Keston Newsletter

No. 20, 2014

Patriarch Kirill, head of the Moscow Patriarchate, with President Putin

Putin, the Patriarch and the Russian Public

by Sergei Filatov

The spring of 2012 in Russia is remembered particularly for Putin's victory in the presidential election, his inauguration and the widespread reaction, including protest demonstrations, to his return to the Kremlin.[1] The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) remained at the centre of public debate almost as much as Putin himself. The attention of the opposition as well as the government was focused on the support given to Putin by Patriarch Kirill and a large number of influential clergy, as well as on the condemnation of the protest movement (known as the 'Marsh Movement' because large demonstrations took place on Marsh Square – Bolotnaya ploshchad – in Moscow) and its leaders by ROC members.

Also in this issue:

Before the presidential election the Patriarch openly criticised those who took part in the protest demonstrations, and particularly their leaders, but after the election he changed the emphasis in his statements. Addressing more than a thousand participants in the St George's Day parade on Poklonnaya gora on 6 May 2012 after celebrating the liturgy in the Church of St George (the Victory Day parade on Red Square takes place on 9 May) the Patriarch said:

> 'We Orthodox, defenders of the Fatherland, should not fall into temptation and be influenced by loud, empty and pointless words which aim to divide us, destroy what we have achieved and build something new which is beyond our ken.'

From this point he began speaking about the political opposition in these vaguer terms, with greater circumspection, without referring to the 'Marsh Movement' at all. During the celebrations marking Russia's victory over the Poles in 1612 and over the French in 1812, without referring to recent events, he spoke about the lessons which could be learned from these historical victories – how essential it was to preserve national unity, to unite behind the government, to be faithful to the traditional principles of the state without succumbing to the temptation of Western ways.

During and immediately after the mass demonstrations on Marsh Square, a few Orthodox clergy, who publicly expressed support for the demonstrators, were not punished at all by the church authorities (my own conversations with many clergy convinced me that behind the scenes there was no small number of such people who sympathised with, or at least were tolerant towards, the demos). This was highly significant: the ROC leadership at this stage accepted the political views of those who did not toe the church's line. But from the end of 2012 onwards, all the most prominent clergy who had publicly expressed sympathy for the political opposition were subjected to varying forms of restriction or punishment. Now only one position was permissible – all clergy had to condemn uncompromisingly the 'Marsh Movement'.

The ROC's leadership portrayed all demonstrators as opponents of Orthodoxy and thereby provoked an anti-clerical backlash; previously anti-clerical views were of no great consequence with the majority of political dissidents expressing loyalty towards the ROC. If the Patriarch had not openly condemned the opposition, the hostility of many Orthodox commentators towards the 'Marsh Movement' would not have become even more intense than the views permitted to those in the government. Fr Vsevolod Chaplin, head of the Holy Synod's Department for Cooperation between Church and Society, expressed the Moscow Patriarchate's uncompromising position at a forum held by the United Russia party on 16 May 2013 (*Interfax*, Moscow 17 May 2013) at which various party projects were debated. Fr Chaplin stated:

> 'Deeply unpatriotic anti-state propaganda is being spread about. Organised forces with foreign support are behind this. But a wise government and a wise élite can deal with such a threat if the deep-rooted strength of the people is roused from slumber.'

Different roles were played by the Patriarch and some top church leaders on the one hand, and by others in their immediate circle on the other. The

Patriarch Kirill leads prayer vigil on 22 April 2012

Patriarch *et al* did not condemn the opposition outright, but exposed 'church enemies', whereas others in his entourage directed frenzied attacks at the opposition which only served to strengthen and radicalise the ranks of so-called 'church enemies'. On 24 August 2013 the Patriarch spoke to those attending a gathering of the Novosibirsk regional branch of the World Russian People's Assembly and claimed to be trying to reconcile opposing political forces:

> '…the church does not have the wherewithal to calm all these conflicts, although it is currently already doing a great deal. But the church is able to gather people together, including people who hold different views and convictions, in the name of the highest of goals… Why does this People's Assembly need local branches? Because at a local level problems and conflicts also exist, there are different programmes – economic, political and cultural. Where can these be discussed at a distance from those with particular commitments to rival groups? So you see we need a calm space like this one where people do not shout at each other, where people talk quietly, where argument wins the day and where, most important of all, through prayer grace is present.'[2]

From this statement the ROC seemed to be claiming the role of intermediary between opposing political forces, and yet it is difficult to see what grounds there were for such a role when the ROC's uncompromisingly negative attitude to the opposition was plain for all to see. Be that as it may, the Patriarch (and a significant section of the clergy, particularly the episcopate) focused his condemnation not on those who wanted fair elections and opposed the government in power, but on those who criticised the ROC in any way, i.e. on what he called 'church enemies'. A strident opening to the campaign against these 'enemies' was staged on 22 April 2012 when a 'prayer vigil in

defence of the faith' was organised in front of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, with tens of thousands from all over the country. The term 'church enemies' came to include those who publicised the story about the Patriarch's expensive Breguet watch (this went viral when the watch was airbrushed out of a photograph of the Patriarch sitting at a table while the watch's reflection remained[3]); those who publicised the Patriarch's legal case against the surgeon Yuri Shevchenko, whose building works damaged the furniture, so it was claimed, in the Patriarch's neighbouring expensive flat; and those who criticised the Patriarch for supporting the United Russia party and Putin during the elections, as well as those who wanted the Patriarch to condemn the manipulated election results. 'Church enemies' included those who opposed teaching the Orthodox course *Foundations of Orthodox Culture* in secondary schools, and those who did not refer to the Patriarch with sufficient respect. Furthermore the Patriarch and his entourage deliberately dramatised the situation: they called themselves victims of persecution, finding analogies with the early years of Soviet power when anti-religious Communists destroyed churches and murdered believers. Such an interpretation in today's situation when the ROC has constant government support, was totally out of place, to put it mildly.

This hysterical and inadequate response of the ROC leadership needs explanation. There are a number of causes behind it. One is simple: from the late 1980s there has been an informal and unspoken consensus that criticism of clergy, and especially of the ROC's leadership, is inadmissible. Only a very few publications have not observed this ban, the result of the enormous sympathy felt towards the church and believers who suffered under Soviet rule. The Patriarch and other top church leaders, however, became accustomed to this comfortable situation out of the firing line, and appear to have failed to keep an eye on their behaviour, believing they could do anything. But they were public figures who made socially and politically significant pronouncements, so they could not have remained beyond criticism forever; it is extraordinary how long the unspoken vow of silence lasted! The behaviour of church leaders during the political crisis brought closer the unavoidable hour when the dam would burst and compromising material would pour forth onto the heads of these leaders. Deep disgust was felt by the wide circle of people who supported democratic change, and who, until then, had had nothing against Kirill and his entourage, or against the ROC's support for the government. Many accusations began to circulate: the excessive luxury of these spiritual leaders' lives was condemned, as were the ROC's links with state institutions, schools and the army, and the morally lax behaviour of some churchmen. The political policies of the Patriarch, the Moscow Patriarchate's support for authoritarianism and silence over electoral fraud stoked the fires of resentment. This dissatisfaction then became more general and was directed at all aspects of the ROC.

The change in public opinion came as a psychological shock to church leaders who suspected that some 'conspiracy' or planned anti-Christian campaign was behind it (how sincere this reaction was is difficult to gauge). They even suggested it was the result of foreign interference! Their stormy reaction to losing their halos and becoming a focus for public scrutiny, for criticism and condemnation, was natural and with

time would have faded away. However, there was another factor which came into play – the contemporary religious consciousness of Russians.

Post-soviet man considers himself to be 'Orthodox', while at the same time he is disinclined to follow Orthodox rules; his 'Orthodoxy' can widely diverge from what is taught by the ROC. The unusual nature of contemporary religious consciousness became evident in the public reaction to the Pussy Riot demonstration of 21 February 2012 in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.[4] The group prayed to the Mother of God to remove Putin, expressed sympathy for homosexuals ('gay parades are sent off to Siberia in chains'), asked the Mother of God to become a feminist, and condemned the Patriarch in sacrilegious terms for supporting Russia's 'rotten leaders'. The demonstration did not at first attract much attention, but its significance came to the surface later with, on the one hand, Pussy Riot's severe punishment (their long period in pre-trial detention followed by their sentence) and the extremely harsh reaction of the Patriarch and church leaders, and, on the other hand, with the group's refusal to repent and willingness to suffer for their convictions. The Pussy Riot demonstration turned out to be not just a PR stunt but something really serious for which some were willing to suffer and others to punish.

What was it that evoked such intense passions? The women's defence of homosexuals quickly disappeared from public debate; surveys show that the overwhelming majority of Russian citizens have a negative attitude towards homosexuality; and most of those who supported the women were somewhat indifferent to this issue. As for feminism, most Russian citizens have only a very vague idea about it – for most it is of no interest – so this aspect of the Pussy Riot protest fell on deaf ears. But intense debate flared up over whether it was blasphemous (and if so to what degree) to dance and use unacceptable language in church, whether you could use abusive language about Putin and the Patriarch, and to what extent you could protest against 'the church as servant of the state'. Public debate on these questions revealed a wide variety of views. Surveys showed that a significant majority of the population thought Pussy Riot had deserved their harsh punishment. It was also clear that this majority were not practising Orthodox, and rarely attended church, but nevertheless thought Orthodox churches should be treated with respect and bad behaviour banned. A significant number (though not the largest) of those who sharply condemned the women were practising Orthodox, while even those who did not believe in Christ and took no part in church life had a developed sense of the sacred. The feeling that Orthodox churches, icons and holy books are sacred exists independently of involvement in church life. Reverence for the sacred (which is not necessarily connected with church attendance and acceptance of clerical authority) has become a striking characteristic of mass consciousness.

Most often the high level of Orthodox religiosity (some surveys show 80%) is linked to national identity. Patriarch Kirill contrasted the number of people who stood waiting to revere the Virgin's Belt[5] to the number of protesters in the 'Marsh Movement', an unconvincing comparison to my mind since there has been no survey of the political views of those standing outside the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour; I have talked to some of them and discovered

that they had enthusiastically joined the protesters on Marsh Square and considered the Patriarch's condemnation of the democratic movement as shameful. I do not believe there are that many convinced opponents of the street protests, although the majority of people are probably politically indifferent and not greatly interested in criticism of Putin and the 'Marsh Movement'.

Gennadi Zyuganov holds up his party card in front of a statue of Lenin

The political confrontation between the opposition and the government, most clearly expressed within the church's life in the Pussy Riot demo, revealed another important aspect of current mass Russian religious consciousness: oppositionists have referred to the gospel and to Christian tradition irrespective of ideological and political differences. The statements and actions of the Pussy Riot women had a religious, Christian content. The published biographies of Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova show that they were familiar with Orthodox teaching, while Alyokhina was for a time active within the Orthodox youth movement based at the Danilov Monastery. The radical protest of these feminists was wrapped up in religious rhetoric and naturally needed to be made in a church environment. Most of the liberal defenders of Pussy Riot also used biblical arguments, claiming that ROC leaders, by condemning the women, had not understood the gospel correctly. From a liberal standpoint Pussy Riot proclaimed the gospel values of freedom and brotherhood, while the ROC leadership and Putin with their ranks of security services personnel were enemies of love and mercy. Orthodox church members accused the Pussy Riot 'blasphemers' of hating Orthodoxy and being the enemies of Christ and the church, whereas these 'blasphemers' fought with rare self-sacrifice for what they saw as Christian Orthodox values; they were not external enemies of the church, but internal dissidents, 'heretics'.

A politically important 'Orthodox' view of government which is not fully within the control of the church leadership, is that held by such people as Alexander Prokhanov,[6] by the security services personnel who support 'the unifying factor of Orthodoxy', and by nationalists who 'defend Russian feelings'. These are mostly people who adhere to a non-religious Orthodox ideology. The leader of the Communist Party, Gennadi Zyuganov, is a striking example of this group. He said when addressing his Duma faction on 9 April 2012:

> 'The army and the Orthodox faith are the two bastions which, after the liquidation of Soviet power's achievements, will in the first instance undermine those who hate the Russian people and Russia, whose main aim is to destroy our spirituality and traditions… today

> we see a coordinated campaign against the ROC by aggressive liberal forces.' (*Interfax* 10 April, 2012)

People like Zyuganov are far from religious life and alien to Christian belief, but call themselves 'Orthodox' and are prepared to defend the majority 'state-building' religion. They do not attack the Patriarch and accept his political line. But for the church such people are a problem: by equating their political views with those of the church leadership, and by viewing the church as an ideological tool for creating a despotic state, they are a dangerous ally for the ROC and will undermine religious faith.

Pussy Riot with their supporters, the many thousands of pilgrims queuing to revere the Virgin's Belt, and the security services personnel who are convinced of the need for the 'unifying factor of Orthodoxy' yet mostly do not regularly attend church – all these are a challenge for the ROC. Yet the Patriarch thinks that he speaks in the name of all Russian Orthodox, while in fact there are legions of 'Orthodox' in Russia who have no direct link with the ROC at all; for them the Patriarch and his clergy are mere symbols.

During the last two years Orthodoxy – understood in different ways – has become a subject of debate in the cultural and political mainstream where various ideological programmes vie with each other. Sociologists are forever debating what the claim 'I am Orthodox' means in their surveys. The most common answer to this question is that to be Orthodox denotes national identity. Yet Orthodoxy is not only associated with national identity; it has become a language used by Putin, Zyuganov and Novodvorskaya.[7] All Orthodox interpret Orthodoxy according to their own taste, everyone has their own idea of what the church is. As for the place of the Patriarch and clergy, this is becoming a matter of debate. For the ROC's leadership such a situation does not present them with some advantage but is, rather, a dangerous challenge.

At the beginning of 2013 the sociological centre 'Sreda' carried out a nationwide survey on the public's image of the church. It was extraordinary to discover how many people thought about this: $^{4}/_{5}$ had a definite mental image of the church, and ¾ had an image of what they wished to see. The survey's results showed that only a tiny minority associated religious values such as salvation, prayer, spiritual life, with their idea of the church. The vast majority talked about ideological values (though not about church support for the state as advocated by the Moscow Patriarchate) and the church's social work.

From theorising about an ideal government structure, the ROC has been forced to confront real issues of the day. The following questions are now of general interest: what sort of political structure does the hierarchy advocate? What influence do the church's views have on the social and political development of Russia? How do these views influence the church's own position in society?

The socio-political doctrine of the ROC was primarily contained in a document which was prepared by Patriarch Kirill when he was still a bishop, and officially adopted by the Moscow Patriarchate at the Bishops' Council held in 2000.[8] It advocates the Byzantine model of absolute monarchy as the ideal state structure for Russia with its prin-

ciple of 'symphony' between church and state, a model best embodied by the Russian monarchy. Such advocacy of absolute monarchy, to my mind, is the stuff of dreams – an unattainable ideal, which bears no relation to reality. However, although the church's social doctrine sees a democratic state with the rule of law as a consequence of secularisation, which would only be accepted out of necessity, it does also affirm that the church could co-exist with any form of government and would accept the choice of the people.

Fr Vsevolod Chaplin

Since this document was adopted the ROC leadership has from time to time expressed the view that they do not consider the choice of democracy to be Russia's ultimate political goal, though they would 'not oppose' it. The views of Fr Vsevolod Chaplin are typical of the church's senior bureaucracy. He stated during a meeting with Duma deputies of the United Russia party, according to *Interfax*, on 31 May 2012, that 'the people must mature in order to propose and choose a monarchical system' and 'any attempts to change radically the political structure would at worst lead to destabilisation, or at best to a parody of the ideal of monarchy which exists in the minds of our people'. The rejection of monarchy at the present time, however, does not imply that democracy would be preferable in Fr Chaplin's opinion: 'In Russia a strong centralised and personified form of rule is typical; without this nothing gets done in Russia.' He then added: 'we should also consider what should counterbalance, and has always counterbalanced, this strong central authority – the government's consultation with the people and the latter's participation in decision -making.' From other statements made by Fr Chaplin, the Patriarch and other church leaders, it is clear that 'consultation' does not presuppose a parliament, elected by the people within a multi-party system, but rather some sort of cooperative consultative body appointed by the government. Here is a typical statement by Fr Chaplin: 'Such a body as the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation best suits the Russian spirit, whereas a parliament is not part of the Russian mental make-up.'[9] On 9 February 2010 he stated at a conference held at the Russian Academy for State Service that 'it is generally not clear whether a party-political system is possible in Russia.'

In the autumn of 2011 the ROC had to give concrete meaning to its theoretical declarations about Russia's political future. Commentators were convinced that it would once again support the existing political regime, but this was a crude assessment of the situation and not entirely accurate. Unlike the activists of the United Russia party who claimed that the elections had not been falsified, church leaders did not say this but rather argued that the existing political regime should not be changed, that on principle state authority should not be attacked. The Patriarch spoke disapprovingly about a multi-party system because in his opinion it would divide the country. Fr Chaplin, meanwhile, for well over 18 months, had been criticising the separation of powers, a multi-party system, as well as the institution of elections and civil free-

doms. The ROC's leadership did not only support Putin passively but at the same time it promoted consistently its own project which is distinct from today's political system. It is suspicious of the actual institution of elections; when confronting the mass protests against the falsification of the vote, it resembled someone who considers games of chance to be a crime and when asked by players for their opinion on cheats replies, 'to cheat is perhaps bad, but look here, to play a game of cards is wrong in principle!' The legitimacy of the current regime does not in general interest the ROC leadership. To them what is most important is that it be authoritarian. They have compared the late '80s and early '90s (a time of wonderful new possibilities for the church) unfavourably with the Soviet era of militant atheism. Put simply, behind the ROC's political doctrine is a basic principle: 'lack of freedom is better than freedom; slavery is better than liberty!'

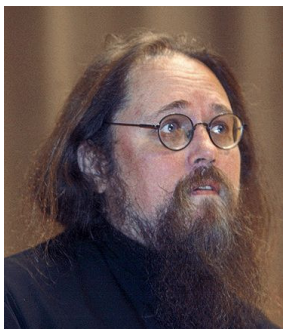
History's pendulum swings back and forth: the church was swept away by the Revolution because of its association with the archaic political regime of Nicholas II, and on the wave of protest against the tsarist regime was subjected to terrible persecution under Soviet rule; then after the fall of Communism the ROC enjoyed mass support and respect owing to the persecution it had suffered. Now with its support for authoritarianism the ROC is once again facing a wave of anticlericalism (maybe even militant atheism) which is growing before our eyes.

Does the ROC's authoritarian ideology affect the development of democracy in our country? Surveys show that no more than 10% of the population are practicing Orthodox believers who are therefore influenced by the church's propaganda on 'traditional Russian social structures'. Furthermore, the results of these surveys show that when it comes to politics the church's opinion is not greatly respected. Nevertheless, the church's preaching is directed not just at the mind but also at the conscience, the aesthetic sensibility, the cultural and historical consciousness (and subconscious). The effect on society of the church's pernicious support for servility will harm the democratic movement, but it will also harm today's government and the church itself. Although the current political leaders rarely speak about their vision for Russia's political future, it is impossible to conclude from what Putin and his entourage say that their ideal is an Asiatic despotism; rather, they claim to be constructing a modern democratic society.

At the end of 2013 Putin made two speeches – one to the Valdai Club gathering near Novgorod, the other to the Federal Assembly[10] – in which for the first time he started to use the rhetoric and some of the phraseology of Patriarch Kirill about the importance of Russian spiritual and national values. He rejected 'barren tolerance', defended family values, attacked multiculturalism and Western liberalism, spoke about the 'national' and 'spiritual values' at the base of Russia's national identity: Russia 'cannot move forward without a sense of its spiritual, cultural and national identity' and unlike the West, which had rejected its Christian roots, Russia, Putin said, was not afraid to talk about its religious convictions. These speeches, however, did not play into the hands of either anticlerical sympathisers or the Orthodox leadership: they could have been made by some conservative European or American politician. Putin did not either advocate church-state 'symphony' or

national unity without political parties and a parliament.

If the current Russian government allied itself with an institution like the ROC which opposes democracy it could be accused of hypocrisy, and this would sooner or later become a focus of public debate. To ally oneself with a dogmatic ideology which opposes the Constitution and the political values of the vast majority would threaten society with serious unrest. So it is no surprise that Putin cooperates very circumspectly with the ROC. The history of almost all states with a Christian tradition (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant) shows that churches sooner or later (or even when they are founded) have accepted democratic political values and have become their guardian. Such a development in Russia is inevitable; only its tempo and details are open to question. The ROC will act for the time being as a break on the process of constructing a just and humane society, while the struggle against its destructive propaganda of authoritarianism will inevitably increase the anti-Christian, anti-Orthodox and anticlerical mood in Russia. This mood will grow not only within the ranks of the political opposition, but also within a significant section of the bureaucracy, the political élite and the intelligentsia.



Fr Andrei Kurayev

An important further cause for the growth of opposition to the ROC has been the exposure of immorality among some Orthodox clergy and the Moscow Patriarchate's inadequate response. The longest-running and most serious scandal has been exposed by Fr Andrei Kurayev[11] who has written about the pressure to commit homosexual acts placed by certain senior bishops on those under their authority. Kurayev has presented hard facts and claims that he has evidence. This is not the first time that such matters have been discussed on the internet; the subject of a 'gay lobby' in church circles has been much aired. But Kurayev has brought church and civil law into the discussion. The reaction of the Moscow Patriarchate's bureaucracy has been totally crazy: there has been almost no attempt to deny Kurayev's claims; instead the Patriarchate has criticised Kurayev personally, insisting that he has no authority to make these statements and is harming the ROC's prestige. Such a level of moral judgement (let alone legal) within the Patriarchate is bound to provoke continuous 'anticlerical campaigns', and the church leadership will pay dearly both for their reluctance to examine seriously the allegations against these hierarchs, and for their readiness to leave the latter *en poste* without punishment. Even if the Patriarchate manages to silence Kurayev, his revelations will remain in the public eye and will periodically emerge again for debate, provoking resentment towards the ROC in some, and distrust and doubt in others.

The internal finances of the ROC and its financial relations within society and government are also a subject which will be a headache for the Moscow Patriarchate. The church's budgets at various levels and its economic activity as a whole are not available for public scrutiny; government control, to put it mildly, is weak. Current practice al-

lows church leaders in positions of power to spend a vast amount on themselves, which often provokes public shock and disgust. So far there have been a number of specialist studies on this aspect of the church's activity, as well as much discussion in social media and accusations, but without convincing evidence. No doubt another Kurayev will emerge to carry on the battle on this front too.

The Patriarchate's representatives will probably again point the finger at the sins of the whistle-blowers and the anti-religious campaigners, but such a defence will get nowhere. There is only one way out for the Patriarchate – to overtake the ship of doom and cast off its own sins. Otherwise the ROC's critics will not only accuse the leadership of a mad and amoral political policy, but they will also attack the church and Christianity as a whole. They will demand more and more insistently that the ROC be limited in all sorts of ways and will prophecy its disappearance as well as that of the Christian religion. Their hopes will not come to pass, in my view, for even in the most secularised countries (i.e. Latvia and the Czech Republic according to recent surveys) the churches have remained amongst the most respected and influential of social institutions. They attract a significant part of the active population and fulfil many important social functions. In practice the churches in secularised countries have more rights and opportunities to participate in the life of society than in Russia.

Despite the suicidal political doctrine of the ROC and all its commonly known inadequacies, healthy processes, usually unnoticed by its critics, are underway within it: at their root is the increasing involvement of local clergy with believers. In Soviet days the clergy formed

Fr Andrei Voronin

an isolated caste which limited its activity to celebrating the liturgy and performing other rituals, and had little contact with church members. The secret police kept an eye on the clergy and did their best to thwart them wherever possible. The gradual rapprochement of the clergy with the people after the fall of Communism is most clearly seen in the development of the church's social work, a new phenomenon for Russia where for many centuries a Russian Orthodox parish was inward-looking and not involved in such activity.

Just before the 1917 Revolution church charities began to appear and various church philanthropic movements were founded. Even 10-15 years ago it was rare to find a successful church social project, but in the last 5-7 years a veritable flood of remarkable projects have come into being. In practically every administrative area of the Russian Federation you will now find an effective organised team of volunteers helping down-and-outs, the poor and the elderly. Projects involving work with children have been especially successful among the Russian Orthodox – for example the children's home run by Fr Andrei Voronin[12] outside Nerekhta (near Kostroma). Work with children from deprived backgrounds in many

Fr Andrei Voronin shows the author the outward-bound training centre in the children's home which he runs

regions has become a positive aspect of local Orthodox church life, especially in economically depressed areas. Social work in the ROC began spontaneously and was not at first noticed by the church leadership until 2010, a year after Kirill's election as Patriarch, when it was put top of the church's agenda. The ROC leadership started to talk about compassion for orphans, the sick, the homeless; church-wide programmes began to be developed and social work departments established in every diocese.

The struggle to rid the ROC of its Neanderthal political theories, and the struggle against the church and religion, are two different things. The more Russian supporters of democracy understand this, the more successful they will be in achieving their goals. If the opposite were to happen, the anti-church struggle will rebound against the supporters of anticlericalism. Members of society, with the exception of militant atheists, recognise the important constructive role played by the churches in the life of contemporary society. The stronger anticlericalism and militant atheism become, the further will the historical pendulum eventually swing back in favour of religion and the churches.

---

1. The original Russian version of this article was published in *Russian Review*, No 62, www.keston.org.uk.
2. http://www.vrns.ru/news/2063/?sphrase_id=2594.
3. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17622820
4. See *Keston Newsletter* No 16, 2012, pp.24-26, 'Is This a Return to the Cold War?'
5. In November 2012 the Virgin's Belt was displayed in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow and attracted vast numbers of pilgrims, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/8913048/
6. Alexander Prokhanov is editor of *Zavtra,* an ultra-nationalist newspaper.
7. Valeria Novodvorskaya, a human rights activist and opposition politician, died on 12 July 2014.
8. *Основы социальной концепции Русской православной церкви*, Moscow: Издательство Московской Патриархии, 2000.
9. www.portal-credo.ru, 9 February 2006.
10. *Выступление на заседании международного дискуссионного клуба «Валдай»,* 19 September 2013, http://www.kremlin.ru/news/19243; *Послание Президента Федеральному Собранию*, 12 December 2013, http://www.kremlin.ru/news/19825
11. Fr Andrei Kurayev was dismissed from the staff of the Moscow Theological Academy in December 2013 for his critical stance.
12. Fr Andrei Voronin founded this home for boys in 1996. He was interviewed by Keston's Encyclopaedia team in June 2011.

Sergei Filatov *is a sociologist on the staff of the Oriental Institute in Moscow. He heads Keston's Encyclopaedia project.*

Orthodox and Protestants in Russia: Neighbours, Rivals, Relatives

by Roman Lunkin

Christian denominations not associated with Orthodoxy, yet with their own culture and outlook, have involved a significant number of people living in Russia for over a century, yet they remain an unknown quantity to the Orthodox, while Protestants are not familiar with Orthodoxy (Catholics have had rather more contact with Orthodox clergy). Historically this is perfectly understandable since there has never been any dialogue or period of familiarisation between the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), the majority church, and other denominations. Personal spiritual dialogue took place only when Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants found themselves flung together in prison during the Soviet period.

Dialogue between Orthodoxy and other denominations within the Russian Empire was made impossible because as a Russian, before the Toleration Act of 1905, you could not be anything but Orthodox. A whole cultural section of society lived like foreigners in a ghetto. In fact many different Christian denominations as well as Orthodoxy had long existed in Russia: Catholic parishes were active in Ancient Russia especially in the Far North, Lutheran congregations were founded in Moscow and St Petersburg during the reign of Ivan the Terrible soon after the Reformation, while from the late 17th century to the early 19th century Catholic missions flourished, Catholic churches were built, Evangelical groups were formed – indigenous groups like the Dukhobors and Molokans emerged as well as groups from European countries like Pietists, Shtundists, Baptists and Reformers from Germany, England and the Netherlands. Protestants were firmly established as a Russian phenomenon in the early 20th century (during the first two decades) when Baptists, Evangelical Christians and Pentecostals spread throughout Russia and later the USSR. Soviet policies on religion brought persecuted Christians together, while at the same time radically dividing their leaders at the top level – Moscow Patriarchate clergy were given a superior status to that of Protestant leaders, while dialogue at the top had to praise the Soviet system and its policies. Persecution of the non-Orthodox prevented them becoming an élite within Soviet society; Lutherans and Catholics were in practice annihilated on Russian territory. The more numerous and missionary-minded Baptists and Pentecostals were pushed underground where they formed a marginalised sub-culture, while those Protestant leaders who were loyal to the Soviet authorities were isolated within the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, formed in 1944.

During the 1990s many kinds of Evangelical Protestantism (including a host of new groups from the US and Europe) burgeoned in Russia thanks to missionary zeal and a capacity for renewal. Catholicism and Lutheranism, which rose from the embers in the post-Soviet period, claimed to be the churches of Poles and Germans (to avoid being

accused of proselytism) until after 2000 when they broke out of their ethnic confines and started to attract Russians and other indigenous peoples of Russia. In many regions Protestantism became more active in the missionary and social work spheres, while the spread of the Baptist church and Pentecostals among the peoples of the Far North, in the national republics, was unprecedented.

Billboard attacking Sergei Andreev, a Baptist, running for mayor of Togliatti in March 2012. It reads 'Light or Damnation. Togliatti must choose.' The choice is between the ROC (see cathedral depicted on left) and the Baptist church (on right) over which flies a black crow.

It became obvious that dialogue, or at least cooperation, between different denominations, which had no experience of working together, was unavoidable. We are concerned here with dialogue between Protestants and Orthodox;[1] Catholic-Orthodox dialogue is a separate subject with its own complexities.

Anti-sect Phobia

Because of the impenetrable wall between Orthodox and Protestants at a personal and official level, the pronouncements of both sides have often been aggressive, rude, hostile, full of stereotypes; neither side has recognised the other as fellow Christians and brothers. The confrontation has mostly taken place in the media. A dividing wall exists not only in the minds of Orthodox activists but also in the minds of most Russian citizens who understand little about different denominations. Thus anti-sect campaigns in the press have become popular and their Orthodox organisers have had a significant effect, engendering an anti-sect phobia in the minds of many. The St Irenaeus of Lyons Centre, founded in 1993 by Alexander Dvorkin with Patriarchal blessing, has successfully spread the idea of 'hostile and mad sectarians'. Dvorkin is the most quoted anti-sect campaigner in the media who has drawn up a list of sects which endanger Russia; he is the source of the most aggressive attacks on non-Orthodox denominations and new religious movements, and considers their leaders and activists to be criminals and fraudster. In 2009 Dvorkin was appointed head of the Expert Council on Religion within the Ministry of Justice, something which evoked a horrified response from among academic circles and non-Orthodox believers.

The activity of centres which study new religious movements is perfectly normal and acceptable in a democratic society, but in Russia an anti-sect phobia has helped to block the dissemination of information about non-Orthodox groups and has prevented inter-denominational dialogue. And

there is worse: this anti-sect phobia has justified discrimination against Evangelical churches and has led those Orthodox, who would like in theory to develop a dialogue, to fear punishment from their bosses. Sufficient to say that between 1990-2000 the missionary departments of ROC dioceses focused entirely on 'the fight against sects', basing their views on books produced by anti-sect campaigners like Dvorkin. Local Orthodox clergy only dared talk in secret to Protestant pastors about theological matters or work with children and drug addicts.

Pentecostals hold a service outside their church, destroyed by the authorities in Moscow, September 2012

This anti-sect phobia and basic hostility to 'non-traditional' religions influenced the image of Protestantism in the media and among a section of society and officialdom from the time the Law on Religion was adopted in 1997. From this point 'traditional religions' came to mean Russian Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism, while all non-Orthodox denominations – Baptists, Pentecostals, Charismatics, Evangelical Christians, Adventists, Methodists, Presbyterians – were essentially considered 'non-traditional'. Some Evangelical-Lutheran churches and traditional Baptists were exceptions, as the Russian authorities and ROC saw them as ethnic traditions which had a long history in Russia. But as soon as these denominations dared go outside the walls of their churches with some mission or social work project they were reduced to the ranks of 'non-traditional' churches, which have no rights in the eyes of the ROC and are, in the latter's eyes, guilty of proselytism on Russian territory, an accusation which was directed by the ROC even at the Siberian Lutheran Church with its centre in Novosibirsk which, founded in the early 1990s, is a purely Russian phenomenon.[2]

The ROC, its laity and episcopate, think that 'sects', or rather religious minorities, pose a threat on a spiritual level and to the security of the state. However, a subtler approach has been followed by two Orthodox academics who study such minorities in the context of comparative theology, rather than as an ideological threat to society and the state: Roman Kon', a teacher at the Moscow Theological Academy, and Vitali Pitanov, head of the Orthodox Apologetics Centre in St Petersburg, oppose the work of Dvorkin whom they accuse of criminalising sects, of adopting the American term 'totalitarian and destructive sects' and of copying American methods which use relatives and the courts to 'wrench' dissidents from a sect's clutches.[3]

Many Orthodox bishops portray membership of a sect as a social ill. Patriarch Kirill expressed concern about the situation in Russia's Far East where there are a great many Protestant churches:

‘Last year I visited Yakutia and Kamchatka. In these distant parts of Russia I had the opportunity of meeting representatives of the indigenous minority peoples from whom I received the warmest of impressions. At the same time I became aware of the problems they face: unemployment, alcoholism, high crime rate, increasing number of suicides. Various sects, mostly from abroad, are taking advantage of these peoples’ poverty and are drawing them into their net.’[4]

Vitali Vlasenko, head of the Baptist Church’s Department of External Church Relations, talks to Fr Dmitri Smirnov

In early June 2012, Fr Dmitri Smirnov[5] gave voice in the media to the most radical of Orthodox views:

> ‘We want our President to create a situation similar to the one which existed in the Soviet Union, so that not one damn sect can carry on here as they do back in their home countries!’

He recommended that ‘all totalitarian sects be made illegal’ and called the followers of new religious movements ‘pernicious beings’: ‘Gather the people together, blow this sect out of the water!’ Furthermore, he recommended that complaints about ‘sectarians’ be sent to the police, the courts, the Procuracy and Duma: ‘You must take action and make sure the ground burns under the feet of these monsters!’[6]

Anti-sect campaigners think that the Pentecostals out of all non-traditional movements have the greatest influence. In 2005 a conference for anti-sect campaigners was held in Saratov (similar conferences were held in a whole string of Russian cities and their resolutions published in the media) and issued a statement which was circulated by the law-enforcement agencies and in the media: ‘We believe neo-pentecostal destructive sects pose the greatest threat and use methods in their work which undermine individual freedom.’ These ‘destructive sects’ threatened the physical and mental health of people, manipulated the human psyche and consciousness leading to suicide. ‘We think that their members are methodically trying to gain a foothold within the local authorities.’ Dvorkin who organised similar conferences emphasised:

> ‘Neo-pentecostals are among the most dynamically developing sects in Russia. The task of this conference is to draw the attention of all society, of state structures, the courts and police to the spread of this religious movement.’[7]

Some Orthodox activists, heads of missionary departments and anti-sect centres include a large number of groups within the category ‘neo-pentecostal’: i.e. Pentecostals (known in Russia often as Christians of Evangelical Faith), Charismatics, all Protestant groups which encourage speaking in tongues,

all Evangelical congregations with 'Charismatic' pastors which hold emotional services using contemporary music. Thus almost all Protestants in Russia are encompassed in this term, apart from the conservative and socially passive 'traditional' Baptists and Lutherans.

A radical anti-sectarian ideology in Orthodox garb, compatible with state ideology and pro-ROC, which aims to render illegal unacceptable 'sects', has come to dominate the relations of Orthodox activists, bureaucrats and the security services with 'non-traditional' religions. Protestant churches are seen as a 'fifth column', as 'Western spies', or suspected by officials and anti-sect campaigners of being capable, like their Ukrainian brothers, of taking part in an 'Orange revolution'. With the revolutionary Ukrainian events of 2014 Baptist and Pentecostal pastors have once more been viewed with suspicion by the authorities and by 'patriotic' public opinion, although there is no basis in reality for this.

Confrontation

The public dialogue (if one can call it such) of Orthodox and Protestants in Russia's regions takes the form of ideological conflicts and mutual accusations. A host of concrete examples reveal how intense are the disagreements: the ROC defends its monopoly right to be the only Christian denomination in the Russian state, while Evangelicals fight their corner within Russian culture, politics and within society as a whole, on the grounds that they are the second most influential Christian denomination. Behind this dialogue of confrontation stand out most clearly the accumulated accusations and hurts of recent centuries which have been inflicted by one Christian on another. Evangelical churches most often address their complaints to the secular authorities and to public opinion, rather than to the Orthodox church authorities. In 2005 an anti-sect campaign compelled the Evangelical congregations in Ekaterinburg and the Sverdlovsk oblast to publish statements drawing attention to 'the closure of the process of constructive co-operation between the authorities and non-Orthodox religious organisations' as a result of disbanding the Council within the oblast administration which dealt with inter-confessional relations. The Evangelicals sent an open letter to Putin about the infringement of the rights of the Charismatic churches – New Life, Good News and Living Word. Protestants on the disbanded Council had for many years endured insults from 'anti-sect campaigners' – Orthodox clergy from the Ekaterinburg diocese had set up pickets outside a building where Protestant Sunday services were held. In 2004 the diocese had distributed leaflets attacking Evangelical churches and the film 'Jesus' which was shown in local cinemas. A leaflet entitled *Be watchful, take care!* had been published by the diocese, which warned that the film was being used 'as a bait'. Pickets were set up by Orthodox clergy and the Orthodox Student Brotherhood outside cinemas showing the film, and also outside the New Life church in Ekaterinburg, where those arriving for a service were insulted and faced with anti-sect placards.

Despite these provocations, the council of Protestant pastors in Ekaterinburg invited 'journalists, the public and all sensible people not to pay any attention to the mass hysteria of some "Orthodox brothers" who have long shown themselves to be the opponents of non-Orthodox churches.' On this

occasion and on many others, Protestant pastors in Russia's regions have avoided direct conflict with the ROC, and have tried to disassociate what happened locally with the overall policy of the Moscow Patriarchate. Protestant leaders have acknowledged the unproductiveness of head-on clashes with the ROC, have treated Orthodoxy and Russian society as a whole with respect, and have tried to show how marginalised and stupid are the attitudes of the anti-sect campaigners.

The excessive zeal of some Orthodox activists and the absurdity of their accusations have sometimes led to court cases and scandals in the media. In 2007, for example, the pastors of the Evangelical churches in the Tula oblast were shocked by the statements of the local Governor, Vyacheslav Dudka, and of the Tula Orthodox diocese. Leaders of the Tula Protestant churches – about 30 congregations in all – wrote to the Governor demanding that he stop inciting religious hatred in the Tula region. A whole series of articles, offensive to Protestants, began to be published on 2 August 2007 when a consultation on the religious situation took place under the chairmanship of the Governor, who was reported to have announced that a member of the American secret service had been uncovered within a missionary group in the Tula oblast. The press secretary of the Tula diocesan missionary department then announced to the media that the diocese had not been surprised by the Governor's statement because the diocese had long been warning about 'the destructive effect of totalitarian sects and cults, not only on the personality and on society, but on the state'. Then Alexei Yarasov, on the staff of the diocesan missionary department, published an article actually naming potential 'spies' – i.e. the following Pentecostal churches in Tula: Word of Life, Holy Trinity, the Tula Christian Centre – which he described as 'Tula's most dangerous sects,' adding, 'They call themselves Christians and Protestants. This is not true.'[8] His article ended with the call: 'Dear readers! If you or your relatives have suffered at the hands of sectarians, speak out!' When this author interviewed the assistant of a Presbyterian pastor in the Tula oblast, Alexandr Rozhkov, he said that the so-called 'fight against sects' had been going on for a long time, with Orthodox clergy regularly preaching against Protestants. Now people were even beginning to smash the windows of Protestant churches!

In Murmansk in 2008 the missionary department of the Murmansk Orthodox diocese launched an 'anti-sectarian campaign' when a group of Pentecostals started to build a prayer house. The internet journal *Orthodox in the North* published an offensive article entitled 'The Charismatic sect is constructing a religious building in the centre of Murmansk'.[9] The article's author quoted Anton Tuchkov, head of the diocesan Department of Education and Catechesis, and accused the Pentecostal church of 'proselytising extremism':

> 'Among the totalitarian sects active in the Murmansk oblast, the neo-pentecostals are the most numerous. There are more than 100 Charismatic religious groups and organisations at the present time. … Together with the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Charismatics form the core of anti-Orthodox policies in the region.'

The Orthodox youth website of the Murmansk diocese also published an announcement from the missionary department which accused the Pentecostal church in the area of 'extremist

proselytism' and called Protestants a sect. The missionary department came to the following conclusion: 'Their members are instilled with the values of the Western secularised world.'[10] The Murmansk Pentecostal church then instituted court proceedings against Anton Tuchkov, accusing him of inciting religious hatred, but the Procuracy rejected the case on the grounds that the views expressed were the personal views of Tuchkov.

A confrontation in Blagoveshchensk (Amur oblast, Far East) between the New Generation Pentecostal church, with over 5000 members, and Orthodox activists received much publicity. Criticism of New Generation and its leader, Mikhail Darbinyan, by the Orthodox had been going on for a long time, and a campaign was organised in the media and internet which was supported by the Orthodox diocese and Dvorkin supporters. In 2010 the Procuracy of the Amur oblast directed a string of accusations against New Generation. (This form of public trial against Evangelicals was imitated in other regions of Russia, and the New Generation case was used in the media as a means of limiting the activity of many other Protestants congregations.)

On 10 March 2010 the Procuracy distributed to the Procurators of seven cities and districts in the Amur oblast (including Blagoveshchensk and its Justice Department) an order to check the activity of New Generation to see whether it was of an extremist nature. No infringements were recorded. On 9 April 2010 the Procuracy asked a Blagoveshchensk judge to decide whether, according to administrative law, New Generation had 'infringed regulations for announcing published data' when it published the church's videos. The case was thrown out of court some months later. Meanwhile on 12 April 2010 the Procuracy called New Generation to answer the accusation that it had not received special permission for its business activities and lodged a case in the Blagoveshchensk city court on two counts: that, firstly, the educational work of New Generation and, secondly, its production of videos without a licence, had been illegal. Both counts were dismissed. But this was not the end of the story: the Procuracy lodged another case on 17 August 2010 asking for 18 videos with Christian content to be banned as they, in its opinion, could have a negative influence on a person's psychological state. The Blagoveshchensk city court on 4 March 2011 ruled that some of the material in the videos could have a dangerous effect because of the emotional prayers and some of the preaching. New Generation appealed against the decision to no avail. However, as all the videos had been sold before the court ruling, the church did not make a fuss in public. And Mikhail Darbinyan, the church's leader, continued to preach in the same way as before using 'emotional' prayers!

This conflict in Blagoveshchensk emerged again on 24 October 2013 when Viktor Selivanovsky, head of the missionary department of the Blagoveshchensk diocese, held a launch in a local library for his book on the Pentecostal church, *The Charismatic Heresy*. Alexandr Kipko, a New Generation pastor, reacted strongly to what he saw as insulting attacks against his church made during the launch, and decided to test the Christian nature of Selivanovsky by punching him on the cheek; the latter controlled himself, did not retaliate and rather reluctantly shook his opponent's hand. New Generation's website (www.ngrussia.com) published the following statement:

Sergei Ryakhovsky with Patriarch Alexi II (d. 5 December 2008) at a reception celebrating the conversion of Russia in 988

'During his presentation V.V. Selivanovsky referred to some famous Protestant preachers in sarcastic and clearly mocking terms. He distorted and misrepresented their words and New Generation's teaching. His words and behaviour during the book launch did not back up his statement "I love all who attend New Generation and passionately wish to help them out of the error of their ways"… The nerves of the believers present were near breaking point from the "filth" which was thrown at them. Many of those present belonged to Evangelical churches… In their opinion the publication of such literature creates ill feeling and provokes inter-faith conflicts… Some of them have already submitted statements to the Procuracy and Investigating Committee about the offence caused to their religious feelings.'

Relating to Orthodoxy

At an official level today the situation has stabilised and space has even been made for dialogue. A head-on confrontation with Orthodoxy has in the main become rare. Protestant leaders at a local level now like to distinguish Orthodoxy as a faith from Orthodoxy as an institution, individual Orthodox believers who are 'true Christians' from Orthodox politicians and radicals who sow discord. Two centuries of difficult relations, handshakes at the highest level and accusations in the media at a regional level, have led the Evangelical community to value contact with 'living' and 'reborn' Orthodox believers rather than with official Orthodox representatives, from whom they have ceased to expect anything positive.

During perestroika many felt that Russia's traditional foundations and faith in God in all its forms (especially within the framework of the ROC) were being rebuilt. Protestants felt encouraged by the openness of the ROC at this time. Priests from various denominations met each other freely, while inter-denominational meetings were held with the support of the local authorities who tried to involve all active

Left to right: *Catholic Archbishop Paolo Pezzi, Metropolitan Ilarion Alfeev & Vitali Vlasenko (Baptist church) during the IVth Plenum of the Christian Inter-denominational Consultative Committee, 26 February 2014*

social and religious elements. During the early years of the Yeltsin era in the mid-1990s Protestants played a key role in Russia, distributing humanitarian aid in the harsh economic climate, often with the help of Orthodox clergy who agreed to speak at religious gatherings or to attend missionary meetings led by Billy Graham or Victor Hamm. Although the following decades stripped Protestants of some illusions, they did not lose their general respect for Orthodoxy or change their view that the Evangelical movement was building up the country together with the Orthodox.

The evolution of Protestant-Orthodox relations is clearly visible in the views of the Pentecostal leader Sergei Ryakhovsky, who at the end of the 1990s took the view that Protestantism would develop alongside Orthodoxy. Unlike many radical Charismatic leaders who thought that Evangelical preaching would change the situation and make the Orthodox lose their exclusive role, Ryakhovsky recognised the spiritual role of the ROC. He believed that if the main promoters of an Evangelical revival in Russia were Pentecostals, Charismatics and Baptists, then such a revival would not be accepted by all Russia's citizens. Only the parallel development of Orthodoxy and the cooperation of Protestants (especially of Charismatics as a new religious force) with the Orthodox could evangelise Russia.

From 1999-2000 Ryakhovsky was critical of the Moscow Patriarchate and often expressed a preference for the Old Believers, 'really the traditional confession'. Now one of his priorities as leader of the Pentecostals is to develop relations with the ROC. One achievement, he believes, was his joint Christian radio programme with Fr Oleg Stenyaev, head of the Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Non-traditional Religions. Ryakhovsky has maintained good relations with the liberal wing of the ROC, and considers as his friends the clergy in the parish of Cosmas and Damian. The existence of a charismatic Orthodox group in Moscow whose members speak in tongues he thinks is particularly significant.[11]

In 2002 Fr Oleg Stenyaev attended a service at the church where Ryakhovsky was the pastor and said afterwards:

> 'When I heard you pray for the Patriarch and learned that this happens every Sunday, I was surprised and delighted. For me it is important that good relations between Christians of different denominations are established.'

According to Fr Oleg, he like Ryakhovsky is 'a strong opponent of proselytism in Russia' and considers it essential that there be contact between Christians:

> 'We must find the Christian courage to raise those questions which divide us. This dialogue has already begun and it will be difficult to stop it. I do not consider this church [Ryakhovsky's] and other Protestant Christian churches to be sects and am willing to repeat these words to Mr Dvorkin. … We must find a common language and communicate with each other.'[12]

In 2005 Ryakhovsky emphasised the common goals facing the ROC and Protestantism against the background of accusations that Evangelical churches were a 'fifth column' inside the country. He announced that Protestants would not support an 'Orange revolution' in Russia:

'Protestantism is an inseparable part of the history and culture of our country. During the Soviet period there was appalling persecution against Orthodox, Protestants, and against other religions; we endured all this together. For example, my father was imprisoned with Orthodox priests in concentration camps for politicals. In Russia before the Revolution there were Molokans, a branch of Protestantism which grew out of Russian soil independently of the West. In our communities in the south, on the Volga, there are today many believers who were born into Molokan families. Of course Russia is predominantly an Orthodox country, but Orthodoxy is Christianity, and Protestantism is also Christianity.'

Since 2002 Ryakhovsky has represented Protestants on the President's Council of the Russian Federation and in the Public Chamber, but he has never sought for himself or other Protestant leaders a place on any other council, while constantly pointing out how degraded within society is the position of Protestantism:

'We are not represented in the Interreligious Council of Russia, but I nevertheless greatly respect this body. Registered Protestant congregations are numerically second after the ROC, and no doubt the time will come when we will occupy the place within the social and religious life of the country which we deserve… Not long ago an important meeting was held with the head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR) when we discussed mission, proselytism, and our attitude to Christian values and the possibility of an official meeting between the leaders of Protestant churches and the Patriarch [then Patriarch Alexi II. *Ed*].'

Such a meeting did not take place, but encouraging noises were made by Kirill when head of DECR, and later as Patriarch when he invited Protestant representatives to his birthday celebrations.

The basic condition for 'dialogue' has been recognition of the ROC's dominant role. Ryakhovsky accepts this:

'Protestants form a highly active part of society. But I wish to emphasise that it is well-nigh impossible to do anything on a global scale without the active co-operation of the ROC, which today represents the majority in our society and plays a dominant role...'[13]

By 2000 Protestants held the future Patriarch Kirill in high regard: he was a striking public speaker, an evangelist in their eyes unlike most other Orthodox bishops. Kirill's criticism of Western liberal values, his condemnation of Western governments and churches for rejecting their Christian identity, entirely tallied with Protestant preaching in Baptist and Pentecostal churches. As Ryakhovsky observed:

'When I hear his [Kirill's] broadcasts, "A Pastor's Word", on Channel One I think that, were the vestments removed, before me sits a charismatic, wise and self-controlled Protestant preacher… Bishop Kirill has never been a nationalist or a narrow-minded patriot, he acknowledges the importance of Protestantism and its great influence on the world. This does him credit. He is also radical when it comes to defending Christian values. I agree with his speech at the 10th World Russian People's Coun-

> cil when he expressed his concern about the permissiveness to which liberalism also leads in the Christian churches.'[14]

Thanks to a distorted mental image of Orthodoxy, the impossibility of dialogue, and the all-pervading presence of Orthodoxy in the public mind, many Protestants began to create their own idea of 'Orthodoxy' and the 'Orthodox church'. Many pastors believed that one day reformation would come to the Moscow Patriarchate, whereupon Protestants and Orthodox would be able to preach the gospel to the Russian people together.

A first step towards this kind of reformation took place in the West European enclave of the Russian Federation – the Kaliningrad oblast – when in the spring 2005 the Contemporary Orthodox Church (COC) publicly announced its birth. The founders of this church were a Pentecostal from a long Pentecostal line and a former Orthodox who had served Kirill as a deacon. The COC distributed leaflets (a picture of Rublev's icon of the Trinity was on the front) calling people to convert to 'genuine' Orthodoxy. However, the Protestant leaders in the Kaliningrad oblast quickly condemned this new church, and in May 2005 the Coordinating Council of Evangelical Pastors, containing Baptist, Pentecostal and Charismatic representatives, sharply criticised the very possibility of 'contemporary Orthodoxy'. COC quite quickly ceased to exist but it reflected many of the secret hopes and spiritual needs of Protestant pastors. In 2005 this author interviewed some of its founders who by then did not advertise their association with this church, and came to the conclusion that COC had asked the questions which every Protestant pastor in Russia had posed: what was the ideal Christian church which could influence society and culture in Russia, and what could an Evangelical glean from the Orthodox tradition which was precious to every Russian heart? Dreams about the conversion of Russia to faith, in the opinion of the COC leaders, could only become reality if Protestants stopped trying to influence the whole of society, and instead used Orthodox teaching and forms of worship. They envisaged that the COC might one day introduce Eastern Rite Catholic liturgical practice. The liturgy would be in Russian and clergy would lead Charismatic services where there would be speaking in tongues and contemporary music. The COC leaders considered 'contemporary Orthodoxy' to be continuing the work of St Seraphim of Sarov who spoke about the acquisition of the Holy Spirit which, in their view, included speaking in tongues as practised by Pentecostals. The COC aimed to gather all that was best – from the liturgy, the Charismatic movement, the Jesus Prayer: 'our aim is to demonstrate a charismatically renewed Orthodoxy'.

Archbishop Sergei Zhuravlev, who in 2012 headed the Reformed Orthodox Church, also promoted what he called 'contemporary Evangelical Orthodoxy'. In the 1990s he was ordained as a priest in the ROC's Ryazan diocese, but in 1996 was excommunicated for becoming a Pentecostal. In 2001 he was ordained and 'anointed for apostolic service' with a large group of pastors at a 'God's Embassy' conference in Kiev. From 2002-2012 he was bishop of the reforming Apostolic Orthodox Church of Revival (Fr Gleb Yakunin belongs to this church). Today Zhuravlev, wearing brightly coloured Orthodox vestments, regularly speaks during the services and confer-

ences of Protestant churches (mostly Pentecostal) about Russian Orthodoxy, but he has not succeeded in leading an Orthodox revivalist movement; his outlook remains essentially Protestant with Orthodox trappings.

Zhuravlev's church was the reason behind a Pentecostal pastor, Igor Zyryanov's conversion to Orthodoxy, an event which hit the headlines. In 2010 Zyryanov and his congregation joined the ROC, and in 2011 he was ordained and served as a priest in the Irkutsk oblast. Then in 2012 he joined Zhuravlev's church:

Fr Igor Zyryanov with his wife

> 'I came to realise that over 2000 years, thousands and thousands of the cleverest and most spiritually advanced people had filled the Orthodox church, and all the questions which we naively thought had baffled the Orthodox, had long ago been faced and answered. Protestants have many myths in their heads about Orthodoxy and need to realise the truth.'[15]

Myths exist on both sides: Protestants consider the ROC to be an 'old wineskin' which hides the gospel from the people; the Orthodox view of Protestants is coloured by anti-sect phobia and xenophobia. Unfortunately the conversion of Igor Zyryanov did not help to start a dialogue; instead it was used to criticise Protestantism and the Charismatic movement. Yet many Protestants read the writings of Fr Alexander Men and Metropolitan Anthony Bloom with great interest and listen to the radio broadcasts of Patriarch Kirill; indeed some see an evangelical element in the words of Orthodoxy's most striking preachers.

Hopes for the Future

Official pronouncements will gradually lose their significance, while concrete action, the need for people to work together to improve their society, will become a basis for dialogue. Life itself will offer a way out of the current situation, when people start communicating with each other and Christian churches find they have common concerns.

The improvement in Orthodox-Lutheran relations, evident since early 2010, has been the most hopeful recent development. This has been achieved by Metropolitan Ilarion Alfeev, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's DECR since 2009, who looks upon the Lutherans as his brothers and treats the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) as a church. He visited the Lutheran Church of SS Peter and Paul in St Petersburg on 20 April 2013 for a performance of his St Matthew Passion oratorio, sung by a combined choir from the Moscow Protestant churches, and during his address emphasised the 'traditional' nature of Russian Lutheranism:

> 'We support your efforts to preserve the traditional Christian way of life in your congregations and families, and observe with sadness the processes which are taking place in some Western Protestant congregations where traditional Christian moral values are being diluted and

modified to suit secular moral standards. I do not want our Russian Lutherans to follow this path, and wish that the Christians in our Fatherland should work towards the embodiment in life of the Saviour's commandments which have to do with morality, family life and human relationships.'[16]

According to Archbishop Dietrich Brauer, head of ELC, Metropolitan Ilarion's words inspired Lutherans who did not expect such an expression of understanding and loyalty towards them.[17]

Left to right: *Metropolitan Ilarion Alfeev & Archbishop Dietrich Brauer*

The ROC, however, also understands that there are different traditions within the Lutheran Church. ELC is keen to support the dialogue of Lutheran churches in European countries with other churches, and is in communion with the Lutheran Church of America which adopts many controversial decisions unacceptable to ELC in Russia.

ELC has widened its cooperation with the ROC on social projects: on 29 January 2014 Archbishop Dietrich Brauer and the coordinator of diaconal service, Elena Kurmyshova, participated for the first time in a round table discussion on the exchange of information and inter-denominational cooperation in the field of social work. In St Petersburg, Volgograd, Samara and Moscow joint social work projects are already being set up by Lutherans and Orthodox.

However, Lutherans and other Protestants are not yet members of Russia's Inter-faith Council which has existed at the Moscow Patriarchate since 1998, and which only includes representatives from the 'traditional' religions under the chairmanship of Patriarch Kirill.[18] Occasionally the Christian Inter-denominational Consultative Committee (CICC) of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) and the Baltic States[19] meets, but this is usually just a formality. The CICC functions within the Moscow Patriarchate's DECR and since 1993 has brought together all 'foreign' churches functioning in Russia, the CIS and the Baltic States: Catholics, Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists, Lutherans, the Armenian Apostolic Church. Between the late 1990s and 2010 this committee has met a number of times to consider the importance of social work. The most significant meeting was the IVth Plenum in St Petersburg held on 26 February 2014 which was chaired by Metropolitan Ilarion, the Roman Catholic leader Archbishop Paolo Pezzi and Vitali Vlasenko, chairman of the Baptist church's foreign relations' department. The plenum noted the common view of the churches on family values, the

The first meeting of a large number of Protestant pastors (mostly Pentecostals) with Metropolitan Ilarion Alfeev (centre), head of DECR, in the Danilov Monastery, Moscow, 2009. Sergei Ryakhovsky stands on the Metropolitan's right.

upbringing of children, and on Ukraine with a call for peace and political reconciliation.

Since Metropolitan Ilarion has been head of DECR, Orthodox-Pentecostal relations have improved. This has attracted the criticism of the nationalist Russian news service 'The Russian Line'. Andrei Rogozyansky[20] attacked 'playing with pluralism' and warned the Moscow Patriarchate off any form of dialogue with non-Orthodox Christians; he also protested at the way Metropolitan Ilarion had replied to a letter written by the pastors of the Saratov Pentecostal 'Word of Life' church, who had accused the local Orthodox diocese and anti-sect agitators of inciting religious hatred. Ilarion in his letter described the Pentecostal pastors as 'brothers in Christ' and called them to dialogue with the Saratov diocese, to which he also wrote a similar letter.

The year 2009 was a favourable one for Protestants. In May Metropolitan Ilarion met representatives from the Baptist Union; on 5 June he received a delegation from the Russian Joint Union of Evangelical Christians (the Pentecostal central organisation); and in July he received all the heads of Protestant unions. On 5 October he received about 60 Protestant pastors, including Dmitri Taranov of the Saratov 'Word of Life' church, and on 15 October he chaired a meeting of CICC's secretariat. It is the first time that the Moscow Patriarchate's DECR has had such intensive contact with Protestants. Although these meetings have not significantly advanced dialogue they have nevertheless been a good familiarisation exercise.

At a regional level informal cooperation between different denominations and conversations between clergy

have become more frequent. For example, since 2008 the government of the Karelia Republic has organised inter-denominational seminars at Valaam[21] with the blessing of the Abbot, which Orthodox, Lutherans, Pentecostals and Muslims have attended. These seminars have been devoted to studying the role of the churches in promoting peace and concord and in helping immigrants to integrate into society. The government in Karelia has also supported conferences on creationism and family values, organised in Karelia's Orthodox diocese and attended by Lutherans and Pentecostals. Fr Vyacheslav Rasputin, head of the diocesan missionary department, actively cooperates with Protestants. Each year two large music festivals are held: 'Sound of Easter Bells' and an inter-denominational conference 'The Soul of Karelia' in which Orthodox, Lutheran, Pentecostal and Adventist church choirs participate. The openness of the Orthodox diocese and of its leader, Archbishop Manuil, not only to cooperation with Lutherans but also with Pentecostals, has irritated and provoked the criticism of many provincial Orthodoxy clergy. The Pentecostal leader in Karelia, Fyodor Akimenko thinks that Karelia is lucky with those it has deciding religious policy and with its Orthodox leader. For example, the ROC runs an Alpha Course with Fr Rasputin leading some of the classes. Pentecostals run a summer camp for disabled children with the help of Orthodox young people, who have been encouraged to do this by their parish clergy. Members of the Charismatic 'New Life' church attend seminars in the diocese on family values. Akimenko has often talked to Archbishop Manuil, who, he says, is a man of deep faith.

The personal contact between pastors and Orthodox clergy has helped dispel their false images of each other. The pastor of the 'New Generation' congregation in Arkhangel, Sergei Latyshev, emphasised, for example, that there are a number of progressive Orthodox priests in the area. He has often met Fr Feodosi from the Church of Alexander Nevsky in Archangel in whom he felt no animosity at all. Another Pentecostal pastor, Sergei Pestov, works with Fr Feodosi organising rock concerts (Orthodox and Protestants rock groups meet up at these concerts). In Volgograd, for the past decade, the Protestant community project 'Feel the Power of Change' has brought together a number of denominations in the area, and has become a test of tolerance and openness to dialogue on the part of Orthodox bishops. Metropolitan German of the Volgograd diocese and Metropolitan Sergi head of the Voronezh diocese have supported the project, unlike most other Orthodox dioceses (e.g. Archangel, Ufa, Krasnodar, Syktyvkar, Saratov, Ryazan, Lipetsk) which have contacted the Procuracy and asked for advertisements of the project to be removed and for the project's organisers to be prosecuted for 'religious recruitment'.

Conclusion

Although most in Russian society see Protestants as citizens like themselves and now understand that Protestant churches are trying to help people in need, mutual fear and misgivings still exist. According to Nikolai Sobolev, a Senior Presbyter in the Baptist church of Krasnodar:

> 'society usually accepts Baptists, but since the Baptist politician Turchinov[23] in Ukraine has

emerged some people have started treating us with suspicion and distrust, saying that all Baptists are like him. Our work is welcomed by the local administration which would not be against giving us more openings for our work, but, under pressure from the ROC, it has to reject our requests.'

The Krasnodar Baptist church for a long time helped in a number of children's homes, but the ROC made an agreement with the administration which stopped this work.

A surprising example of Orthodox-Protestant tolerance is to be found in the Volgograd oblast where Protestant pastors point to the local Cossack population who fully accept Evangelical believers. The pastor of a conservative Pentecostal congregation (which rejects registration) has established normal relations with the Cossacks in his area; many Cossack wives have become active members, and their husbands sometimes come to the church, and are 'secret learners'. 'Evangelisation is difficult because Cossacks drink, lead an immoral life while at the same time defending Orthodox Russia. The husbands of these Pentecostal wives say that all is fine in our church and that they would join if only there were also icons and crosses,' the pastor added.

Orthodox and Protestants often work together closely despite the continuing pronouncements of conservative fundamentalists on both sides about the enmity and incompatibility of these two Christian traditions. They live and work together, form friendships, become relatives and neighbours. In Russia they hold many views in common – on piety, patriotism, the role of Orthodoxy and state power – which have been formed over a century and a half of coexistence, both in times of peace and in times of persecution. The Protestant belief in democracy as a Christian value and Protestantism's connection with the West have not thwarted but rather have helped the Evangelicals to become an important part of Russian society and culture, and to interpret Russia's 'special road' in terms of European civilisation. In contrast to the culture of 'nationalistic' Orthodox, the Evangelical churches put forward the Bible, strict ethical norms and civil principles.

Protestants have learned to live within post-soviet secularised society. Against this background we should view the odd and sometimes crude aspects of Evangelical society, the hypocrisy and overzealousness of some Orthodox clergy and activists, their use of the secular authorities against religious minorities as part of 'defending Orthodoxy' – all behaviour which underpins the difficulties surrounding Orthodox-Protestant dialogue in the first quarter of the 21st century.

Gradually a natural hierarchy of relations with different Protestant traditions is evolving: closer relations with the Lutherans, a reserved friendliness towards conservative Baptists, while Orthodox relations with missionary Evangelical churches – with their emotional services, their gifts of the Spirit – are guarded and full of suspicion. As shown in practise, 'family' links are being established between the two confessions through the cooperation of congregations, through the dialogue of young people and through working together to help children, the homeless and drug addicts. Fulfilling the Christian commandments is the language which is the simplest and most easily understood.

1. The material used in this article comes from interviews with many church leaders which the author conducted during his field work (1998-2014) for Keston's Encyclopaedia project.
2. See: 'В Московском патриархате критикуют намерение "Сибирской лютеранской церкви" развивать миссионерскую работу в России', *Интерфакс-Религия*, 6 January 2005, http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=532; see also the interview with Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin, *Russian Review* http://www.keston.org.uk/_russianreview/edition12/04Litkin.html
3. On Roman Kon' see http://www.pravoslavie.ru/authors/1121.htm, and on Vitali Pitanov see http://stavroskrest.ru/Vitaliy_Pitanov
4. Patriarch Kirill's address to the Bishops' Council of the ROC (2 February 2011), http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1399993.html
5. Archpriest Dmitri Smirnov, formerly in charge of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for Relations with the Armed Forces, is now First Deputy Chairman of the Patriarchal Commission on Family and Maternal Assistance.
6. Website of *Религия и право*, 12 June 2012, http://religionip.ru/news/roman-lunkin-sektantskaya-obida-v-slovah-otca-dmitriya-smirnova-net-nikakih-ekstremistskih
7. See 'Специалисты по деструктивным сектам обеспокоены активизацией в России неопятидесятников', http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/9372.html
8. 'Кто заманивает туляков в секты?' // Газета «Слобода», 22-29 August 2007.
9. http://www.pravoslavie-nord.ru/996?pid=996&id=1&y=2014&m=1&d=12
10. http://www.murmanspas.ru/index.php?p=news&newsid=532&print=1
11. From Roman Lunkin's 2001 interview with Sergei Ryakhovsky. See R. Lunkin, 'Пятидесятничество и харизматическое движение', *Современная религиозная жизнь России. Опыт систематического описания*, ed. M. Bourdeaux, S.B. Filatov. M.: Логос, 2003, vol. II, pp. 241-387.
12. Fr Oleg Stenyaev attended a neo-pentecostal service on 22 October 2002, URL: http://rusk.ru/st.php?idar=307078
13. 'Пятидесятники не станут инструментом "оранжевой" революции', *Интерфакс-религия*, 13 June 2005, http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=interview&div=27
14. Portal-credo.ru, 23 November 2006, http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/print.php?act=authority&id=636
15. 'Рассказ бывшего протестанта', *Православие и мир*, 6 April 2010, http://www.pravmir.ru/rasskaz-byvshego-protestanta/
16. Website of the Moscow Patriarchate's Foreign Relations Department, 21 April 2013, https://mospat.ru/ru/2013/04/21/news83898/
17. Roman Lunkin's interview with Archbishop Dietrich Brauer, 12 March 2014.
18. See interreligious.ru
19. See http://www.xmkk.org/
20. See his article 'Досадная ошибка, которая может дорого стоить', http://rusk.ru/st.php?idar=114611
21. The Valaam Monastery was founded in the late 14th century (possibly earlier) on the Island of Valaam in Lake Ladoga.
22. Oleksandr Turchinov is currently chairman of the Ukrainian parliament.

***Roman Lunkin** is a member of Keston's Encyclopaedia team and on the staff of the Institute of Europe in Moscow.*

Romanian Orthodox Clergy and Communist Opposition? What the Keston Archive Reveals

by Ryan J. Voogt

It is conventionally asserted that in Communist Romania, Romanian Orthodox priests and bishops did little to combat or stand up to state intrusion into church affairs. A believer looking to the priesthood to criticise atheistic propaganda, resist the demolition of churches, or speak out against the harassment or imprisonment of clergy and believers, would probably have been disappointed. The leading historian of Romania Dennis Deletant writes, 'It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Orthodox believers were not well-served by their leaders.'[1] One Orthodox priest, however, stands out in the historiography and is often mentioned, Fr Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa,[2] but many would concur with Deletant that Calciu 'proved exceptional among Orthodox priests in his defence of Christian values' and that 'examples of Orthodox protest were isolated and inevitably invite comparison with the defiance of the Protestant groups.'[3]

This article's focus is not the leadership of the Romanian Orthodox Church, but the priests who more readily interacted with everyday believers. The position of the bishops was unique (though certainly not wholly separate from the situation of the clergy): either a bishopric formed an integral part of the state ministry of religion, or the state was an integral part of church administration. The bishops have sometimes been viewed as outright collaborators, who had a 'nickname' assigned to them by the secret police, while others have had their behaviour justified on the grounds that they were playing the role of 'double agent', doing the minimum for the state while protecting the institution of the church. But to make such judgements would require a detailed study of the life and work of each bishop – not a simple task.

Fr Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa

Turning to the clergy: were there Romanian Orthodox priests who regarded the state's treatment of religion as unacceptable and expressed their disagreement publicly? Are there aspects of Romanian Orthodoxy, such as theology or tradition, which influenced the response of clergy to state interference, and can these explain any significant differences between the actions of Orthodox clergy, as compared to those of clergy belonging to other denominations? Such questions are broad and complex enough to warrant a major study, and I do not presume to answer them satisfactorily here. Instead, I would like to suggest that, based on analysis of documents in the Keston Archive, Orthodox dissidence was more widespread than is usually assumed, but that it was not as close-knit as in other

denominations, due primarily to certain characteristics of the Romanian Orthodox Church's situation and tradition. Outspoken Orthodox priests were extremely isolated and vulnerable, as compared to the clergy of other denominations.

The Keston Archive has files of Romanian documents which include letters from Orthodox priests – sometimes addressed to a Romanian audience, sometimes to a Western one – as well as letters from laity in support of particular priests, and an especially large quantity of documents which relate to Fr Calciu-Dumitreasa. In general, clergy faced discipline for two main reasons: political statements or activities, and for serving with 'exceptional' zeal.

Fr Calciu became well-known in Romania for a series of addresses given to students in 1978 which the authorities found inflammatory, and for publicly protesting against the destruction of churches in Bucharest.[4] His subsequent arrest and harsh treatment also became known, leading to a group of five priests writing an open letter entitled 'Testimony of Faith' in 1981 to the Patriarch in support of Fr Calciu and against the church's authoritarian treatment of its priests and its submissiveness to the state.[5] All five priests – Viorel Dumitrescu, Liviu Negoiţă, Ionel Vinchici, Emeric Abruş-Cernat, and Cornel Avramescu – came from the area near Timişoara. All but Negoiţă were exiled to the US after suffering harsh treatment.

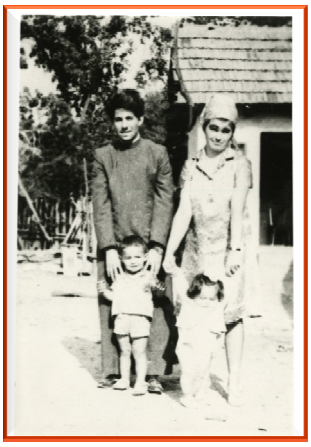
Fr Gheorghe Doru Gage, also from Timişoara, was another active priest who talked to his parishioners about Fr Calciu. In an open letter to Ceauşescu, he complained that it was impossible to lead an 'authentic religious life'.[6] He too was exiled to the US. Like Fr Gage, three of those who wrote the 'Testimony of Faith' – Dumitrescu, Negoiţă, and Avramescu – were young priests who shared a concern for the spiritual vitality of their communities. Dumitrescu was said to be full of 'apostolic zeal' and quickly entered into conflicts with the authorities. Negoiţă was also 'animated by the spirit of authentic Christian service' and, aware of the non-Christian practices and customs of his parish, struggled against them. An informer notified the authorities that Negoiţă had 'reformist ideas'; he was soon called in for a meeting with the bishop.[7]

Cornel Avramescu began running into problems in 1979; he was tried in 1982 and sentenced to imprisonment in 1983 (ultimately he was given a reprieve). He was accused by the church authorities of trying to create a schism within the Romanian Orthodox Church when he took a more active leadership role in a renewal movement within the church known as the Lord's Army; he was also accused of contacting 'reactionary elements' and becoming an agent of Radio Free Europe during a trip to West Germany in 1979. He suspected that this foreign trip was permitted in order to give the authorities material for spreading defamatory rumours against him and to prepare the ground for attacks on him upon his return. His true crimes were that he had promoted 'the gathering of the believers around the church and towards raising the level of religious knowledge.' He wrote that he had 'used every occasion to attract everyone to Christ.' Evidently his churches were well-attended; he had also permitted the banned Lord's Army to meet, considering 'their place' to be within the church. He had also travelled about the country, meeting believers and forming relationships with them (he kept in touch even when they had left Romania). People were told to have no contact with him, while

an inspector called 'Hofman' from the Department of Cults passed on information about him to the bishop who reprimanded him. An attempt to transfer him to another area was made, but the authorities there would not accept him. Some of his parishioners 'inundated' their bishop with letters, to no avail. In the end, in 1985, he was exiled to the US.[8]

Other clergy were also disciplined. Fr Radu Pamfil from the Timiş region was relocated in 1985, supposedly due to 'occult practices' performed during visits to former parishioners. Perhaps it was no coincidence that his problems began in April 1981 when 'Testimony of Faith' was written: he faced harassment, investigations, threats, surveillance, and slander from his superiors. Fr Remus Bipart was a friend of those who wrote 'Testimony of Faith' and was threatened with excommunication. He was accused of cooperating with the Lord's Army movement and of attracting people from outside his parish in the Hunedoara region. Another local priest and acquaintance of these others, Fr Marian Ştefănescu was also threatened with excommunication and removed from his parish because of his links with Greek-Catholics.[9]

In the Prahova region, Fr Stefan Gavrilă and Fr Leonida Pop stand out. In 1977 Pop was installed in a parish in Vălenii de Munte in Prahova: 'The young cleric began among other things – to the consternation of the local authorities – weekly lectures of religious education for children and teenagers. Because he did not want to give in to threats and blackmail, continuing the activity for which he had full legal right, he too suffered harsh treatment'[10] and went abroad shortly thereafter. Ştefan Gavrilă bravely cut himself off from the establishment by refusing to sign the annual 'declaration of collaboration' because he saw the 'diabolical policy of the state toward religion as well as of the leadership of [his] superiors in which [he] had to conduct [his] activity.'[11] He also attempted to organise religious education for his parishioners and wrote letters to the Archbishop and Patriarch, condemning atheist interference in church life.



Fr Stefan Gavrilă with his wife & children (30 September 1970)

In the Bucharest region Costica Maftei gained particular notoriety. Transferred from Prahova in 1977, he was given a new parish in the Bucharest region which had no church building. Thanks to the support of his parishioners, he worked hard to build one but faced harassment and constant obstacles. He wrote to Ceauşescu and Radio Free Europe, and a group of his parishioners wrote an open letter in his support. No longer able to endure the harassment against himself and his family, he was allowed to emigrate in 1978.

Two priests from Iaşi are mentioned in the Keston Archive: Gheorghe Zimisnicul, who recorded aspects of persecution in a diary and was wrongfully placed in a mental hospital a number of times until his death in 1974,[12] and Gheorghe Bistriceanu who attracted the attention of the authorities because

of his work with young people and the choirs which he organised. Two days before Christmas 1979, his church was vandalised: a ladder was used to reach the icons high up on the walls – all were smashed or stolen (one still had an axe embedded in it) while the Christmas tree was 'broken down' and excrement placed on the altar. Local officials were assumed to have had a hand in this.[13]

The above examples make clear that priests came into conflict with the political and religious authorities primarily for their connections with others, whether with particular groups like the Lord's Army, Greek-Catholics, or with other politically involved people, or even with ordinary citizens. Since many of these priests were exiled or transferred to other areas, it was clearly a goal of the authorities to isolate and prevent them from meeting other like-minded people.

Deletant is correct when he claims that 'examples of Orthodox protest were isolated.'[14] But 'isolated' should not be confused with 'absent'. Orthodox opposition very much existed, but it was not as close-knit as in other denominations. In 1977 six Romanian Protestant pastors and laymen wrote and broadcast a document demanding freedom of conscience and condemning the persecution in Romania; the following year they, with a larger group of mainly (though not exclusively) Baptist pastors and believers, established the Comitetul Creştin Român pentru Apărarea Libertăţii Religioase şi de Conştiinţă (the Christian Romanian Committee for the Defence of Religious Freedom and Conscience, often abbreviated as ALRC). A few Orthodox priests were also involved in the activity of ALRC, although not necessarily as members.

Non-Orthodox denominations in Romania sometimes complained that the Orthodox enjoyed certain privileges and suffered much less harassment. My research indicates that there was a 'minority mentality' which helped to strengthen ties within the minority churches. The Reformed Church was comprised almost exclusively of ethnic Hungarians and treated as a minority group on religious and ethnic grounds. Baptists, Pentecostals, and other so-called 'neo-Protestants' shared an outsider status even before the Communist period, while the Greek-Catholics had always been deeply disliked by the Romanian Orthodox Church: the survival of these denominations depended very much on their cohesion. The Catholics never received official recognition from the state. The 'minority' status was a kind of refuge to which the Orthodox did not have recourse. Moreover, the 'atheist' state would sometimes promote a Romanian nationalist message which awkwardly included elements of Romanian Orthodoxy. The Patriarch and bishops were often seen in the company of government leaders, travelling abroad, or hosting dignitaries. In whom could a dissenting Orthodox priest or layperson confidently confide? How could he or she complain while enjoying such a 'privileged' status? Nationalist-minded Romanian leaders – although ostensibly atheist according to ideology – to some degree regarded the Romanian Orthodox Church as part of what was considered 'Romanian'. It was even more threatening to the regime for an *Orthodox* priest to deviate from compliance or to speak out against the political-religious establishment, since he threatened to undermine the *quid pro quo* that the church and political leadership had established. By contrast, minority confessions could always be written off as 'outside the fold'; they

were outsiders, and outsiders tended to act according to their non-Romanian characteristics.

In 1986 Fr Alexandru Pop of Arad wrote about the isolation he and other Romanian Orthodox clergy felt in a letter forwarded to Keston. As a priest, he felt obliged to put himself at risk for the sake of his flock: 'The churches and cathedrals are at capacity, youth, students, and schoolchildren come to drink of the riches of the clean source of truth' and among them are 'those sickened by indoctrination'. Church leaders, he wrote, did not act in accordance with the views of most priests, many of whom were kept silent by 'terror and shock'. Along with some others like him who were born, raised, and trained under Communism, Pop wrote, 'when we are honest we have to admit that we are overcome by a feeling of loneliness. Some are afraid that they could be left alone in the face of a wave of repression.'[15] Fr Alexandru Pop thanked Fr Calciu for being willing to suffer so that he might show others the way and encourage people like him to take a stand. After expressing his longing for religious freedom, Fr Pop concluded, 'For the time being I am alone in signing this message, but there are many who would like to join me.'[16] Even into the late 1980s, attempts by Orthodox priests to join forces were successfully undermined by the heavy-handed combination of religious ministry officials, secret police agents, and church leaders, while Orthodox opposition seemed to be growing in response to the increasing number of cases of harassed or exiled priests.

Each religious faith has its own customs and mores according to which its people judge themselves and their leaders. Rather than beginning with the highly subjective categories of 'resistor', 'dissident', or 'collaborator' and then forcing historical subjects into one of these, let us consider how historical circumstances might have shaped the behaviour of Orthodox priests as compared to clergy of other denominations. Clergy of each denomination respect the teaching, traditions, and senior members of their church, and even during the Communist period such factors affected how clergy acted. In the case of the Romanian Orthodox Church, its structure of authority, its legacy of close cooperation with the government and its anti-schism rhetoric all worked to limit opposition to church-state cooperation and anti-religious propaganda. The highly centralised Orthodox Church expected submission, whereas the decentralised Protestant denominations were more difficult for the authorities to control; local clergy and congregations were not accustomed to accepting meekly the dictates of their church superiors. Also the Orthodox Church had a long history of working in partnership with state power, sometimes called '*symphonia'*, a concept diametrically opposed to the idea of church-state separation, and, unlike other denominations, it had no tradition of scepticism towards state power.[17] The Orthodox Church was highly sensitive to any schism or sectarian movement, claiming to be the 'one true church' from which all others had deviated. Its daily practice also mitigated against innovation. The liturgy was standardised, limiting free expression, and preaching was not emphasised in Orthodox clergy training. The liturgy included a prayer for the government in power (some clergy expressed their opposition by refusing to pray for Ceauşescu or the Socialist Republic of Romania). The Orthodox emphasised participation in the sacraments over biblical teaching on morality which led some to see a bifurcation in the Orthodox

Church: a person, on the one hand, might encounter the divine mystically through the sacraments, and on the other consider Christian teaching on daily living to be secondary.

The evidence provided by the documents in the Keston Archive point strongly towards the view that Romanian Orthodox priests were not unlike the clergy of other denominations: a good number of them acted or spoke in ways which did not conform to state requirements; their battle was an uphill one and made more difficult by the lack of any obvious source of community support. Let this not be the final word on the matter, but rather an invitation to further study on how the blend of religious tradition and state action, particular to each denomination, shaped the kind of choices made by believers and clergy.

---

1. Dennis Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (Armonk N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), p.232.
2. For a brief introduction to the life of Fr Calciu, see the obituary written by Michael Bourdeaux, 'Father Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa' *The Guardian*, 10 January 2007, http://www.theguardian.com/news/2007/jan/10/guardianobituaries.religion. Accessed 3 December 2013.
3. Deletant, *loc.cit*.
4. It is most likely that a few supporters of Calciu notified a broadcaster such as Radio Free Europe, and from there sympathetic priests found out. Calciu's sermons were also circulated in samizdat.
5. 'Romanian Orthodox Priests Criticise Hierarchy,'*Keston News Service* no. 136, 5 November 1981, pp.3–4.
6. Letter from Comitetul Creştin Român ALRC, dated 10 September 1980. Archive file <RO/Ort>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Cornel Avrămescu, unpublished letter 'To leaders of Western countries'. Archive file <RO/Ort/LA 18s>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
9. 'Romanian Orthodox Priests under Pressure,' *Keston News Service* no. 249, 1 May 1986, p.9.
10. Leonida Pop, 'Persecuţia Bisericii Ortodoxe din România', received by Keston 5 November 1978. Archive File <RO/Ort/12>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
11. Stefan Gavrilă, Autobiographical letter, undated, but probably 1974, Archive File <RO/Ort/8>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
12. 'Persecuţia Bisericii Ortodoxe din România', received 5 November 1978. Archive file <RO/Ort/12>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
13. *Keston News Service*, 22 August 1980. Archive file <RO/Ort/6/13.29> Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
14. Deletant, *op.cit., p.*232.
15. Alexandru Pop, open letter to Fr Calciu, dated 19 February1986. Archive file <RO/Ort/11/4>, Keston Archive and Library, Baylor University.
16. 'Romanian Priest's Appeal', *Keston News Service* no. 251, 29 May 1986, pp.14–15.
17. Lucian Leuştean, *Orthodoxy and the Cold War: Religion and Political Power in Romania, 1947-65* (Basingstoke, England; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Leuştean argues that the cooperation between the Orthodox Church and the state was not a phenomenon unique to the Communist period. The two bodies cooperated, he argues, in exercising authority over society and promoting a nationalist image of Romania.

Ryan J. Voogt *is currently a PhD candidate in history at the University of Kentucky. He was given a Keston scholarship in 2013 and was recently awarded a US Fulbright grant to complete his dissertation research in Romania in 2015.*

Letter to the Chairman from Alexander Ogorodnikov

Alexander Ogorodnikov was imprisoned in the Gulag from 1978-87 for demanding greater religious freedom after founding a network of study groups – all branches of what became known as the Christian Seminar – in different parts of the Soviet Union for people who were searching for Christian faith. This was an extraordinary feat in a political system which only allowed the expression of religious faith within a tightly controlled structure, within official churches which were strictly limited by Stalinist laws and watched closely by the government's Council for Religious Affairs. Ogorodnikov and other Russian Orthodox dissidents active under Khrushchev and Brezhnev still await a serious historical study. Unlike the persecution of the church under Stalin, the period of Russian Orthodox Church history with which Ogorodnikov was so closely involved – the 1960s, 1970s up to the 1988 dramatic change in Communist Party policy towards religion under Gorbachev – is ignored in most official histories published by the Moscow Patriarchate, and Ogorodnikov's role airbrushed out. Ed.

I am very grateful to Keston's Council and to you for giving me a grant to work for four weeks in the archive at the Keston Center at Baylor University. From my limited experience I think the Keston Archive is particularly rich in documents on the persecution of Christians and other believers in the USSR and other Warsaw Pact countries.

The archive for me is fundamentally important – it is linked with my life. I had a somewhat distant conception of the archive. But when I worked in it I was simply bowled over by the unexpected abundance of documents, first-hand accounts and the immense amount of samizdat, letters, Soviet press cuttings, articles from the Western press which reflected the development of religious revival and spiritual resistance, of undercover human rights and religious activity. The unique importance of the archive for me and, I would suggest for other participants in the religious and human rights movement, as for today's researchers into this subject, is that part of the material I discovered – articles and documents – **exists only in the Keston Archive** [*Ogorodnikov's emphasis*. Ed.]. In the USSR this material, these documents and articles, were confiscated by the KGB. When I asked to have these documents returned to me, the KGB told me in 1992 that 'the confiscated material as well as dozens of volumes containing investigative reports had been destroyed'. When I searched for these lost documents and even photographs among my friends and acquaintances I discovered a sad situation too: fearful of searches or of being accused by the KGB of criminal culpability or being subjected to extra-judicial persecution, those people who were entrusted with preserving samizdat in secret had destroyed it all. I was deeply dismayed by what had happened. An important part of our unrecorded history had been destroyed. And oh what a joy to find these lost documents in the Keston Archive!

This material, preserved only thanks to the efforts, often fraught with danger, of Keston volunteers and staff members, will help us to establish an authentic history of Russia and the Soviet Union, a history showing how naked faith withstood the unprecedented onslaught of persecution, and how generations, fed from birth on godlessness, nurtured by the Komsomol on atheism and deprived of the chance to hear about Christ, managed to find faith and to discover the Good News despite Marxist doctrine.

Ogorodnikov, Moscow March 2013

Thanks to the Keston Archive I was able to put together an almost complete set (except for issue No 9) of the journal, *The Bulletin of the Christian Community* (*BCC*) which I published after being freed from prison. The whole *BCC* archive and all *BCC* issues were confiscated in November 1989 by unidentified people during a raid on the apartment which contained the *BCC*'s editorial office. Keston's founder Dr Michael Bourdeaux highly valued our publication and called it 'an encyclopaedia of religious life in the USSR'. For the first time not only material on the Russian Orthodox Church was published, but a broad picture of Christian and religious life in the USSR at that time was presented in *BCC*. This included the discovery of religious movements in the Baltic States, in Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia. *BCC* began a campaign for the legalisation of the Greek Catholic Church in Western Ukraine and publicised the Protestants' struggle for freedom and the right to emigrate. I supported this broad ecumenical approach and analysis, for which I was severely criticised by some Russian Orthodox who quarrelled with me over my ecumenical stance. The influence of *BCC* was so great that the KGB, via its agent Sergei Markus, began to distribute a so-called 'samizdat journal, *The Word*', in order to discredit me and to accuse me – as it were 'in the name of the Orthodox' – of extremism and of betraying Orthodoxy.

Now, thanks to the Keston Archive, I am able to respond to the main Russian libraries which have requested copies of *BCC* for their readers and researchers. The archive has also helped me realise the degree of understanding and the strength of Western Christian public opinion and of the world press in response to our appeals, with its articles about the religious revival and its letters in defence of the persecuted and in defence of faith.

During my search for documents I received constant and invaluable help from Larisa Seago, the archivist, who is dedicated to her work and feels deeply about the archive's future. Please would you convey my thanks for all her help! I would also like to mention the great kindness of the archive's Director, Kathy Hillman, as well as the personal concern and care which her husband, John Hillman, showed me.

I spent the whole month working in the archive, without missing a day, refusing invitations to speak in New York and at the St Tikhon Seminary. One

evening I was even allowed to work through until 1am, taking advantage of the fact that some material had been handed over to the University library for one day. In spite of such intensive work I unfortunately (or rather thanks to there being so much material) did not manage to complete my work. I would very much like to work again in the archive at the Keston Center. How many documents and pieces of material remain which I did not have time to find and scan? I think that such a unique archive should not limit itself to what was found and collected in the past. It should continue to collect documents and material which will establish an objective picture of religious and human rights movements and initiatives. This archive does honour to Baylor University.

Once again from the bottom of my heart I thank Keston's Council and the Chairman for the opportunity to work in the archive at the Keston Center, and to acquire documents which were lost or destroyed during the persecution under totalitarianism.

Alexander Ogorodnikov
5th June 2014

Michael Bourdeaux writes:

We are used, I think, to hearing our visiting students sing the praises of the rich – indeed unique – resources housed in our archive at Baylor University. However, Alexander Ogorodnikov's report (I will call him Sasha) is of special interest for more than one reason.

First, Sasha is not your regular student. He is a long-term dissident (even, one may say, in Putin's Russia) whose decades of suffering persecution have given him a special moral authority. No one quite like him has ever visited the archive before. He pays rich tribute to the overall wealth of information of all sorts it contains. During my 30 years as Director of Keston, I encouraged our staff to collect and file information of the widest possible relevance to religion: not only the obvious resource of original documents, but also cuttings from the Soviet atheist press, Western reactions to instances of persecution and even travellers' tales, however subjective and sometimes ill-informed (even biased) these sometimes turned out to be. Our detractors said we were only interested in persecution. That was never true: from the beginning, for instance, we tried to report on official Soviet policy towards religion and to quote the ways in which Russian church leaders sometimes went along with it. Sasha's report on the archive abundantly endorses what we were doing.

Second – and movingly – Sasha discovered part of his own life-history there. Documents, of which he thought no copies existed and which he lost long ago due to the frequent KGB raids and confiscation of his work, were somehow preserved in copies in the Keston Archive. Sasha's report hints at his profound psychological experience in 'discovering' the preservation of some essential parts of his own past.

Third, Sasha's report pays tribute to the depth of understanding in the West, especially in Keston circles, of the real situation in the Soviet Union. This is something which is still rarely acknowledged by the world at large – and even denied, as I know from my personal experience, by those in high office in the Moscow Patriarchate. I hope Sasha's report will circulate in Russia and stimulate much further research interest there.

Comment

'Religious Persecution in Albania: the Greek Minority and Orthodoxy', *Keston Newsletter* No 19, 2014, pp.1-9

Maria Panayiotou must be commended for reminding us of the appalling treatment of believers by Enver Hoxha's regime, and drawing our attention to the current tensions fomented by (imported!) Islamic fundamentalists, whose whole ethos is so foreign to the traditional local Muslim communities. However, I have reservations since she gives the impression that the majority of Orthodox in Albania are Greek, which is by no means the case. Official statistics, as in the 2011 national census which gave the Orthodox only 6.75%, are misleading, and have been challenged by the Albanian Orthodox Church (AOC), which is in the best position to know, by the Council of Europe and the WCC. The AOC estimate of its members is 500,000.[1] There is certainly a considerable Greek constituent, with Gjirokastr recognised as a mainly Greek diocese. The exact size of the minority has long been contested; certainly it shrank under Communist pressure when Greek parents had to give their children Albanian names, when the adjacent Greek diocese of Northern Epirus took up their cause and Radio Vlorina broadcast the liturgy, naturally in Greek, from over the border. It briefly escalated again in 1991 when Greeks became eligible for food parcels from Greece as well as work permits in the 'mother' country! In 1991 the Greek Orthodox bishop in Vienna, Michael Staikos, told Kathpress that roughly 250,000 of the then estimated 400,000 Orthodox were Greek.[2] When Fr Arthur, representing the Albanian diocese queried Keston on this figure, Vanessa Townsend suggested that 60,000 to 80,000 was probably nearer the mark. Miranda Vickers, author of *The Albanians: a Modern History*, (2008) reckoned 250,000 to 300,000 back in 1991. An estimate in 2005 was 215,000. Numbers had apparently dwindled; it was reported that 80% had emigrated, but also that many had returned.[3] That could reflect the deteriorating economic situation in Greece. The AOC has had an extremely fractured history, partly stemming from the historically fraught relationship between Albanians and Greeks. Under Turkish rule in the Balkans, in this very backward region, the Orthodox Church was run by Greeks who also provided an excellent network of parish schools but where all instruction was in Greek. When after 1878-1880 the weakened Porte relaxed its ban on the use of Albanian a number of Albanian schools sprang up, only to be anathematised by Philaretos, Archbishop of Kastoria, in 1892, and in response the Porte shut them down. Things came to a head when in 1905 the priest and poet Kristo Negovani was murdered by Greek chauvinists after he introduced the Albanian language in the liturgy for the first time. It was only during the brief interwar independence under a newly autonomous AOC that, largely through the American born scholar and bishop, Fan Noli, the vernacular liturgy was properly authorised.[4] In today's revived church, each of the 909 parishes can opt for either language and, interestingly, the Greek used is modern—the only Greek church so far to opt for that! The Archbishop, Anastasios,

widely regarded as one of the most outstanding and spiritual Orthodox hierarchs around today, is Greek. With his invaluable experience of mission work in East Africa, he was the ideal person to guide and lead the rebuilding of a shattered church. It was tragic that he encountered such opposition. Clans (and deadly feuds) had long riddled and dominated Albanian society. Under Hoxha, each religious, national and linguistic group (northern Gheg, central and southern Tosk; Albanian and Greek; Catholic and Orthodox; Muslim Sunni and the syncretic Bektashi) drew closer in on itself as a means of self protection. In 1980 Albanian sociologists complained that 96% of young Albanians married within the same religious background, reversing a previous trend.[5] With the escalation of fundamentalist Islam there is a widespread belief that Orthodoxy is linked with conspiracy theories, in which identifying with Greek expansionist plans would classify them as potential enemies of the state. In parts of Albania the term Greek is used pejoratively for Orthodox Albanian communities. No information on subsequent attacks by fundamentalists later than 1996 was provided, when in fact in 1998-1999 over ten more churches and monasteries were destroyed or set on fire, without the police taking any action. A Greek church in Dervican was profaned.[6] Attacks became more common in reprisal after the government expelled an extremist mufti from Iraq in 1999; subsequently it expelled several dozen more 'terrorists'.[7] More recently Vickers reported that Albania's traditional tolerance within its religious communities and within Islam itself was under threat; in 2003 Sali Tivari, a prominent leader known for his attempts to introduce a policy of moderation in his community, was murdered, probably by a Salafi anti-modernist faction member. In 2005 Salafis issued death threats against two other moderate leaders. This is completely alien to the Albanian religious outlook where even syncretism was widely accepted especially by the leading Islamic community, the Bektashi, who played a key role in promoting Albanian independence. I would welcome any further information. Maria Panayiotou quotes from Jim Forrest's *The Resurrection of the Church in Albania*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2002. I would also highly commend this as essential reading on this topic—a truly inspiring account of the lives of individual Orthodox under persecution.

Janice Broun

---

1. Albanian Orthodox Church web site.
2. Kathpress, Vienna, 8 February 1991 and comment by Keston.
3. Wikipedia article on Greeks in Albania.
4. 'Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century,' (Ed) Pedro Ramet, pp.150-154, Ramet.
5. 'Conscience and Captivity,' Janice Broun, Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington, 1988, p. 39.
6. *Service Orthodoxe de Presse* 141,1999 and 266, 202.
7. 'Albania struggles for its balance,' Miranda Vickers, *Church Times* (date unknown).

Diary Extracts:
Field Trip to South-West Siberia

by Xenia Dennen

The author with Fr Gennadi Knyazev & volunteers

In November 2013 the Encyclopaedia team – Sergei Filatov, Roman Lunkin and I – flew overnight from Moscow to Kemerovo in south-west Siberia (the Kuzbass) arriving early in the morning, and drove straight to our hotel overlooking the river Tom in a taxi which, to my surprise, was playing *Songs from the Auvergne* and Vivaldi's *Winter* from his *Seasons*! I had expected lots of snow, but there was none and I felt a bit of a fool in my mother's 1940s fur coat and my hi-tech snow boots from Canada.

The Kuzbass began to be developed in the 1930s and the Kemerovo oblast was created in 1943. The size of the population grew dramatically, composed chiefly of those who were forced to live there, exiled or as part of the Gulag work force; they included many Protestants, German Lutherans, Baptists, and Ukrainian Greek Catholics. A large proportion worked in the mines—where you were lucky to survive. Life in Kuzbass was particularly tough under Soviet rule, yet it was also one of the most religious areas in Siberia where the authorities turned a blind eye to unregistered religious groups. Miners were a powerful force whom the authorities were reluctant to challenge.

After breakfast Roman went off to the local administration to talk to the official dealing with religion while Sergei rang the Diocesan Administration. We were encouraged to contact Fr Gennadi Knyazev, in charge of social work in the diocese, and Fr Sergi Semikov who worked in the youth department.

Fr Gennadi could see us straight away in the chapel of St Panteliemon next to a local hospital, where we were led up a small winding staircase by a young man, a former drug addict, to Fr Gennadi's office. Sixteen groups of women (318 in total), he said, worked in the oblast, helping in hospitals or in drug rehab centres. All these groups were the creation of individuals who were 'remarkable people'; 'nothing would have happened without them'. Each parish had a social worker on its staff supported by many volunteers: home visits were regularly carried out. 'We don't impose ourselves—we respond to need and requests for help; we do not run a crusade.'

When we arrived at Kemerovo's Znamensky Cathedral (built 1997 -98) to see young Fr Sergi Semikov we found he was busy performing a *panikhida*, so we sat at the back waiting. Eventually he showed us into an area to the side of the sanctuary behind the iconostasis. He ran a troupe of Orthodox scouts, he said, which had been functioning in many of the diocese's parishes since 2004. His youth department also organised volleyball matches and taught martial arts. In the summer he ran children's camps for about 300 children, and in many parts of the diocese youth clubs had been set up; student dances were organised on St Tatyana's Day. Youth groups grew through personal contact, he added: young people who attended church drew in their pagan friends.

Left to right: *Xenia, Fr Pawel, Sergei & Fr Tony*

By the evening snow was falling and it had begun to freeze. As we walked in search of a restaurant I noticed young people pushing prams along the esplanade beside the river Tom. The statue of Lenin in the central square rose up in front of some Christmas trees, decorated with cascading white lights; his outstretched arm seemed to point towards them, inviting his anti-religious followers perhaps to think again and turn their minds to something less stultifying than Communist ideology.

On our last day in Kemerovo Sergei and I had an appointment at the Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, built in 2009. This was an interesting modern structure and seemed to have stood up better to the harsh climate than the Catholic cathedral in Irkutsk where, I remembered, the stonework was crumbling away. We rang the bell at a side entrance and were welcomed in by Fr Paweł Mroczek and an Irish priest Fr Tony Branigan. They showed us the cathedral with its stained glass window of St Varvara, 'the patron saint of miners' they said, and then sat us down in a side room and began to tell us about Catholic life in the area. A Greek Catholic priest from Ukraine, Fr Vasili Rudka, had arrived in 1958 and had taken care of a community of exiled Germans and exiled Ukrainian miners, sent in 1959 to Prokop'evsk not far from Kemerovo. Today there were 14 Catholic congregations in Kuzbass. Fr Paweł visited groups in the north, nearly 300km away. On Sundays the cathedral usually had a congregation of about 60-80 and mass was celebrated every day (all services were in Russian). Three nuns were on the staff at the cathedral: they ran catechism classes, visited the poor and collected clothes to distribute to those in need. Fr Paweł and Fr Tony confirmed that relations between Catholics and Orthodox were good, mentioning that a Catholic bishop from Italy had been allowed to stand within the sanctuary at the Znamensky Cathedral, wearing his vestments.

After this meeting it was time to catch a bus to Novokuznetsk, three

hours away. We went through miles of uninhabited steppe covered in light powdery snow and along excellent roads; the feathery branches of birch trees broke up the undulating countryside. A few smoking chimneys were the only sign I could see of any Kuzbass mines. Many houses were being built in a village near Novokuznetsk but I could see no lights on. Once at the bus station we set off through the crowds to find our hotel.

Fr Gladkov with his Armenian wife

The next day we interviewed a Greek Catholic priest, Fr Pavel Gladkov, who looked after two congregations, a Roman Catholic and a Greek Catholic one. His church, designed by a local architect and completed in 2007, combined Orthodox elements with western Gothic-shaped arches. Inside a moveable altar was placed in front of the iconostasis for the Catholic mass and moved to one side for the Greek Catholic liturgy. All members of his two congregations spoke Russian, although some had Polish or German roots. I discovered that he had been a top gymnast; following a serious physical injury he had fallen into despair, he said, and then joined a punk group. One day he visited a Catholic church, dressed in punk attire and with outlandish hair, whereupon to his amazement a woman at the church had taken him by the hand and had said she would like him to be her '*synok*' (son). The warmth of the welcome overwhelmed him. Thereafter he began to put his life together again.

In the evening Roman told us about his interviews with Baptists and Pentecostals. The former, whose congregations were much smaller, faced more difficulties from the local authorities than did the Pentecostals, who had congregations of over a thousand and were integrated into the community and influential. Baptists had problems obtaining a building for their services and it was difficult to get permission for public events, whereas the Pentecostals were able to organise charity football matches: sometimes teams were made up of teenagers from state homes and members of a Pentecostal congregation. Spectators were asked to make donations to Pentecostal social work projects. Before the Revolution many Kuzbass miners had been Baptists and during perestroika had built a prayer house in Kemerovo for a congregation of about 400. The Kemerovo branch of the Russian Baptist Union now had 25 churches in the oblast. One of the largest groups (about 300 members) was in Novokuznetsk where the pastor admitted to Roman that the local authorities were far from friendly.

To celebrate on our last evening we had supper in an Italian restaurant. We walked a long way down snow-covered avenues lined with silver birches. The traffic stopped obediently at road crossings, families were out walking their children and dogs. Roman skated along on his thin flat-soled shoes which seemed quite unsuitable for the conditions. But of course there had been no snow when we arrived. He had learnt figure skating as a teenager, so slid along expertly unlike me in my hefty boots which, I'm glad to say, gripped the ground firmly.

Keston AGM

Saturday 1st November 2014 at 12 noon

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

12 noon	AGM
12.45pm	Lunch
2.00pm	Talk by the Very Revd John Arnold: 'Cold War and Warm Peace – The Visit of Archbishop Michael Ramsey to the GDR'
3.00pm	Talk by Mark Hurst: 'The Birth of the Last Utopia: Is Keston Really a "human rights" Group?'
4.00pm	Talk by John Eibner: 'The Moscow Patriarchate and the Persecuted Church in the Middle east: Reflections on the Past, Present and Future'
5.00pm	Tea

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

Keston Institute
PO Box 752, Oxford OX1 9QF
administrator@keston.org.uk www.keston.org.uk