plate on 18 March 1987; 350 lay people joined in the protest and Pastor Plate stood his ground. Soon a non-religious protest group joined in: the Helsinki monitors. An even younger Pastor, Juris Rubenis, called for the reopening of the cathedral. The state caved in, not only permitting a service to be held, but even televising it. There was now no going back. A democratically elected consistory (meeting of senior clergy) met on 11 April 1988 and voted Archbishop Mesters out of office. His replacement was Archbishop Karlis Gailitis, only 53 years old, who openly supported the Latvian National Independence Movement. This goal was now immediately in sight and the Lutheran Church played a significant role in achieving it.

Estonia

The Soviets long considered that the claimed pacification of Estonia was an achievement of socialism. The majority Lutheran Church there seemed weaker than its Latvian counterpart.

But in church-state relations here the first focus was on the promotion and eventual elevation to the Patriarchate of Alexei Mikhailovich Ridiger, born in 1929. He later claimed that his religious views were formed during the 'free' years – from the age of six he wanted to become a priest in the Orthodox Church. We do not know exactly if, how or when he was compromised: what is certain is that at Leningrad seminary in 1947 he was singled out for a purpose – to pacify, 'Kremlinise' the large Orthodox minority, 'converting' them from Estonian Orthodox to Russian Orthodox – and to make that great cathedral in Tallinn the symbol of Russian domination.

At 32 in 1961 Alexi became the youngest bishop in the Russian Orthodox Church – first in Tallinn, eventually as the Metropolitan of Leningrad (1986) and then as Patriarch Alexi I (1990). Abroad, he became the best-known Russian church leader. His extensive international role with the World Council of Churches and especially the Conference of European Churches frequently took him abroad. In his public statements he consistently concealed the persecution which continued while he was in his heyday in the 1970s. Looking back, I estimate that his role was to suppress not only *knowledge* (abroad) of religious dissent in USSR, but to suppress dissent itself in Estonia. He became the archetypal 'Soviet man', whose core was compromise, but at the same time jealously preserving that degree of religious liberty permitted by Soviet atheism. A full biography is one of the many tasks awaiting today's scholars.

However, Estonia was not as passive as Alexi – and his Soviet masters – would have liked the world to believe. Various elements – not least in the Russian Orthodox Church itself, but also in the small Roman Catholic Church and elsewhere – began to coalesce. The Catholic composer, Arvo Pärt, was forced into exile for writing liturgical music, which caused dissent in the artistic community. It is a mistake to confine one's study to purely church matters: a wider cultural perspective is often helpful.

There was also unrest and religious revival among the very small Methodist Church, where Pastor Olaf Pärnamets began, most successfully and fearlessly, to organise youth work. In the Lutheran Church, Harri Mõtsnik horrified the Soviet establishment by giving up a distinguished law career to become a Lutheran pastor and remarkable preacher. With his experience of public speaking, he was especially effective and his 'gospel' included strong elements of Estonian nationalism. How about this from a pre-*perestroika* sermon?

Left to right: *Sister Tatiana Spektor, a former Keston scholar at Baylor, with Larisa Seago, the Keston Center's archivist*

‘It is relevant to remember the noble path of self-sacrifice of those who have chosen the struggle for freedom as the only way of hope for the Estonian people, setting on one side the fear which they surely experience within and in the face of the totalitarian regime which confronts them.’

Left to right: *Professor Stephen Gardner, Canon Michael Bourdeaux, Professor Xin Wang & Professor Wallace Daniel answer questions.*

The KGB of course targeted Harri Mõtsnik. He ‘repented’ and was forced into exile in Sweden. Yet his message had galvanised hundreds, perhaps more. What had seemed a passive church was throbbing with new life in 1980s. Here is another subject awaiting new research.

Almost out of the blue an ecumenical group calling itself ‘Rock of Support’ formed in 1987 to defend all believers throughout USSR. They contacted me directly and asked to work with Keston College – and we published their information – these were exciting times. Their role has received little publicity since, but deserves re-examination. They were far from being the sole stimulus for the Singing Revolution, which did receive worldwide publicity and eventual success, but the voice of the church was present during these turbulent years, so even ‘pacified’ Estonia picked up the pace, as dissent gathered strength in its neighbouring republics to the north and the south.

Lithuania

Lithuania truly became the Achilles heel of the Soviet system, and I hardly need to emphasise here the potent link between Catholic dissent and *Sajudis,* the ‘Movement’ for *perestroika*, which was a covert way of saying ‘independence’. There is no time here even to begin to document the rise of dissent in the 1970s, but the story is written in my *Land of Crosses*, published in 1979.

Let me quote just a single example, culled from literally hundreds recorded within the voluminous pages of the *samizdat* journal, *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church.* It makes amply clear the fact that the Catholic leadership was never compromised in the way that other denominations became subservient throughout the Soviet Union.

I consider it of major importance that the case of Fr Juozas Zdebskis was reported in the very first issue of the Lithuanian *Chronicle* in 1971. He was arrested for the third time in that year for teaching the catechism to children at their parents’ request. He already had an extensive record of fearlessly upholding the faith, so a ten-year sentence, at least, might have been expected. However, in the face of the manifest public support for him, his sentence was ‘only’ one year. The *Chronicle,* amazingly, contained an abridged transcript of his trial, having been secretly written down by a supporter during the trial. On his release, he walked on a carpet of flowers which children strewed in front of him. In 1978 he became a founder-member of the Catholic Committee for the

Defence of Believers' Rights, which soon led to his death. After several brutal attacks, he died in a so-called road accident in February 1986. At his death, apart from a Bible and a few other Christian books, his sole prized possession, found in a drawer, was a collection of small stones he had picked up in various parts of his native land. He had witnessed the beginning of Gorbachev's era, but not the independence which his country gained at the end of it. One wonders why he – and others like him – are not in the forefront of the current rush in the Vatican to create modern saints.

The Lithuanian Church achieved its liberty at the cost of great suffering. Indeed, when Gorbachev began sanctioning the release of political prisoners in 1987, the many imprisoned Catholic leaders did not immediately benefit. The Bishop of Vilnius, Julijonas Steponavičius, was released only at the end of 1988 after 27 years (no less!) of house arrest – he was never tried. By this time Lithuania was already awash with the new signs of freedom – parishes regained, Christian books published, charitable activities revived, monastic orders reinstated. The bishop set himself as his first task the re-consecration of Vilnius Cathedral (it had been, successively, an atheist museum and a bookstore). By February 1989 Professor Vytautas Landsbergis and the other *Sajudis* leaders were installed in a house opposite.

It was my privilege to be – apart from some Russian church representatives – the only foreign guest present at this momentous event. When the authorities permitted a live TV broadcast of the whole three-hour event, this was not the beginning of the end of the Soviet domination of Lithuania – it was virtually the end itself. Events moved irresistibly from one phase to the next. Lithuania witnessed the last murder of its own citizens by the Special Forces, but even this was too late to stem the tide. *Sajudis* became the elected government and it declared independence long before the collapse of the Soviet system.

Nowhere in the Soviet Union had the movement for change been more powerful. The Catholic Church had openly embraced politics in a way which was, of course, on a smaller scale than the parallel in Poland, but which was no less potent within its community. Religion, in the 1980s, was popularly but mistakenly viewed as a dying force. Historians whose work is honed by the realities of 2013 are likely to re-evaluate the role of religion in the Baltic States prior to the collapse of Communism.

Russia

Evaluating the role of religious dissent and striving towards democracy in Russia itself is a much more difficult task. Some scholars, such as Professor Archie Brown of Oxford University, dismiss the role of dissent as a whole – not just religious dissent – as a factor in the collapse of Soviet Communism.

Alina Urs from Romania, a speaker at Keston's 2012 AGM, addresses the symposium during her four-week period of research in the Keston Archive at Baylor

sional woman) contributed to the intellectual atmosphere of the mid-1980s, which led directly into *perestroika.* Not a single one of the ordained men saw his efforts crowned by what one might term 'ecclesiastical preferment'.

It is of immense significance, though, that the Moscow Patriarchate, immediately at the beginning of *perestroika*, began to cultivate the ground which the reformists had so painfully cultivated in the preceding two decades.

Mikhail Gorbachev was not himself a believer, but the demands for religious liberty, which the church democrats put on to his early agenda, undoubtedly had a profound influence on his policy. His first liberal act in the religious sphere was the release of prisoners, first in a trickle in 1987, then in a spate from 1988 onwards. Indeed, this latter date provided, from many points of view, the fulcrum which levied the pressure which caused the dam to burst.

If one were to seek out one key moment, it would be 29 April 1988, when Gorbachev received the leading bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Kremlin. It is a subject of some dispute whether Gorbachev himself initiated this event or whether it occurred in response to an initiative from the church itself. I personally have always favoured the former interpretation, because the pliant Patriarch Pimen, who had never lifted a finger to support religious liberty, was still in office. Be that as it may, the date was doubly significant: it was the 59th anniversary to the day of Stalin's new repressive laws on religion of 1929. It was also only the second occasion in Soviet history when any church leader had been invited to meet the Kremlin leadership, the first having been on 4 September 1943 when Stalin acknowledged the role of the Orthodox Church in its efforts during the Great Patriotic War. On that occasion he gave permission for the election of a Patriarch, after a gap of 25 years, and the establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Participants in the Keston Symposium: Professor Kathy Hillman, Director of the Keston Center & Director of Special Collections for the Central Baylor University Libraries, stands in the front row (in a red jacket)

Gorbachev, in his turn, was to promise abolition of the Stalinist legislation, which he brought about in 1990. More immediately, he admitted that there had been persecution in the past – 'mistakes', as he called them. Now he went on to say:

> 'Believers are Soviet people, workers, patriots, and they have the full right to express their convictions with dignity. *Perestroika,* democratization and *glasnost* concern them as well – in full measure and without any restrictions. This is especially true of ethics and morals, a domain where universal norms and customs are so helpful for our common cause.'

Never before in history had a Communist leader in power anywhere in the world proclaimed such a common cause.

The church, though, was far from minded to work out the practical basis of such co-operation. This was the moment at which the demands of the democrats now passed, unacknowledged, into the mouths of the church hierarchy. By an astonishing coincidence of history, 1988 was also the year in which the Baptism of the Eastern Slavs would be celebrated. In double-short order – and with every assistance from the state – the Orthodox Church prepared to turn this into a major international event. Buildings were painted, even if there was not much time for repair, organising teams were appointed, international invitations were sent out. Breathlessly and amazingly, the Russian Orthodox Church was ready, more or less, to receive a bevy of international guests, headed by such figures as Cardinal Willebrands from the Vatican, Billy Graham and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Runcie.

I was due to join them but the KGB still retained control of the visa blacklist. Mine – to lead a group of pilgrims under the auspices of Inter-Church Travel – was issued, then withdrawn with a telephone call from the Soviet Embassy in London. However, intervention from the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office prevailed. Some such conversation as this must have occurred: 'How can you possibly exclude the Reverend Michael Bourdeaux from these celebrations when we are in the full glare of *perestroika*?' Well, that is speculation. What is not is the fact that I received a telephone call from the Soviet Embassy at 9pm – 'Please come and collect your visa' – I was an hour's travel away, I hadn't packed a stitch and my group's plane was due to leave at 7am next day – two hours travel away!

After this frenetic experience, the pressure of excitement if anything mounted over the next ten days. For an account of these events I must refer you to my book, *Gorbachev, Glasnost and the Gospel*, Chapter 3. Let me, though, give the flavour of the rapid unfolding of events – and their meticulous recording on *both* of Moscow's TV channels. I quote (pp.61-2):

> 'The day ended with a jubilee concert in the presence of dignitaries representing both church and state (Raisa Gorbachev and President Gromyko were the most notable secular figures present). I am able to describe it in detail because it took place also the previous evening, in the presence of a slightly less official audience. My wife and I were there, the Moscow Patriarchate having provided us with tickets. We sat in the second row of the stalls to witness yet another revelation. No fewer than seven choirs, six orchestras and some of the stars of Soviet screen and concert platform combined in a joint celebration of the Millennium by church and state. To witness the best choirs of the Russian

It is impossible here to summarise the evidence. It has already been done in Keston's publications, but it needs to be re-assessed by the wider scholarly community. This is where the ongoing work of the Keston Center here at Baylor is so very important. Historical scholarship in Russia on the period from Khrushchev's assault on religion beginning in 1959 to the rise of *perestroika* about a year after Gorbachev's accession in 1985 has been weak. In 1990, doing my research on the role of religion while *perestroika* was in full swing, I published *Gorbachev, Glasnost and the Gospel.* I intended it as a work of journalism, basically, which would soon be superseded by more in-depth studies. This, by and large, has not yet happened. Most of all, one might have expected the now free Russian Orthodox Church to pay minute attention to what immediately preceded its contemporary gains. The reason for this lacuna is almost certainly guilt. The Moscow Patriarchate speaks in general and persistent terms of the way the church suffered under Communism, but it shies away from a more detailed examination of the evidence – which it has in abundance. The fear is that such study would inevitably uncover the endless compromises which the church made, both nationally and locally to avoid the worst of the persecution. Meanwhile the true heroes of the faith are rapidly disappearing into the mists of history with no true memorial established commemorating their *podvig*. As time goes on, the number of those still alive dwindles and opportunities of documenting oral histories are missed.

As a rare example, Fr Gleb Yakunin, who first publicly challenged Khrushchev's atheist campaign, is the sole survivor of that astonishing act of bravery – and he is now in his 80th year. As a young priest in a Moscow parish in the early 1960s he began, with his colleague the late Fr Nikolai Eshliman, systematically to gather information about the renewed persecution. Fr Gleb sounded out senior priests as to why there was no opposition to Khrushchev's new brutal measures. Eleven or so promised support; Fr Gleb collected nationwide information from visitors to Moscow who often came with their petitions to the Government. But when he published his sensational (but objective) documents in 1965 this support quietly evaporated, and the signatures of the two priests alone appeared under their open letters to the Kremlin and to Patriarch Alexi I.

The two priests wrote:

> 'No fewer than ten thousand churches and dozens of monasteries have been closed, among which we should specially mention the Monastery of the Caves at Kiev, the most ancient sacred place of our Orthodox people […] The mass closure of churches, a campaign instigated from above, has created an atmosphere of anti-religious fanaticism which has led to the barbaric destruction of a large number of superb and unique monuments.'

This reads like a blueprint for the demands of the *perestroika* period more than 20 years later. Fr Gleb's career suffered – the Patriarch silenced him; he was eventually imprisoned and disowned by the Moscow Patriarchate. He survived – just – due to his undaunted bravery and determination. Here is another biography waiting to be written.

Such a work would describe the atmosphere of increasing boldness which the activities of the two priests would arouse: the rise of religious dissent. To list the names today is to make a roll call of heroic activity. Here are some names (in no particular order).

- Fr Alexander Men' – a contemporary and friend of Fr Gleb Yakunin, who never became a dissident as such, but was nevertheless murdered in 1990 in circumstances never fully investigated. His is an exception to the generalisation that there has been no serious study of his role.

- The layman Alexander Ogorodnikov, who became a student convert from Communist activism and established a Christian Seminar (discussion group) which rapidly spread from Moscow to many regional centres. *Dissident for Life,* his biography, was published this year by Koenraad De Wolf.

- Boris Talantov – another layman, a maths teacher from the northern city of Kirov (Vyatka) who documented Khrushchev's persecution of religion in his region with the same assiduity which Frs Eshliman and Yakunin practised on a nationwide scale. He died in prison. Xenia Dennen has met a Russian in Vyatka who is working on his biography.

- Anatoli Levitin, another layman, also a schoolteacher, who was formerly a deacon in the Living Church. His particular interest was in the education of young people in the faith. For doing this in practice and for circulating his voluminous works in *samizdat*, he too lost his job, was imprisoned and forced into exile in Switzerland, where he died, being mysteriously run over by a car.

- Irina Ratushinskaya, a lay-woman, almost totally innocent of any 'crime', even by the debased standards of Brezhnev's Russia. She almost died at a young age in prison for having, as a schoolteacher, a handful of religious poems. She became a *cause célèbre* worldwide before being allowed to emigrate as a result of pressure from Mrs Thatcher.

- The tragic Fr Dmitri Dudko, subject of another biography this year (*The Last Man in Russia* by Oliver Bullough) who was perhaps the most outspoken and influential of all dissident Orthodox priests, but who renounced his 'political and disloyal' activities after maltreatment in prison.

- Fr Pavel Adelheim, fearless critic of the atheist regime, who actually managed to build a church in remote Uzbekistan, survived several attempts on his life, carried out a fruitful ministry in Pskov supported financially from abroad, and was murdered in his own kitchen in August 2013 by a young assailant.

Other names one might mention are Fr Vsevolod Shpiller, parish priest in Moscow; Vadim Shavrov, graduate of the Odessa Theological Seminary, who remained a layman; Vladimir Osipov, editor of the *samizdat* journal, *Veche* (named after the popular assemblies of ancient Kiev and Novgorod); Igor Shafarevich, mathematician; and there were others. A special category is, of course, the literary world where, towering over other writers, stands the figure of Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

All these Christian voices associated with the Orthodox Church form a pattern and a complex one at that, but they do not coalesce into anything resembling a movement, except perhaps Ogorodnikov's Christian Seminar. It is still open for discussion how far these men (and the occa-

Orthodox Church alternating with the finest secular choruses was to see a new era in microcosm. There have been thousands of evenings when the Bolshoi atmosphere has sparked electricity: rarely can it have been more charged than it was then. Nuns from Riga and Kiev, with whom I talked, were given the opportunity to see and hear something which would remain with them for the rest of their days.'

Then the great Soviet actor Sergei Bondarchuk took centre stage and read the words from the Russian Primary Chronicle, which recount the conversion of Kievan Rus' to the Christian faith. The atmosphere was charged and emotional. Finally, the Bolshoi Opera Chorus and Orchestra joined together to sing the traditional Russian greeting, *Mnogoe leto* (Long Life), which now resounded as a paean of praise from the Soviet state to the church. The heavens – literally – opened, and the top tier of the Bolshoi stage revealed a peal of real bells. The carillon rang out the louder, since the ringing of church bells had been forbidden for the past 70 years.

The state abolished all restrictions on religion in the new law two years later. Things would never be the same again – though the direction they would take after the collapse of Communism was, for a few years, veiled from sight.

Legacies

Keston's trustees are very grateful to all members for their continuing support and enthusiasm for the Institute's work. We are, however, a dwindling band of enthusiasts so we would be delighted if you were able to recruit new members.

If you are thinking of remembering Keston in your Will, the following suggested form of words, which can be copied directly into a Will, may be helpful:

> *'I give the sum of £…… [in figures and words] absolutely to Keston College, (otherwise known as Keston Institute), Company Registration No 991413 and Registered Charity Number 314103, hereinafter called "the Charity", such sum to be applied for the general purposes of the Charity. I direct that the receipt of the Chairman or other authorised officer for the time being of the Charity shall be a good and sufficient discharge to my Executors.'*

With best wishes,
Xenia Dennen (Chairman)

In Search of Repentance: Tengiz Abuladze's Film Examined

by Mikhail Roshchin

The Georgian director Tengiz Abuladze's film *Repentance*, released in 1987, was a bombshell: for the first time in the USSR the subject of Stalinism and Stalin's crimes was presented on the big screen with total honesty, and attracted many reviews which were basically positive.

In 1987 *Repentance* was awarded the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival, the special prize of the International Federation of Film Critics and the prize of the Ecumenical Jury. In the Soviet Union that same year the film was given the Nika Award with six nominations: 'best fiction film', 'best production', 'best screenplay', 'best cinematography', 'best art direction', 'best male actor' (Avtandil Makharadze).

Tengiz Abuladze

The film made a deep and immediate impression on me, so much so that I wrote to Abuladze. I know my letter reached him because I sent it via some friends. In that old letter I was not interested in an aesthetic evaluation of *Repentance*, and I now see that my mini-review was more like a diary entry which retains the spirit of that moment in time. But the main point in my letter seems still valid today. I wrote:

> 'Your film speaks about the past and present, but primarily about the future: totally sincere and honest repentance has not yet taken place and still lies ahead, but without it there can be no true recovery. Sin must be admitted, and fully recognised by everyone; for we are talking about sin at the heart of society, not about individuals. Any other sort of repentance is not repentance but hypocrisy.'

In the film a respected and influential civic leader, Varlam Aravidze, is buried, but in the morning his body is found leaning up against the wall of his son, Avel's house. This happens again and again. In the end a woman called Ketevan Barateli is discovered to be the person who kept digging up the body – her parents had been victims of Varlam Aravidze. Ketevan is put on trial during which she tells the story of how her family were imprisoned. This is of little interest to the judge, to Avel, his wife and their circle, but Varlam's grandson Tornik experiences what he hears as his own personal tragedy. Unable to bear the hypocrisy of his parents and their minions, he commits suicide. After this, even Avel's conscience is awakened: he digs up the body of his father and throws it down the mountainside, thus breaking with the criminal past.

The film starts with Ketevan hearing about the death of Varlam in her small bakery, where she makes beautiful cakes decorated with marzipan churches, and ends with scenes of her back in her bakery. She looks out of the window and sees an old woman who asks: 'Could you tell me whether this road leads to a church?' Ketevan replies: 'This is Varlam Street.

This street does not lead to a church.' The old woman hears this and says: 'Then why do you need it? What's the point of a road unless it leads to a church?' The framing of the film with scenes in the bakery is the key – the posthumous punishment of Varlam takes place in the consciousness of Ketevan herself, in symbolic not real time. Thus the story told by the film's director becomes a parable about the purges. The question at the end of the film – 'What's the point of a road unless it leads to a church?' – becomes redolent with meaning and crucial when trying to understand why the Communist utopia collapsed.

Ketevan Barateli

The theme of a ruined church and lost ideals permeates the whole film: at the beginning Ketevan's artist father, Sandro Barateli, tries to stop an ancient church being destroyed, but it is demolished on the orders of Varlam Aravidze, while at the end of the film Ketevan makes churches out of marzipan for the town's residents. In this way Abuladze portrays how convictions, which could not withstand the authorities' brutality, had been devalued. He foresaw so much: from the shattered pieces of past convictions new ones were not formed, and the divided mind which dominated Avel's soul (Varlam's son) is still a mark of our times. More than 15 years ago on 31 January 1994, not long before the death of Abuladze, Ninel Ismailova wrote an article about this film in which she commented:

> 'The period of *perestroika* is for us almost like running on the spot, because we have experienced no spiritual renewal. There are a mass of external signs of change, but we are functioning like people in a new world who avoid genuine repentance. In this way we have weakened society in the face of many trials.' ('Покаяние все еще впереди', *Izvestia,* 1 February 1994).

These words have not lost their relevance. On the contrary: more and more often today you hear talk of Stalin's achievements and how the Soviet Union flourished during the Stalin period.

Repentance, possibly the most famous and significant film of *perestroika*, is particularly important because it was filmed in 1982-1984, i.e. during the period of stagnation when such a film had no chance of general release, and at a time when public discussion of Stalinism and Stalin's crimes was taboo. Abuladze conceived *Repentance* in the late 1970s, but it was one particular meeting which finally made him decide to make the film:

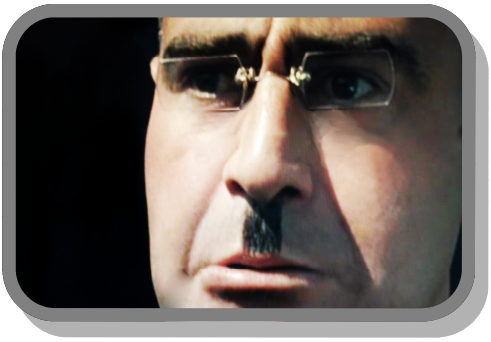
> 'My meeting with Ketevan, a remarkable woman who had suffered in the camps, touched me to the depths of my soul, and, I later realised, turned my life upside down… Ketevan is very beautiful; she has an inner spiritual light. For six hours she told me about her tragic fate. I found it hard not to weep… After she returned from the camps Ketevan started baking cakes in order to earn a living. That day the concept and form of the future film took shape in my mind.'

Repentance was filmed twice. The role of Tornik, the dictator Varlam's grandson, was played by Merab Ninidze who later became a famous film star. Initially, however, this part was played by another young actor, Gega Kobakhidze whose scenes had already been filmed when on 19 November 1983 he and a group of friends hijacked flight 6833 from Batumi to Kiev. Kobakhidze was arrested and later shot on 3 October 1984. Because of Soviet conditions, Abuladze was forced to destroy the material with Kobakhidze and redo those scenes using another actor [http://kino-teatr.ru/kino/movie/sov/5335/forum/#503137; http://kino-teatr.ru/kino/acter/sov/39459/bio/]. Afterwards no one talked about this, and even the writer Margarita Kvasnetskaya, who knew exactly what had happened during the filming of *Repentance*, did not mention this tragic episode in the only book so far dedicated to the creative work of Tengiz Abuladze and published in 2009.

Presented as a parable, this film can be interpreted in different ways, although in the context of Soviet history certain things have a specific meaning. The main hero, Varlam Aravidze, is undoubtedly a composite figure. His salient features are those of Stalin and Beria, but he also sometimes resembles Hitler. As Abuladze later said:

> 'We invented the name Aravidze. No such Georgian surname exists in reality. Aravidze comes from the word "*aravin*" which means "nobody", i.e. Varlam, the Nobody.'

His son Avel, who loves life and is pragmatic, in some fundamental way reminds one of Brezhnev or of some figure from the Brezhnev era: the dictator's initial drive and indomitability have faded away into the past, leaving a desire simply to enjoy the fruits of power. Tornik, whose conscience is genuinely awakened, cannot



Varlam Aravidze © Vasili Roshchin

bear the burden of his grandfather's and father's crimes which engulf him, and kills himself. Thus does the director show that there is no positive way out from the dead-end to which dictatorial power leads – all results are negative.

The digging up of Varlam's body is a key element in the film. Abuladze later said that this was based on fact:

> 'I heard once that someone dug up a body in a village and leant it up against the house belonging to the dead man's relatives. It's difficult to imagine what terrible sins were on the conscience of the dead man. I not only remembered this fact but also wanted to give it flesh in a film. Thus may one avenge the terrible deeds enacted by Varlam. In a literary context these acts had to be carried out by a man. We figured out what his job would be – someone who sticks up adverts. But then I dreamt that a woman had to take revenge on Varlam. A woman after all is the source of life, the continuation of a family, humanity's immortality. When I said this to my "operations team" they were all knocked for six. A male actor had already been rehearsing the role! Everything revolved around this role. There were heated exchanges, but I stood my

ground. I already knew that Zeinab Botsvadze would play this role.'

From the point of view of the plot and the film's inner logic, the choice of a woman for the role of avenger adds dramatic effect to the unfolding story. The choice of actress was brilliant. When the avenger, Ketevan Barateli, is still a child, she and her mother are filmed at a station where logs from Siberia have been transported. Some logs bear messages in Georgian – letters from the Gulag world, signs of hope from behind barbed wire. Ketevan's mother vainly searches for a message from her arrested husband, the artist Sandro Barateli. She is soon arrested and her daughter is bereft of parents. This scene at the station among the logs is filmed almost like a documentary and conveys a feeling of oppressive defencelessness in the face of a totalitarian system.

The director of *Repentance* put together an excellent caste. The most striking actor was Avtandil Makharadze who played both the part of Varlam Aravidze and his son Avel, i.e. both Stalin and Brezhnev. This actor's extraordinary talent is revealed particularly in the scene when Avel makes a confession, to, it later transpires, his own father Varlam who at that moment is eating a fish with great relish, i.e. destroying something which symbolises Christ. During his confession Avel talks about a split consciousness and a loss of faith, but the confessor does not believe him:

> 'So is that what you think? Who are you deceiving, you hypocrite? I know you, you who smash into smithereens anyone who stands in your way. If someone hits you, you wouldn't turn the other cheek, but would get out of the line of fire! People like you cannot divide into two! You couldn't care less about good or evil! You're not worried about being split in two, you're eaten up with fear, fear!'

Only at the end of the film does it become clear that the confessor was Avel's father who laughs sardonically after what is probably the film's climax – a climax worthy of the best pages in a Dostoevsky novel.

Repentance was released to the general public more than 20 years ago. Not everyone approved of it; many could not grasp its meaning; in the provinces the film was sometimes censored. Even today the public has different and often contradictory views about it. Furthermore, debates around the role of Stalin himself, the prototype for *Repentance*'s main hero, have not died down. It is interesting to note that David Giorgobiani, who plays the part of the artist Sandr Barateli and fights in vain to save an ancient church, later played the part of Stalin brilliantly in the film *Stalin Lives,* and in recent years has been filming Russian Orthodox documentaries.

David Giorgobiani © Vasili Roshchin

Mikhail Roshchin *is an Arabist and expert on the North Caucasus. He is a member of the Oriental Institute in Moscow and works with Keston's Encyclopaedia team.*

Ukraine

Mass protests – peaceful until late January 2014 – began in Ukraine in November 2013 after President Yanukovych withdrew from an agreement establishing closer ties with the European Union. Events in the capital Kiev, especially on Independence Square or Maidan, became headline news. A striking image, published in The Times *on 25 January, was of Orthodox clergy holding a processional cross and standing in the mud between the riot police and oppositionists during the night of 24 January. A number of religious denominations supported the protesters, though calling for a peaceful resolution to the conflict: the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and many Ukrainian Orthodox, as well as Muslims from the Crimea and Protestants. On 16 January 2014 the government rushed through anti-protest legislation. The next day in Kiev a roundtable discussion took place which issued a resolution entitled 'Maidan and the Church: Mission and Social Responsibility of Christians'. This was then circulated in the form of an 'Appeal to the Evangelical Churches of Ukraine'. We print the text below.*

Appeal to the Evangelical Churches of Ukraine

At this crucial time for Ukraine we, the participants of the roundtable 'Maidan and the Church: Mission and Social Responsibility of Christians' held in Kiev on 17 January 2014, appeal to the leaders of Evangelical churches, fellowships, denominations, ministries, and organisations, as well as to church members – to do all in their power to stand up for truth, peace and justice in Ukraine.

Regardless of political preferences, we call our brothers and sisters all over the country to take a more active part in the life of Ukrainian society and to demonstrate a high level of personal responsibility. We all should first strengthen our prayer: 'I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for all men […] lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing' (1 Tim. 2:1-4, 8). As 'faith without works is dead' (James 2:17, 20, 26), we have to provide practical help for the victims of violence, following the example of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) and our Lord Jesus Christ, in the context of the recent repressions against the activists on Maidan Independence Square in Kiev, the threats against the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, the adoption of anti-constitutional laws on 16 January 2014, and the use of terror and force against the protestors on 19 January which is still continuing.

The church has wisely avoided political speculation about the association agreement with the European Union. However, after the bloodshed at Maidan on 30 November 2013 [*riot police attacked a peaceful student demonstration and caused many injuries*. Ed] the church can no longer keep silent. Recognising its moral responsibility before God and society, Christians must condemn the violence against civilians, publicly call it a crime, expose the perpetrators and help the victims.

Maidan – Independence Square – in Kiev, as well as little Maidans all across the country, are places where the Ukrainian people have the right to demand from the government respect for their freedom, dignity and rights, as well as to require officials to fulfill their obligations towards the common good and refrain from abusing the power granted by the people. The church must make its authoritative voice heard alongside the voice of the people, declaring that human beings are created by God in His image and likeness, that all people are equal before God, that God's judgment is real, as well as God's care for the helpless.

We draw the attention of the government and protesters to God's commandments of love and forgiveness, without which the demand for justice may result in chaos and violence. Therefore we encourage everyone to do their best in support of a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Each person will have to give a personal account for his or her actions both on earth and in heaven.

We declare that the government's attempts to isolate Ukrainian Evangelical believers from the European and international community of Christians are unacceptable. We confirm that the main task of the church at this time is to be 'salt' and 'light' in our society. This means that the church has to expose sin in all its manifestations directly without any compromise, call officials and civil society to repentance, show people the true way of salvation in Jesus Christ, help the victims in every way, and give hope.

We believe that through the mercy of God, through the prayers and labour of Christians, the events taking place on Maidan will bring forth a spiritual awakening and renewal of the Ukrainian nation.

What will the church say to Maidan?

Maidan has challenged not only the government but also the church. While searching for answers, people are turning to the church, but so far it has not been able to give a clear reply. Society is trying to understand: is there a limit to tolerance when human rights and freedoms are brutally violated by the President and parliamentary majority? How should we demand justice? How should society react to the sudden threat of dictatorship after more than 20 years of independence? How should we protect our lives and our children's future in view of the current political situation in Ukraine?

The roundtable 'Maidan and the Church: Mission and Social Responsibility of Christians' took place in Kiev on Friday 17 January 2014. The event was initiated by the youth leaders of Ukraine's Evangelical churches. The Christian Student Fellowship (known as CCX in Ukraine and part of a global Christian student movement) together with the Spiritual Renewal Association and the Maidan-Prayer.org project helped to implement this initiative. More than a hundred people attended, and their feedback has been resonating in social media since then. The discussion was led by the following three groups of speakers: 1) pastors and missionaries; 2) theologians and scholars, 3) experts and public figures. They represented the Baptist, Pentecostal, Free Evangelical, Lutheran and Reformed Churches of Ukraine.

All the speakers expressed serious concern about the violence demonstrated repeatedly by the Ukrainian government during the last two months (all the churches condemned the violence used by riot police against the 30 November 2013 student demonstration on Maidan). The participants also condemned the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture for its illegal

threats against the Greek Catholic Church. Finally, they criticised the adoption of the anti-constitutional laws (already named 'Black Thursday' by the Ukrainian people) on 16 January 2014, which outlawed the right to peaceful protest, and called into question the legitimacy of the whole government. At the same time, some participants of the roundtable believed that the current unprecedented crisis would purify both church and society. 'A final "desovietization" of our post-USSR society and the birth of a new generation of leaders are taking place,' said pastor Oleg Magdych, a Maidan activist.

The leaders of the Evangelical community declared that they were ready to carry on their Christian ministry were there to be a new wave of repression or restrictions against religious freedom. 'The January laws signed by the President threaten not only our society but Christian organisations, too. We should not be afraid, and instead continue our ministry,' said Denis Gorenkov, CCX director. Dr Mykhailo Cherenkov [*soon to be a Keston scholar who will work in the Keston Archive.* Ed] added: 'It is the Church which is the strongest element within civil society today so our responsibility has grown.' 'The barricades of Maidan touched my heart. I saw the birth of a new nation there. People were ready to fight for their freedom and to lay down their lives for the sake of others,' commented Dr Sergiy Tymchenko. His testimony impressed many people in the room. Oles Dmytrenko, author of the book *Corruption: a Bone in the Throat*, reminded the church of its role as 'salt and light' in the world – its calling to convict sin plainly in any political context, to give a clear moral judgement about what is really happening to society, and at the same time to give hope and to show the true way of salvation.

A protester prays with an open Bible during the unrest in Kiev

The roundtable was supported by the following church leaders: Anatoly Kalyuzhniy (Union of Independent Evangelical Churches of Ukraine), Valery Antonyuk (Union of Baptist Churches of Ukraine), Ralph Huska (German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine), as well as by other pastors of Kiev churches, Petro Marchenko, Mykola Ponomarev, Sergiy Tymchenko, Denis Kondyuk and Olexiy Satenko. The following theologians and seminary professors also made their authoritative contributions to the discussion: Petro Kovaliv, Fr Yuriy Chornomorets, and Fr Petro Balog. Sergiy Hula, Andrew Shekhovtsov and Oles Dmytrenko, who are public figures and respected experts, also contributed. Guests came not only from Kiev but from many other Ukrainian cities, including Kharkiv, Sumy, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Lviv and other places. At the end of the discussion, the moderator Andriy Shekhovtsov, the Maidan prayer tent ministry's coordinator, encouraged Evangelical Christians to become more active in their mission and to support the peaceful protesters by prayer, witness and practical help.

The Appeal to the Evangelical Churches of Ukraine aims to lay a strong biblical foundation for more effective Christian mission and outreach to society at such a critical historical moment for the Ukrainian nation.

Home News

The AGM this year, on Saturday 1 November, will be held at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine in Limehouse (Butcher Row, London E14 8DS). The Chairman looks forward to welcoming members and hopes the new venue will not discourage those who live far out of London from attending.

In recent months grants have been awarded to Dr Mykhailo Cherenkov from Ukraine who will spend four weeks working in the Keston Archive, and Alexander Ogorodnikov from Moscow. Alexander, or Sasha as those of us at Keston always called him, spent 1978-1987 imprisoned in a Soviet labour camp for organising a network of study groups – all branches of what became know as the Christian Seminar – in different parts of the Soviet Union for people who were searching for Christian faith. He plans to write a history of the period he lived through, and will be consulting documents in the Keston Archive which he lost when his material was confiscated, during the many searches of his flat before *perestroika*.

The Chairman & Sergei Filatov with Fr Sergi Shulgin & some of the lay sisters in Novokuznetsk

In November 2013 the Encyclopaedia team organised a field trip to south-western Siberia, when the Chairman was delighted to meet members of the Community of SS Elizabeth and Varvara who follow in the tradition of the Martha and Mary Convent, founded by the Grand Duchess Elizabeth before the Revolution. Their community of a hundred lay sisters is based in Novokuznetsk and specialises in helping drug addicts and their families. In January 2014 the team visited Kaluga 200km south of Moscow, and in March travelled to Krasnodar which borders on both the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. Further field trips are planned for this year: in June to Kirov, in October to Cherkesk-Pyatigorsk and in November to Kaliningrad. In January 2015 the team will be visiting Kostroma, and in March the Komi Republic in the far north. On 17 January this year they organised a book launch in Moscow for the first volume of the Encyclopaedia's new edition. The launch was held at the Institute of Europe in Moscow. Professor Anatoli Krasikov, head of the Centre for the Study of Religious and Social Problems within the Institute of Europe, opened the meeting and welcomed the new Keston publication. Professor Nikolai Shaburov (Russian State Humanities University) then spoke, explaining that the Encyclopaedia was unique, and that this new volume would be essential reading on his courses. Alexander Ogorodnikov was the final speaker: he observed that in his opinion objective studies of the religious situation were very important for Russia, and thanked Keston for its work.

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