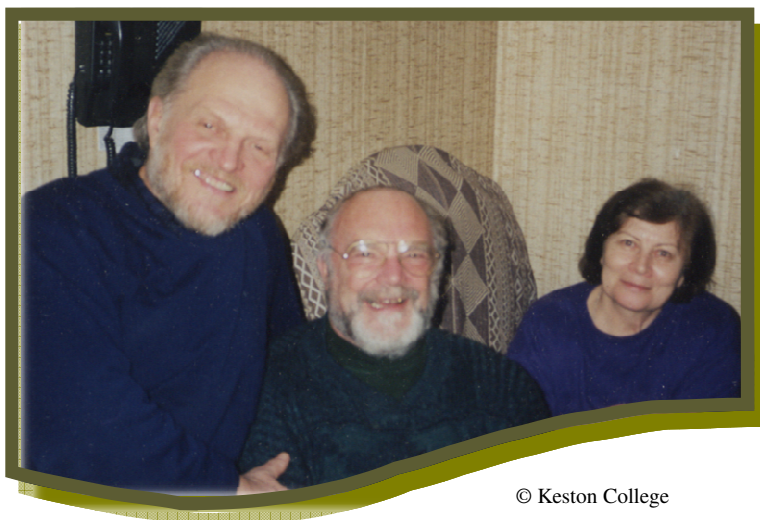


Keston Newsletter

No. 21, 2015



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Michael Bourdeaux sits between Fr Gleb Yakunin & Iraida, Fr Gleb's wife, Moscow, June 1988

Fr Gleb Yakunin Conscience of the Russian Church

by Michael Bourdeaux

The origins of Keston are closely bound to the life of Fr Gleb Yakunin, who died last Christmas Day, aged 80. When I was a student in Moscow (1959-1960), I began to hear about a new period of persecution which Nikita Khrushchev was unleashing on the Russian Orthodox Church – indeed, on all believers. It was not, then, a misnomer to refer to the ‘Church of Silence’. That such a name soon became the opposite of the truth was due in no small measure to Fr Gleb Yakunin.

In 1965, Fr Gleb was a young priest serving in a church in the Moscow region. Energetic, organised and fiercely protective of his church, Fr Gleb

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began to learn of the savagery of the persecution, particularly in the provinces. Believers were coming to Moscow bearing petitions to the Soviet government.



Fr Gleb Yakunin © Keston College

With a fellow-priest, Fr Nikolai Eshliman, Fr Gleb became known as someone who would act on this information from around the regions. The two weaved this information systematically into two lengthy and detailed open letters, one to the Soviet government, the other calling on Patriarch Alexi I, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, to be more active in protecting it. They furnished hundreds of examples and wrote:

‘The mass closure of churches, a campaign instigated from above, has created an atmosphere of anti-religious fanaticism which has led to the barbaric destruction of a large number of superb and unique works of art.’

To this day, these documents remain an unsurpassed record of a shameful period in Russian history, not least because senior clerics sought to conceal the persecution. Curiously, even now when the Moscow Patriarchate is free to publish what it wants, they have not written any detailed account of this period and the opposition to the persecution. In-

deed, the church punished the priests for their actions and have never apologised for their shameful conduct.

Smuggled out, this information resounded around the world and undoubtedly persuaded Khrushchev’s successors to discontinue the church closures. Receiving a copy of this extensive information was one of the key factors which persuaded me to give up the parish work in which I was then involved and to found what would eventually be called Keston College in 1969. For me, what the two priests had written was inspirational, but the world at large was too involved with the hopes

that the USSR was becoming a better place and did not want to hear the reverse side of the picture. I knew there had to be follow-up to these letters and began collecting every scrap of information which came my way – a little easier in the aftermath to the publication of my first book, *Opium of the People*, which first documented the persecution in English.

Fr Gleb Yakunin, however, became an isolated figure. Those who had stood with him largely abandoned him. The punishment meted out to him came not from the KGB, but from Patriarch Alexi (doubtless at the state’s instigation), who barred him from exercising his priesthood. However, for those in the West who wanted to see a better Russia, one without religious persecution, Fr Gleb became an inspirational figure. In Keston’s annals, his name continued to appear frequently.

In 1976 another letter he wrote led to one of the most scandalous episodes in the history of the World Council of Churches (WCC). In the early 1970s the

Soviet authorities were systematically imprisoning dissidents, including religious leaders. The previous year the Soviet government had co-signed the Helsinki Accords, which gave the countries of Europe and North America the right to monitor each others' human rights performance. Fr Gleb Yakunin, now in his forties, responded by establishing a Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights. Many Christians and the Jewish community collaborated with him, sending information which he systematically collected.



Fr Gleb as a dissident during the Soviet period
© Keston College

He sent an appeal to the Fifth General Assembly of the WCC in Nairobi, begging the worldwide ecumenical fellowship to act on behalf of the persecuted church. The African editors of the Assembly's daily newspaper, unaware of the censorship which the Russian delegates exercised over the Assembly's agenda, caused a furore by printing the text of Yakunin's appeal. A rushed resolution expressed solidarity with the persecuted, but, reacting in horror, the organisers forced the Assembly to rescind it, promising to instate a full inquiry into the facts which Yakunin had presented – but of course later Communist pressure prevented this from happening.

Wrongly believing that he now had world Christian opinion behind him, Yakunin increased his efforts. His energy was prodigious. He collected more than 400 samizdat appeals, totalling some 3,000 pages, from the whole religious spectrum, most of which he

sent abroad, to be systematically collected and many published by Keston. The KGB arrested him on 1 November 1979. At his trial, the sentence was ten years, five to be served in a camp, the rest in exile. Eight years into this, with Mikhail Gorbachev at the height of his *perestroika* policy, he was released.

As a child, Gleb had been severely disadvantaged: his father came from an aristocratic background and died of starvation during World War II, when the boy was ten. Gleb inherited something of his father's musical talent and learned the clarinet and the saxophone. His mother inculcated the Christian faith in him, but he abandoned it when he was 15, only to rediscover it while a biology student in Irkutsk, Siberia, under the influence of his contemporary, Alexander Men', who was to become the leading theologian of the Russian Orthodox Church until his murder in 1990.

Fr Gleb's life followed a different course. Whereas Fr Men' graduated from the Leningrad Theological Seminary and developed a low-profile teaching ministry, concentrating on a small inner circle of disciples (until becoming a national figure during the Gorbachev reforms), Yakunin was always more confrontational. He attended the Moscow Theological Seminary, but did not stay the course. He had borrowed a book by the philosopher Berdyaev from the library when the KGB came to extirpate such works from the shelves; Yakunin refused to give it up, saying he had lost it, after which he was expelled. He went on to

study privately, secured his ordination and served in a church near Moscow.

The struggle for religious freedom remained at the top of his agenda until his arrest in 1979. From jail he smuggled out letters, particularly asserting his legal right to keep his Bible which had been confiscated. Ultimately Gorbachev sought to correct the mistakes of the past by releasing imprisoned dissidents, including Fr Gleb in 1987.

1988 was a remarkable year, with the nationwide celebrations marking the millennium of the conversion of ancient Rus' in 988. During these June weeks Fr Gleb and his wife, Iraida, whom he had married in 1961, held open house for religious dissidents, inviting foreign Christian leaders in Moscow for the events to visit his flat and learn the real truth about the persecution of the past 60 years, not the sanitised version as presented by the Moscow Patriarchate. Meeting him face to face for the first time, after having written about him for more than 20 years, was a humbling experience for me.

Fr Gleb at this point might have expected a triumphal reinstatement into the ranks of the Russian church, or an award of the Nobel peace prize, but neither was forthcoming. Ill-advisedly, the church failed to find a role for him. Had it done so, this would have absorbed some of his considerable energies. By contrast, he began to follow a more overtly political line and was elected to the Duma representing the Democratic Russia party. He headed a short-lived commission investigating KGB infiltration into the life of the church. This gave him brief but restricted access to the state archives. Here he found in the records of the Council for Religious Affairs, the government body

that controlled the life of the church, incontrovertible evidence that exposed the collaboration of church leaders with the KGB, including that of the new Patriarch, Alexi II. He was not permitted to take photocopies, but made handwritten notes, which he subsequently copied and passed to Keston's Jane Ellis, who published them in our journal *RCL*. This was a bridge too far for the Moscow Patriarchate, which wrought vengeance on him by defrocking him, on the grounds that clergy were not permitted to stand for election to political office. There was hypocrisy in this, as the previous Patriarch, Pimen, had been a member of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and his successor would be a Deputy also.

As the Moscow Patriarchate regained its leading position in Russian society, Fr Gleb's influence declined, but he continued to subject the leading hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church to his scrutiny. Late in life he became the severest critic of the new 'symphony' of church and state as established between President Putin and the current Patriarch, Kirill. He supported the feminist group Pussy Riot when they demonstrated against this symbiosis and received a jail sentence. He became a priest in the independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church, later transferring to the uncanonical Apostolic Orthodox Church.

Mental toughness predominated in his personal relationships, but he relaxed with friends and, when able to travel in 1989, enjoyed playing truant from a conference in Manila to go white-water rafting with me. Here was a man freed from constraint, excellent company and revelling in his freedom. Ten years later we were jointly honoured on the same day in Vilnius by the award of a Lithuanian 'knighthood'.

The Moscow Patriarchate and the Persecuted Church in the Middle East

by John Eibner

The genesis of this talk goes back to a conversation that I had in June 2013 with the former President of Lebanon, Amine Gemayel, while motoring up the M40 to a conference at St Antony's, Oxford. In January 2011, just as the first phase of the so-called 'Arab Spring' was getting underway in Tunisia, Gemayel declared to the international media that 'Massacres are taking place for no reason and without any justification against Christians. It is only because they are Christians. What is happening to Christians is a genocide.'¹ Gemayel's assessment was echoed within a week by then French President Nicolas Sarkozy who stated 'We cannot accept and thereby facilitate what looks more and more like a particularly perverse programme of cleansing in the Middle East, religious cleansing.'²

Gemayel's and Sarkozy's strong language about anti-Christian crimes against humanity was prompted by massacres of Christians in churches in Baghdad and Alexandria.³ These statesmen recognised that these acts of terror in Iraq and Egypt were not isolated criminal incidents, but were instead part of an insidious pattern of anti-Christian violence that ran in tandem with contemporary political trends, one manifestation of which were the 'Arab Spring' demonstrations. Their warnings, while



St Mary's Greek Catholic Church in Yabroud, Syria, desecrated in 2014 by the Islamist Jabhat al-Nusra & the Islamic Front

gaining little political traction in the West, have been vindicated by subsequent events, especially in Syria and Iraq.

During that M40 conversation, Amine Gemayel shared with me a small ray of hope on the international front. This elder Maronite Christian statesman had the impression that the Russians, having close historic connections with the region's Orthodox churches, were well aware of the existential threat facing the Christians in the Middle East, and had undertaken some constructive initiatives to address the crisis facing Christian civilization in the Orient. I had some personal grounds for taking this message seriously. As a result of my visits to Nagorno Karabakh in the early 1990s, I was aware that Russia, under

Yeltsin, had played a crucial role in bringing about a suspension of the religious and ethnic cleansing in and around Karabakh in 1993, thereby preserving the presence of Armenian Christians in their ancient homeland. Without the constructive role of Russia, it is reasonable to assume that today Karabakh would be for all practical purposes an Armenian Christian-free zone, like the Azerbaidzhani cities of Baku and Sumgait. So I followed up on President Gemayel's lead, and was surprised at what I discovered: the once persecuted Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), now free from the shackles of militant atheistic Communism, was campaigning vigorously on behalf of the existentially threatened Christians of the Middle East, and doing so without much recognition in the West.

The Moscow Patriarchate uses this freedom in three ways. Firstly, it eases the isolation of the Middle East's churches, most of which, apart from Rome-related communions, have only weak links with churches in the West. It does so through its institutional relations with regional Orthodox Churches and through fellowship with ecumenical partners. Secondly, the ROC raises funds for humanitarian assistance for displaced Middle East Christians and their non-Christian neighbours. It reported having raised 1.3 million dollars from Russian parishes in the summer of 2013 for such aid. These funds were transferred to the bank account of the Damascus-based Orthodox Church of Antioch.⁴ Lastly, the Moscow Patriarchate vigorously undertakes advocacy actions as a part of dialogue with the Russian government, with members of the international community, its ecumenical partners, and representatives of other faiths, especially Islam. With a view to creating awareness and mobilising opinion, the Patriarchate keeps the issue alive in the Russian media.

The Moscow Patriarchate sounded the alarm about the persecution of Christians in the very early days of the 'Arab Spring' uprisings, when these were still frequently referred to in the media as the 'Facebook' Revolution. In May 2011, the Holy Synod adopted a document on Christophobia, which highlighted severe persecution leading to the 'mass emigration of Christians from countries in which they have lived for centuries', citing Iraq and Egypt by name.⁵ The church's activity to combat Christophobia in the Middle East is executed under the direction of Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR).

Perhaps the most detailed and comprehensive document presenting the Patriarchate's perspective on the existential crisis facing Middle East Christians is an interview given by Metropolitan Hilarion in April 2014 to RIA-Novosti.⁶ In it, Hilarion draws together all the main themes of the issue that are found scattered in a host of statements. The 48 year-old Metropolitan, holding a DPhil from Oxford, is no fossilised relic of the Soviet past. He is at ease in the western world and communicates effectively with it.⁷ In this interview he declared: 'At present in the Middle East there is unprecedented persecution of Christians.' To make clear that he is not talking simply about social and legal disabilities, Hilarion, like Gemayel and Sarkozy, uses the strongest possible language. Christians in some parts of the region, he said, are in the midst of a 'real genocide'. Middle Eastern Christians, he reported, are witnessing the desecration and destruction of church buildings, the kidnapping and execution of priests and laity, and the bombardment of their neighbourhoods. Many are confronted with a stark choice of either paying tribute or leaving their

homes, while the price of failure to do either of the above is death. Fearing that it is the considered goal of extremists to 'banish Christians from their homes by terror or physical elimination', Middle Eastern Christians, Hilarion laments, often 'have to escape to other countries'. There is now, he says, 'a mass exodus of Christians from the Middle East'.

At the time of the RIA/Novosti interview, Metropolitan Hilarion viewed Christians in Syria, who then made up about 10% of the country's population, as the most endangered Christian community in the region. There, he reports, 'various armed bands are at work, systematically eliminating Christians and people of other religious communities'. According to the figures in his possession, over 1,000 Christians have been killed, about 100 churches and monasteries have been damaged, and over 600,000 Christians have had to flee their homes, with most finding refuge abroad.

The existential crisis facing Christians in Iraq is now scarcely less grave than in Syria. Metropolitan Hilarion estimated that the Iraqi Christian population, which numbered about 1.5 million before the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, had subsequently decreased by more than one million. But since the Metropolitan's interview, hundreds of thousands of additional Christians and Yezidis have been forced to flee their homes as a result of the Islamic State's conquest of Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, and surrounding parts of Nineveh Province. Metropolitan Hilarion also chose to highlight Libya. He noted that 'a great part of its small Christian community ... had to flee the country', while 'those who have remained, mostly Egyptian Copts, are subjected to regular attacks, often with [a] lethal end'.

In stark contrast to the dire situation of Christians in Syria, Iraq, and Libya – all of which have been the subject of American regime change policies – Metropolitan Hilarion found a more hopeful situation in Egypt – a country that has recently undergone an authoritarian counter-



Dr John Eibner (left) talking to Amine Gemayel, former President of Lebanon

revolution. He wanted the world to know that Christians are not persecuted by the government of General Sisi, as opposed to that of his Muslim Brotherhood predecessor, Mohammed Morsi; and that the counter-revolution in Egypt had greatly improved the climate for Christian-Muslim relations. But despite this positive development, Hilarion noted that 'adherents of Islamic radical parties' – contrary to the will of the Sisi government – 'continue committing attacks'.

I cannot vouch for all the statistics presented by Metropolitan Hilarion, but the broad strokes of the picture he paints correspond to what I have observed during many visits to the region.

The Moscow Patriarchate also addresses the causes of the current wave of persecution. Metropolitan Hilarion chooses his words carefully when speaking about its religious character. He has good reason to address this issue gingerly. 15% or more of Russia's population is Muslim, and much of its southern underbelly

borders Muslim majority states. Moreover, as a result of the involvement of Saudi Arabia in support of Islamic rebels, the potentially contagious Chechen wars of the 1990s came close to being internationalised and taking on a dangerous pan-Islamic character. Thus, in his RIA-Novosti interview, Metropolitan Hilarion spoke in accordance with the ROC's tradition of respectful relations with conservative, established Islamic authority and institutions. He therefore did not hammer repeatedly the Islamic nail, but laid the blame more generally at the feet of 'religious extremism'. But he did note that crowds of excited Muslims, chanting Islamic slogans, attack Christian churches immediately following the imam's Friday sermon. The ideology that drives anti-Christian agitation, Hilarion observed, emanates from what he identified as 'influential forces in the Gulf'. While he chose not to name names, Hilarion clearly meant Washington's rich and influential regional allies – Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE and Kuwait.

Metropolitan Hilarion was much more direct in drawing attention to the external political forces that have created conditions for what he calls the 'full scale persecution' of the Church in the Middle East. He was not slow in pointing the finger at the US and its European allies for destabilising the Middle East. They did so by playing a decisive role in the overthrow of the rulers of Iraq, Libya, and Egypt, while attempting to do the same in Syria. There the attempt is still a catastrophic work in progress. These American efforts, Hilarion bewailed, were accompanied by rhetoric about building western-style democracy, while in reality, he claimed, 'force and revolution' were the western powers' chosen instruments for reshaping the Middle East's political landscape. Washington's re-

gime change policy, he continued, took no account of the historic and religious traditions that were the basis of relations between the different religious communities. The result of western policy was, in Hilarion's view, 'the aggravation of internal controversies', and the 'encouragement of extremists and terrorists to flock to these countries from other regions of the world'.

In addition to its sins of commission, he also accused the West of a grave sin of omission – i.e. refusing to support the persecuted Middle East Christians, thereby leaving them with no option but to spend the rest of their lives as displaced people, many in foreign exile. The Maronites of Syria and Lebanon, Hilarion said, were particularly disappointed in France, which had historically 'protected' them, but now refused to do so. I assume that the Metropolitan singled out France because it was French insistence on the protection of Catholic holy sites in Palestine in the mid-19th century – protection not from the Islamic Ottoman rulers, but from the local Orthodox religious authorities – that sparked the events leading to Russia's humiliation in the Crimean War. In contrast to the western powers, Russia, Hilarion claimed 'has remained the only defender of the Christian presence in the region', one on which 'many Christians remaining in [the] "hotbeds" have set their hopes'.

I do not find, however, any Middle East Christians who expect Russia, on its own, to intervene militarily to protect them. All understand that Russia is no longer a super-power and its influence and presence in the region is greatly reduced compared to Soviet times. But that does not mean that many do not entertain some hope that Russia might miraculously prove to be a catalyst for changing the dynamics of post-Cold

War international relations which have contributed so powerfully to create conditions for widespread religious cleansing in the Middle East. In Egypt, for example, Coptic opinion was greatly encouraged when Sisi met Putin in summer 2014 in the Black Sea on board the guided missile cruiser Moskva and struck a set of military and economic deals.

I was twice in Syria in 2013, and found anti-American and pro-Russian passions within the Christian community even stronger than in Egypt. For all its grave faults, the Assad regime has for decades been the protector of Syria's religious minority communities. President Obama acknowledged this to a delegation of visiting Middle Eastern bishops in an off-the-record encounter in September 2014.⁸ For the past two years, Washington, together with its Sunni regional allies – principally Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey – have been supporting anti-Christian Islamist militias in the effort to achieve regime change in Syria, much as the US did in the 1980s to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan.⁹ Turkey, a NATO member and candidate for EU membership, has become the principal gateway for Syria-bound jihadists.

When Christians are displaced by the conflict, they will either seek protection abroad or in parts of Syria that are still controlled by the Syrian government, such as Tartus. Russia's last Mediterranean naval base is located in there. The displaced whom I encountered in Tartus – Christians, Alawites and Sunni Muslims – take comfort in the close proximity of the Russian naval presence. They do so in the belief that this Russian military asset results in the protection of the surrounding area. There is, moreover, widespread belief within the Syrian Christian community that had Russia failed to honour its

military commitments to the Syrian government, they would have been left completely unprotected from the crowds who were chanting 'Alawites to the grave, and Christians to Beirut' during the early days of the 'Arab Spring'.

I was in Iraq twice in the summer 2014 following the Islamic State's conquest of Mosul and surrounding Christian and Yazidi villages. There, I encountered a severely traumatised Iraqi Christian community. As I wrote following my return in a blog for *The Tablet*, the Iraqi Christian community has lost faith in the ability of the government in Baghdad, the Kurdish regional authority in Erbil, and the US and its allies, to protect them from the Islamic state and other extremists.¹⁰ Some of my Iraqi Christian contacts, including those who worked together with the American armed forces in Operation Iraq Freedom, now look back wistfully to the days before the American-led invasion and occupation in 2003, when Russia was the main ally of the Iraqi state. Under the tyrannical rule of Saddam Hussein, violent anti-Christian Islamist fanaticism found no place in public life.

I have found in the Middle East that persecuted Christians view the US and its western allies very differently from the hopeful, expectant way that persecuted Christians in the Soviet bloc did. The American human rights agenda, in practice, does not appear to them to address their main concern – survival as Christians in their own ancient homelands. Moreover, many see Washington allied regionally not with democratic forces, but with the very powers that ideologically and financially fuel anti-Christian persecution. It is old-fashioned protection, not new-fangled and often toothless human rights jargon that interests them.

While Middle East Christians tend to view the West as immensely rich and free, they also tend to see it as a post-Christian, deconstructionist society; one in which Christianity appears to have a bleak future, one that has no real interest in them. The post-Soviet Russian state, on the other hand, increasingly strives to demonstrate Christian credentials, by being openly supportive of the ROC and its traditional values. Western liberalism has yet to make its mark on Middle Eastern Christians, and convince them that it can guarantee their survival. The Moscow Patriarchate offers a policy to prevent the disappearance of Christian communities in the Middle East and calls for the creation of a mechanism for the protection of the region's religious minorities – a mechanism under the control of the world community, and not under the control of one superpower. It furthermore urges the most developed powers to provide economic aid to the region conditional on the protection of religious minorities, and the termination of support for religious extremist groups.

Why has the Moscow Patriarchate placed such a strong emphasis on prevention of the de-Christianisation of the Middle East? When I put this question to a member of the Patriarchate's DECR in 2014, I was told that it can be inferred from the Council of Bishops' 2013 statement in 'support of our brothers – Christians in the Middle East' that the Moscow Patriarchate identifies the 'whole of Christianity as parts of Christ's body and as brothers'. When asked for more substance, my interlocutor did not appeal to a well-developed theological position, nor to international human rights and religious liberty instruments, but to the tradition of the ROC. Even in Soviet times, I was told, the Moscow Patriarchate and the churches of the Middle East tried to be mutually supportive. After Stalin

agreed in 1944 to ease the policy of persecution and end the Patriarchate's total isolation from the outside world, external relations were first resumed with the Orthodox Patriarchates of Alexandria, Jerusalem and Antioch.¹¹ With the Soviet Union enjoying at the very least respectful relations with some key Middle Eastern states during the Cold War, the Moscow Patriarchate had better opportunities to develop external relations there than in the West. The Soviet leadership's desire that the ROC should have high visibility in its 'peace movement' also created many opportunities for the Moscow Patriarchate to interact with Middle East churches after decades of isolation.

But it is not the Soviet era that the current leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate sees as a model; it is the late Imperial era.¹² As Moscow's power expanded and that of the Ottoman Empire contracted in the 18th and 19th centuries, Imperial Russia and its Orthodox Church increasingly assumed the special role of protector of the conquered Orthodox peoples. In the Levant, the ROC also assumed the role of protector of Orthodox pilgrims and the holy sites that they visited. With that function in mind, the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission was established in Jerusalem in 1847 as an outreach organ of the Church. Its head was appointed by the Holy Synod.

In 1882, to reverse what was perceived by the Russian leadership as preponderate British and French influence in the Middle East, Alexander III sanctioned, with the agreement of the Holy Synod, the establishment in St Petersburg of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS). It was not an initiative of the Moscow Patriarchate; rather it arose from the activities of modern and well-educated members of the laity. Part of its power derived from the freedom it

had from the ecclesiastical authorities as a lay organisation. The first President of the Society was the Tsar's brother, the Grand Duke Sergei, a military man with strong religious convictions, whose record includes both supervising the expulsion of Jews from Moscow in the early 1890s and patronising many worthy humanitarian and cultural endeavours.¹³ The Society's officially declared goals were 'to strengthen Orthodoxy in the Holy Land, to help Russian visitors traveling to the Holy Land, to publish news about the Holy Land, and to promulgate it to Russians.'¹⁴ While the Society enjoyed Imperial patronage, it was financed, at first, exclusively from private sources, and was not under the jurisdiction of either the Foreign Ministry or the Holy Synod. This 19th century Russian NGO, as it would be called today, quickly became a force to be reckoned with. It attracted strong support from the upper echelons of Russian society, with local branches established across the country. Its success eventually attracted financial support from the Russian government, and a change of byelaws which enabled the Tsar to appoint the Society's Vice-President and council members representing the Foreign Ministry and the Holy Synod.

In the Levant, the IOPS was the catalyst for the Orthodox renewal that enabled Orthodoxy to start to compete with the success enjoyed by the modern Catholic and Protestant institutions supported by the French, British and Americans. This Orthodox renewal witnessed the growth of schools and teacher training, church restoration, medical facilities, archaeological exploration, and facilities for pilgrimages. One of the lasting achievements of the IOPS was to empower, through education, the Arab clergy and laity who had long been marginalised by the Greek ecclesiastical superiors. This exercise in soft power

played a crucial role in reorienting the Orthodox of the Levant away from Constantinople and towards Russia. With the Orthodox representing a large element within the Christian population of the Levant, the rise of Russian influence through the IOPS was significant.¹⁵ The Bolshevik Revolution put an end to the work of the IOPS, as well as Russian engagement with the Middle East, until the post-World War II era.

With both the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian state looking to the late Imperial era as a model for Russian regeneration in the post-Soviet world, it should not come as a surprise that the Patriarchate's policy regarding Middle East Christians is in harmony with the foreign policy of the Kremlin. After starting out in the early 1990s on an Atlanticist footing, the post-Soviet Russian leadership has moved steadily in the direction of its historic tradition of authoritarianism and Orthodoxy. Constantinianism has returned. It fills a potentially destabilising ideological void that was left by the collapse of Communism and by the failure of the secular Atlanticist experiment to secure Russia's role as a Great Power. It furthermore provides the Moscow Patriarchate with possibilities for bolstering its status as a Great Religious Power. From the point of view of the Moscow Patriarchate, the new Constantinian arrangement precludes the ideological void being filled by a post-Judeo-Christian, pagan ideology, such as Communism, National Socialism, or western materialism, or the religious-based ideology of Islamism.

My former Keston colleague, John Anderson, ably analysed in 2007 the main characteristics of this process in an enlightening article, tellingly entitled, 'Putin and the Russian Orthodox Church: Asymmetric Symphonia'.¹⁶ More recently, Professor Robert Blitt



John Eibner in a Christian cemetery vandalised by Jihadi rebels in Homs

identified the complex and well developed institutional connections that link the Moscow Patriarchate with the Russian state regarding foreign policy. A growing global network of institutions now functions as an instrument of the soft power of the church-state alliance. The Foreign Ministry's Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation provides a framework for close, mutually supportive political collaboration. This policy document declares the state's willingness to 'interact with the ROC and other main confessions of the country' and emphasises the development of soft power abroad, based on institutions promoting Russian culture and spiritual values.¹⁷

While some may assume that the old, Soviet-built, one-way transmission system, running from the Kremlin directly to the Danilov Monastery is still operational, the title of Blitt's paper 'Russia's "Orthodox" Foreign Policy: The Growing Influence of the ROC in Shaping Russia's Policies Abroad' suggests that the transmission belt moves in the opposite direction at least

some of the time. The *New York Times* suggests likewise: in 2013 it reported that Metropolitan Hilarion had persuaded Putin to throw his weight behind the policy to promote the protection of Middle Eastern Christians, while the then Prime Minister was angling for support from the ROC in his bid to regain the Presidency.¹⁸ President Putin should be pleased with the performance of the Church. It created for him a rare public relations success with the *New York Times*. But at a higher level, this kind of collaboration with the church provides his foreign policy with a moral legitimacy that Washington strives to undermine as the Cold War climate returns to chill Russo-American relations.

The vigour with which the Russian state pursues the Hilarion-inspired policy stands in stark contrast to the reluctance of Washington to address the issue of religious cleansing in the Middle East. Putin's policy also enables Russia to cultivate closer relations with the Christian communities of the Middle East, especially those that feel

alienated by Washington. As the Beirut-based political observer Nasser Chararah notes in a perceptive article in *al-Monitor*, Russia strives to create a 'backbone of Christian minorities with which it may ally', using Lebanon, with its significant Orthodox population as its 'launch pad', and it does so to counter Washington's alliance with Sunni political Islam.¹⁹

While the Moscow Patriarchate consults directly with the Russian Foreign Ministry, there is a third institution in the mix. Borrowing directly from the 19th century model, the state has revived the IOPS which joins the Moscow Patriarchate and the Foreign Ministry as the third member of an institutional triumvirate which bears responsibility for formulating and executing Orthodox policy on the Middle East. Unlike the old IOPS, the origins of the new version do not appear to be a manifestation of civil society. According to Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, it was conceived and headed in the 1990s by two Russian diplomats. Under their leadership, the organisation was legally registered in 1992 under its historic name, and acquired NGO consultative status at the UN.²⁰ Since 2012, the IOPS has been housed at 3 Zabelina Street in Moscow. This historic building was restored with state assistance, and has been made available to the IOPS for five years free of charge. The Patriarch dedicated it at the end of 2012 in the presence of the Foreign Minister.²¹

By 2007, the new IOPS, with Patriarch Kirill as Chairman of the 'Honorary Members Committee' and Foreign Minister Lavrov as an 'Honorary Member', was ready to assume a high public profile. The importance the Kremlin attached to the IOPS as an instrument of Russian soft power in a region where more heavy duty instruments were

wanting, is reflected in its leadership. The IOPS authorities appointed a political heavyweight as President. Their choice was Colonel General Sergei Vadimovich Stepashin who had held a host of top government jobs in post-



Sergei Stepashin

Soviet Russia: Director of the FSB, Justice Minister, Interior Minister, and Prime Minister, and, most recently, head of the powerful Federal Audit Chamber. As the Soviet system was collapsing, Stepashin undertook sensitive missions regarding the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Afterwards he played a major role in crafting and executing Moscow's response to the revolts in Chechnya. Lavrov spoke euphorically about Stepashin upon his election as Chairman of the IOPS, declaring: 'With a leader of such calibre, we are capable of achieving anything.'²² At the IOPS's first conference, Stepashin identified its role in promoting Russia's Middle East policy:

'The Society should be seen as a powerful civil force in Russia, capable of uniting the nation spiritually around fundamental, clear and age-long Christian values. Today the Society is Russia's reliable spiritual and moral outpost in the Holy Land [...] It is a powerful intellectual, patriotic, spiritual, humanitarian and social force acting in common with national interests together with the ROC and as an effective

mechanism of humanitarian influence in the Middles East [...],²³

Stepashin is supported by IOPS Deputy Chairman Elena Agapova who appears to function as the IOPS's chief operating officer. Like her boss, she has a background in the Soviet military: she once served as Deputy Editor of *Red Star*, the Soviet army newspaper. During the 1990s she was the press spokesman for Defence Minister Pavel Grachev, and, as such, bore onerous re-



Elena Agapova

sponsibility for making the Chechen war and Grachev's controversial policies acceptable to the Russian public. Within the IOPS, Agapova heads a relatively new department called The Public Centre for the Protection of Christians in the Middle East and North Africa. She describes it as the research and advocacy organ of the Society.

The advocacy efforts of the Patriarchate, the IOPS and the Foreign Ministry reached a crescendo in September 2013 when all three institutions – joining many others throughout the world, including the Vatican and CSI – pulled out all stops in the effort to persuade President Obama not to launch cruise missile strikes against Syria.

To what extent the IOPS is a genuine reflection of Russian civil society, and how autonomous the Moscow Patriarchate is, are questions of interest to

statesmen and political spectators. But they are of little interest to the millions of Christians in the Middle East whose survival in their homelands is currently under threat. They are looking, with increasing desperation, for help and especially for a credible protector. This is a role that Washington is loathe to play, notwithstanding its post-Cold War political, military and economic ascendancy in the region. The vital interests of the US and its NATO allies are bound up with power configurations that promote intolerant Islamic agendas, not with existentially threatened Christian communities.

The Moscow Patriarchate and the IOPS provide welcome humanitarian aid and moral support. They also use language in their advocacy activities that is in harmony with the thinking and the spirit of most Christians in the region. But, as non-state actors without powers of coercion, they are not in a position to provide protection. They can only act as catalysts for effective political action in conjunction with powers within the international state system, as the Vatican did in collaboration with the US to help end the Cold War and free Eastern Europe from Soviet domination. But the Russian Federation, the natural ally of the Moscow Patriarchate and the IOPS, is too weak to don the mantle of a protector of Middle Eastern Christians as did the 19th century Tsars. Since the end of the Cold War, the loss of Russian influence in the Middle East mirrors the Kremlin's diminished stature in Eastern Europe. Washington-led regime change policies have effectively shut Russia out of Iraq and Libya, while imposing a heavy price on its continuing relations with the Syrian government. The absence of any sign that Russia is strong enough to restore stability to the Middle East and implement the kind of policy recommendations made by Met-

ropolitan Hilarion is a source of great despondency amongst the region's Christians.

Pessimism is not unwarranted. The 30 Years' War prophecy for the Middle East made by former CIA Director and Secretary for Defence Leon Panetta is a realistic prospect. The vulnerable Christians and other religious minorities of the region are not likely to survive three decades of religious violence. Order can only be restored, as happened to conclude the 30 Years' War, by some kind of Great Power agreement. Russia, although in decline, remains one of the Great Powers. Harvard Professor Joseph Nye recently highlighted the need for cooperation with Russia, stating:

'Designing and implementing a strategy that contains Putin's behaviour while maintaining long-term engagement with Russia is one of the most important challenges facing the international community today.'²⁴

This former Assistant Secretary of State for Defence and Chairman of the National Intelligence Council then identified a set of global issues that require long-term Russo-American cooperation, such as 'nuclear security, non-proliferation, anti-terrorism, the exploitation of the Arctic and regional

issues like Iran and Afghanistan'. The prevention of a 30 Years' War in the Middle East and the preservation of the region's religious pluralism ought to be among them, just as human rights and religious liberty were central to the Helsinki process in Europe.

Jane Ellis concluded her important book on the ROC with these visionary words:

'Whatever the political situation, and whatever the vicissitudes it has to face, it is clear that the spiritual vitality of the ROC is undimmed [...] We must expect that the largest national church in the world will continue to be a shining example of the power of the Christian faith to inspire people to overcome unprecedented persecution and suffering.'²⁵

Jane's expectation shows signs of being fulfilled in the Middle East. The once severely persecuted ROC is indeed a source of inspiration for Christians in the Middle East as they strive to overcome unprecedented persecution and suffering. This Church's acts of solidarity with the existentially threatened Christians of the Middle East represent a challenge to the secularised West and its churches. Are the western churches capable of joining the ROC as a source of such inspiration?

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Dr John Eibner has worked as the CEO of Christian Solidarity International (USA) for 25 years and has served as its representative at the UN. He has frequently briefed policy makers at the White House and the State Department.

The Birth of the Last Utopia: Is Keston Really a ‘human rights’ Group?

by Mark Hurst

In the context of the Cold War, some NGOs are readily and easily defined as human rights groups. Amnesty International, for example, made their name campaigning explicitly for prisoners of conscience, a term that they coined. Amnesty have become the archetypal human rights group and dominate contemporary discourse on human rights issues. The Campaign Against Psychiatric Abuse (CAPA) and the Women’s Campaign for Soviet Jewry (also known as the 35s) also fall naturally into this definition. Their activism against the abuses of the Soviet authorities, through an array of public demonstrations puts them neatly into the position of an activist group. Keston on the other hand is more difficult to define. Whilst it was clearly working in the field of human rights, there is a question about whether it ought to be considered as a human rights group, something that is complicated by recent developments in the academic study of the history of human rights.

The study of the impact of human rights in the Cold War is a discipline which has blossomed rapidly in recent years. Historians have gradually turned their attention to the role of human rights in the 20th century, asking increasingly critical questions about the role that it has played in society, domestic politics, and foreign affairs. Much of this literature points towards a ‘Human Rights Revolution’ in the 1970s, where human rights became an increasingly salient political issue in international relations.



Mark Hurst addresses Keston members at 2014 AGM

Somewhat surprisingly, the history of human rights is a relatively new academic discipline. In the introductory comments to an edited volume published in 2014 on human rights in the 1970s, it was noted that ‘a mere decade ago, no historians were working on human rights in any time period.’¹ Mark Mazower has linked this increased interest directly to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dramatic change in international relations in 1991, noting that ‘the recent upsurge of interest in the history of human rights must surely be seen as one of the more productive intellectual consequences of the ending of the Cold War.’²

The history of human rights was arguably ‘born’ in 2007 following the publication of a book by the US academic Lynn Hunt entitled *Inventing Human*

Rights.³ Hunt's background is as an historian of the French Revolution, noted for her work on the study of gender, so this book marked a new avenue of research. Hunt argues that the empathetic literature of the Enlightenment period opened up a new period of human history, where the treatment of individuals became an increasingly important consideration. This is quite a shift from the previously predominant focus on nationhood and monarchy as areas of power and influence. Hunt identifies the necessary shift in individual perceptions in order for this transition to take place:

'I believe that social and political changes – in this case, human rights – come about because many individuals had similar experiences, not because they all inhabited the same social context but because through their interactions with each other and with their reading and viewing, they actually created a new social context...For human rights to become self-evident, ordinary people had to have new understandings that came from new kinds of feelings.'⁴

It was through the cultural enlightenment that people began to experience the potential for a new social context, one that was hinged on individual rights and concerns. Implicit within this work is a challenge to some of the traditional literature on rights, which looks back to ancient Greece and Rome for the birth of a rights discourse. Indeed, one of the most important issues raised in the recent literature on human rights is the argument that it is a modern concept, which owes more to the Cold War than to Plato, John Locke, or Voltaire.

The challenge posed by Hunt was addressed in 2010 by Samuel Moyn's *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*. Moyn has become one of the most in-

fluential scholars on the history of human rights, publishing broadly on this issue in recent years. This book was a bombshell within the field, shaking up many of the orthodox views on the subject, and has led to a number of new research avenues. Moyn argued that we need to look explicitly at the 1970s as a period where human rights were born as a salient political concept; where human rights violations around the world gained political traction, persuading governments to take action. This is particularly important in the context of the Cold War. The collapse of détente led to pressure on *both* superpowers to reassert their moral position, in a conflict outside of ideological and military considerations. Human rights as a concept became a useful tool in this reassertion, focusing on the seemingly apolitical notion of rights to position each superpower as superior to its opponent. Moyn argues that this shift occurred because the notion of human rights became a 'last utopia' where other utopian ideologies (Communism and Capitalism) came under threat and no longer seemed convincing. This last utopia is not quite an 'end of history', as Francis Fukuyama claimed at the end of the Cold War, but an ideology which gained its popularity because it was seen as an unsurpassable option, a kind of final ideology for humankind.⁵ Moyn addressed this concern explicitly in his work, noting that, '[if human rights] are found wanting, another utopia can arise in the future, just as human rights once emerged on the ruins of their predecessors. Human rights were born as the last utopia, but one day another may appear.'⁶ Moyn's 'last utopia' of human rights is an intriguing argument, and one that goes some way to explain the sacrifices of activists in the Cold War.

A challenging question for historians to address is what motivates an activist to devote their life to an issue, often one

which goes against the tide of public thought. This is a particularly poignant issue in the wake of the Hungarian uprising of 1956, and the Prague Spring in 1968, where human rights become particularly compelling from an intellectual and moral position as previous utopias were crumbling. As Moyn puts it, 'over the course of the 1970s, the moral world of Westerners shifted, opening a space for the sort of utopianism that coalesced in an international human rights movement that had never existed before.'⁷ This assertion is backed by Jan Eckel who has noted:

'human rights in the 1970s appear as a multifaceted promise of moral renewal that in view of the profound changes in the structure of national and international politics come to be seen as increasingly attractive, both ideologically and strategically. Their essential attractiveness lay in the fact that human rights seemed to provide a way of responding to the failure of older political projects, of transcending the logic of the Cold War, of basing political action on a moral foundation, and of reaching a vantage point that supposedly was above politics.'⁸

If we follow the argument put forward by Moyn and supported by Eckel, which is essentially that human rights as a concept became salient in the 1970s *because* of the decline of other utopian concepts, certain questions need to be asked of human rights themselves. How apolitical are human rights? How much does this concept influence individual activists? Should we link the ideological rise of this 'last utopia' to the rise of human rights groups working for Soviet dissidents? These are difficult questions, which tell us much about the developing position of Keston and other groups working in similar areas in the Cold War.

Alongside the moral and ideological positioning of human rights, the structure and function of activist organisations is another aspect of human rights which has been put under the lens in recent years, most effectively by Stephen Hopgood's *The Endtimes of Human Rights*. This book is a refreshing sideways glance at the 'business' of human rights, offering a critical view of recent developments. Hopgood argues for two different conceptions of human rights:

- human rights – the pure, moral struggle for the protection of individual liberties
- Human Rights – the machinery that has arisen around human rights NGOs and activists.

This is an essential distinction to make when assessing human rights organisations, and is something that readily applies to a number of groups in the second half of the 20th century. Fundraising, and the sheer survival of organisations often became the prerogative of human rights groups, rather than the struggle for which they were formed in the first place. As Hopgood notes, 'many international NGOs are now so big, with large staffs who have significant salary and pension entitlements that they are locked in to this model. Money is essential, and its acquisition from the public and institutional funders, not participation, is now the mechanism for activism.'⁹ This is a pressure that Keston's members are only too aware of.

Hopgood's argument raises questions about the apolitical nature of human rights, namely how these organisations use powerful and popular political concepts, like the struggle for persecuted prisoners of conscience. This is an im-

portant question to consider when they are utilised by organisations in fundraising activities. Given that human rights formed a substantial part of the ideological conflict between the superpowers in the Cold War, they are perhaps more helpfully seen as a *deeply* political concept since they were used as a weapon to apply pressure. This undoubtedly carries through to contemporary politics, with human rights being used by a number of political actors to exert influence. One only has to think of recent rhetoric surrounding the European Court of Human Rights, and discussions about the development of a British Bill of Rights to see this in action.

The moral dimension played by human rights in the Cold War is a theme which has been discussed by a variety of scholars. In *Reclaiming American Virtue*, Barbara Keys argues that human rights were utilised in US foreign policy from the mid-1970s onwards in an attempt to reposition America as a moral and just nation in the wake of the Vietnam War.¹⁰ Keys nods towards the use of human rights as a political weapon in the Cold War, and one that helped to re-establish American prestige after the debacle of Vietnam. She notes:

‘human rights were far more important than a slogan, and they had relevance far beyond purely diplomatic concerns. They helped redefine American to Americans, for they were about American identity even more than they were about foreign policy. They emerged from a struggle for the soul of a country, for principles to define not only America’s international behaviour but its character in a world shaped by new power relations – above all by its loss in the Vietnam War and all the soul-searching that entailed.’¹¹

Keys develops some of Moyn’s arguments about the notion of human rights being born as a salient issue in the mid-1970s. Rather intriguingly, she argues that the pivotal figure in human rights politics in the US was not President Carter, who was noted for his shift in foreign policy towards human rights issues in the late 1970s. Nor does she point toward Henry ‘Scoop’ Jackson or Charles Vanik, co-sponsors of the ‘Jackson-Vanik amendment’ to the 1974 Trade Act which linked US economic policy towards the Soviet Union to the free emigration of the *refuseniks*, Soviet Jews who were prevented from immigrating to Israel by the Soviet authorities. Instead, Keys highlights the US diplomat Henry Kissinger as playing ‘the pivotal role in moving human rights from the sidelines to the centre of American diplomacy.’¹² Despite Kissinger’s pragmatic approach to human rights issues and his attempts to keep the concept out of US foreign policy, it is clear that he was aware of its political power, a concept that was picked up by Jimmy Carter. Moyn has noted that ‘Jimmy Carter, elected president of the United States in the fall of 1976, almost wandered into using the language [of human rights]. He barely mentioned human rights during his campaign, so that when he announced his commitment to human rights on the steps of the Capitol when he was inaugurated in January 1977, a months-long debate was sparked.’¹³

Keys’ work reasserts the impact that human rights in a foreign policy setting could have on a nation’s moral identity and positioning. Her focus on the US is apparent for the clear impact that it had there, but the ripples of this change affected Britain, most explicitly in the foreign policy of Margaret Thatcher.

These recent developments in the historical literature have led scholars to

the compelling argument that the 1970s was a period of revolution in international relations, namely the human rights revolution. Human rights as a concept progressed from having marginal political traction in the 1950s and 1960s to become a salient political issue with great clout during the mid-1970s. The impact of this revolution is clear in the difference between the international reception of József Mindszenty and Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sakharov, Anatoly Shcharansky and countless others from the 1970s onwards.

Whilst convincing, Moyn's argument outlining the birth of human rights as a salient political concept in the mid-1970s does raise a number of very intriguing questions. Should we consider the Holocaust, one of the gravest and most brutal attacks on humanity in contemporary history, as a human rights violation? The discourses used to describe human rights did not exist in the 1940s as we know them now, and there is an argument that the Holocaust has been manipulated as a human rights event to assert the need to defend 'the last utopia'. This is not to take anything away from the barbarity and horror of these events, but to pose critical questions about their reception. Have these atrocities been manipulated to assert the need to support human rights as a political concept? Stephen Hopgood has put this rather astutely, noting that 'Once a regime is accused of genocide, and its leaders by association with the Nazis are labelled "evil", there is no room for compromise. The whole conflict takes place in a kind of sacred space where moral absolutes clash, a place "without history and without politics".'¹⁴

What about the Nuremberg War Crimes trials after the Second World War? Should we position these more

in line with broader issues of imperialism from the early 20th century? The concept of human rights was all but ignored at these trials, which have become entrenched in the public memory as a process to hold the leaders of Nazi Germany to account for their war crimes. Perhaps this memory is subtly different from the actual aim of these trials? The same question can be asked of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights itself. Should this founding document of human rights as we know them be considered more critically, and was it really the birth of modern human rights? If so, why are events that we would recognise as major human rights violations which occurred around the world in the 1950s and 1960s very rarely described as such? Mark Mazower has noted that 'the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights...was little more than decoration – a substitute for a real legally binding commitment and a retreat from the minority rights regime of the inter-war era.'¹⁵ These are all challenging questions, both intellectually and morally, being addressed by scholars in this field at present. So where does Keston fit in all of these issues? These differing issues impact on the way we can assess Keston's work through four major prisms: motivation, finance, the academic nature of Keston's work, and Keston's position in the Cold War.

Religious belief without question played and continues to play a substantial part in the motivation of Keston as an organisation. Michael Bourdeaux's visit to Moscow on a British Council Cultural exchange can easily be read as a religious pilgrimage, particularly with his revelatory meeting with Ukrainian women wishing to call for assistance from the West for their plight. In my conversations with Michael about this event, he described this chance meeting as both 'a total and

utter coincidence' and 'the way of the hand of God'.¹⁶ This religious motivation is also clear throughout Keston's publications: an article in *Keston News Service (KNS)* dated 10 July 1980, for example, calls a Keston visit to the Soviet Union a 'religious pilgrimage'. Issues of *Frontier* carry this dimension even more explicitly, listing calls for prayer, and religious iconography throughout – something that sets them apart from Keston's academic publication, *Religion in Communist Lands*.

The religious dimension to Keston's activism became particularly important for the organisation in difficult times. Much like Amnesty's reliance on the unknown prisoners of conscience, this religious dimension was an integral part of Keston's ethos, something that held the organisation together. This is one of the major areas where Keston is different from other human rights organisations in this period. There is no mention of human rights in Keston's major publications in the 1970s, and discussion of 'liberty' and 'freedom' is always with direct reference to religion itself, not the broader terminology of rights. This is not to suggest that Keston was not concerned with these broader issues, but that its focus was explicitly on the *religious* dimension. It can be argued that broader human rights and religious freedom are one and the same, with freedom of conscience and belief being an integral human right, but it is worth distinguishing slightly between the two in order to assess Keston's position at this time.

Whilst it might seem crude, one of the most defining characteristics of a modern human rights organisation is its capability to engage in wide reaching and effective fundraising campaigns. Consider the glossy campaigns often run by Amnesty International where

one can see how effective this can be in practice. Amnesty now operates as a pressure group with a very glossy exterior, focusing on publicity and influence rather than campaigns in support of prisoners of conscience. The central ethos which united Amnesty in the 1960s has shifted into a business-type model. This can be seen clearly in internal Amnesty reports from the 1980s on the issue of funding, which are striking for their lack of empathy. The 1983 report *Development of Amnesty International Including National Sections and Fundraising* explicitly asks the questions:

What do we sell?
What is our product?
Who is our customer?
What is our sales force?

These questions correlate with Hopgood's concerns about human rights. This is where Amnesty began to shift to become a group more concerned about their financial circumstances than about the centrality of their original ethos. It is interesting that all successful human rights groups have undergone this transition at some point following the revolution of the 1970s. Human rights activism today is more concerned with fundraising and campaigns to attain influence, than with explicit efforts to support prisoners of conscience. Perhaps this indicates a shift within public activism, with people more willing to sign an online petition or set up a direct debit than stand on a street corner for hours on end.

Finance has often been a sore point in Keston's history. In the context of the Cold War, the source of funding for organisations such as Keston came under scrutiny, particularly in the wake of the *Encounter* affair. *Encounter*, a monthly literary journal, was discov-

ered to have been funded by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a CIA funded organisation set up to assert 'soft power' against the Soviet Union through unwitting middlemen. Accusations of funding from 'dirty' sources was particularly harmful for organisations active in this period, and could have jeopardised the entire work of any group.

Keston's *modus operandi* financially can be described as short to medium term, devoting finance on viable campaigns and publications. Financial considerations

for the longer term seemingly fell by the wayside owing to the need to focus on contemporary issues. One only need read through editions of *Religion in Communist Lands* to see the financial concerns throughout Keston's history. Editions of the journal from 1976 describe Keston's financial position as being on a 'knife edge', and in the early 1980s several editions of the journal were restricted owing to financial constraints. Only two issues were published in 1981, and three each year between 1982 and 1987, clearly in an attempt to save money. Indeed, one gets a sense of genuine financial struggle throughout Keston's output in the 1980s, highlighting the group's difficulties.

Yet despite this, the acquisition and development of the old school in the village of Keston which gave the group its name is indicative of a long term strategy. The ambitious project of converting a school building in a state of



Old postcard of the school building in Keston village purchased in 1974

disrepair into the headquarters of a research organisation is something which involved considerable financial investment. With this substantial infrastructure there was potential for Keston to shift its attention towards fundraising and business-like practices, especially following the collapse of the Soviet Union. That Keston did not follow

these avenues suggests that it is more in tune with the moral or ethical definition of human rights as outlined by Hopgood. At the end of the Cold War, Keston's decision to focus

on the ethos of the group's foundation, rather than on

establishing long-term funding security, goes some way to explain its difficulties in the 1990s and beyond. It also indicates the contemporary nature of Keston's work, focusing on the preservation of an archive and the funding of academic work in line with its founding ethos, rather than on engaging in broad fundraising or publicity campaigns.

Academic considerations are a clear part of Keston's history. All iterations of the organisation's name carry a sense of the academy, telling of its position and purpose. The four founding members of Keston relied on their academic reputation, especially so in the case of Peter Reddaway and Leonard Schapiro, academics at the London School of Economics and Political Science. The construction of an archive, arguably the major part of Keston's legacy for future generations of scholars working on religion in Communist countries, is

undoubtedly an academic pursuit. The fact that this archive is now housed at Baylor University is telling of its scholarly merit, and of the academic credentials and concerns behind its collection.

Despite this academic position, activist concerns also drove Keston, especially the desire to assist those behind the Iron Curtain, something which can be seen in Keston's publications. In the first edition of *KNS*, published in May 1974, Bourdeaux wrote that its production should be a '*samizdat* experience'. This is a rather odd term to use for an outright academic group, and perhaps indicative of an activist element. Whilst it neatly refers to the 'hot off the press' nature of *KNS*, it suggests an empathy with dissident practices, perhaps even an attempt to participate in them. Affiliations to organisations such as Aid to the Russian Churches also suggest that beneath the academic exterior of Keston, there was a beating heart of activism. This all points to the tension that exists in the very ethos of Keston's purpose: was it a group formed to document impartially the position of religious belief in the Soviet Union or did it collate information in an attempt to persuade governments, organisations, and individuals in Britain and further afield to change their approach to the Soviet authorities? Given the motivations behind its work, a group like Keston could not be fully impartial, especially given the extreme nature of the religious persecution conducted by the Communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

In the context of the Cold War, seemingly apolitical concepts doubtless had political consequences. This issue is addressed on Keston's website, which states that the group is a 'non-political organisation, which simply gathered the true facts about religion behind the

Iron Curtain'. During the Cold War, Keston did its utmost to collate accurate information about religious belief in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and to distribute this material to those in positions of influence. Indeed, the scope and quality of material obtained by Keston, which is now held at Baylor, is testament to the efforts of its researchers, and the reputation that it held. However, without the ideological conflict of the Cold War, and the broader acceptance of human rights politics as a major part of US foreign policy from the mid-1970s onwards, Keston would not have had the impact that it did.

As a result, Keston should be seen as Cold Warriors, albeit unconscious ones concerned primarily with distributing the latest information about the persecuted believer behind the Iron Curtain. This is not to say that it was concerned with the overthrow of Communism, or that its aims were not noble and morally correct. It is essential, however, to state that the claim to be a non-political organisation during the period when human rights were becoming one of the most politicised concepts in international relations simply does not stand up. The same can be said of other organisations reporting on issues of Soviet dissent in this period. Moyn has argued that '[Amnesty] traded on its powerful claims to be above and beyond politics. This claim to transcendence was, indeed, Benenson's principal innovation.'¹⁷ Whilst it may appear apolitical, human rights concerns were made political by the actions of governments, NGOs, individual activists, and dissidents in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

The question of whether or not Keston should be considered a human rights organisation is complex. Much depends

on the definition of human rights, which is in itself a fluid term. Lasse Heerten puts this neatly stating that 'The meaning of human rights is never clear-cut; human rights as a conceptual vehicle can accommodate divergent ideas.'¹⁸ This is further complicated by the political circumstances present during the Cold War. Whilst Keston's ethos is about more than a concern for the protection of human rights in the Soviet bloc, this was undoubtedly a concern for many involved with the organisation. What is clear, is that the human rights revolution of the 1970s had a great impact on Keston and how it functioned. No group working to

support dissidents, or to report on their situation, was unaffected by this political shift. The salience of human rights as a political issue in international relations, and the decision by the authorities in the US to embrace human rights as a 'weapon' with which to attack the Soviet Union gave Keston a powerful platform for highlighting the position of religion in the Soviet bloc. Whilst it is clear that Keston was not motivated by human rights concerns and, as such, should not be considered as a human rights organisation, without the human rights revolution of the 1970s, its efforts would not have received so much attention.

1. S. Moyn, 'The Return of the Prodigal: The 1970s as a turning point in Human Rights History' in J. Eckel and S. Moyn (eds.), *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia, 2014), p. 13.
2. M. Mazower, 'The End of Civilisation and the Rise of Human Rights: The Mid-Twentieth-Century Disjuncture', in S. L. Hoffman (ed.), *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 29.
3. L. Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (London, 2007).
4. *ibid.*, p. 34.
5. F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London, 1992).
6. S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, (London 2010) p. 10.
7. *ibid.*, p. 1.
8. J. Eckel, 'The Rebirth of Politics from the Spirit of Morality: Explaining the Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s', in J. Eckel and S. Moyn (eds.), *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia, 2014), p. 227.
9. S. Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights* (New York, 2013), p. 105.
10. B. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (London, 2014).
11. *ibid.*, p. 3.
12. *ibid.*, p.153.
13. Moyn, 'The Return of the Prodigal', p. 9.
14. Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, p. 55.
15. Mazower, 'The End of Civilisation and the Rise of Human Rights', p. 41.
16. M. Hurst, *British Human Rights Organisations and Soviet Dissent, 1965-1985* (PhD Thesis, University of Kent), p. 218.
17. Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, p. 132.
18. Lasse Heerten, 'The Dystopia of Postcolonial Catastrophe: Self Determination, the Biafran War of Secession, and the 1970s Human Rights Moment' in J. Eckel and S. Moyn (eds.), *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia, 2014), p. 16.

Dr Mark Hurst teaches British, Russian and European history from the Enlightenment to the modern day at the University of Kent. His doctoral research on the British response to the Soviet dissident movement will be published as a book entitled *British Human Rights Organisations and Soviet Dissent, 1965-1985*.

The Evangelical Church in Soviet Society: Dialectics of Adaptation and Reform

by Mykhailo Cherenkov



*Mykhailo Cherenkov working in the Keston Center
at Baylor University*

needs to be a broader view which considers the relations between the AUCECB and CCECB as a type of dialectic between different models for the church. In a sense, they really formed a single 'brotherhood', which took different forms. Documents from that period convey both a sense of unity and the pain of separation, both attempts at dialogue and acknowledgment of incompatible views, as well as hints of their complementarity.

When analysing trends in the life of post-Soviet evangelical churches, it is difficult to escape the sense that what is hampering their full development and complete transition are the mistakes and unlearned lessons of the Soviet past. To this day, they have no balanced social teaching and missiology; this exposes them to unprincipled opportunism or stubborn isolationism. To this day, fraternal relations between the successors of the AUCECB (All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists) and the CCECB (Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists) have not been restored. [Members of the CCECB during the Soviet period were often called the *Initiativniki*, i.e. members of the *Initiativnaya gruppа*, the Action Group formed in 1961 to demand reforms. *Ed.*] History is still used as a tool for casting blame upon others and justifying one's own actions.

Leaving to others the issue of historical truth and justice, I believe that there

The Keston Archive is a unique collection of materials¹ relating to the life and survival of churches in Soviet society. Most of the documents and publications are united by one theme – the dialectic of the dominant and subdominant, the official and oppositional, the state-recognised and catacomb forms of religion, the processes of adaptation and reform within the conditions which prevailed in Soviet society.

Methodological dualism

This type of methodological structure is supported by the views presented in the works of the Soviet specialist on religion, Alexandr Klibanov, and the post-Soviet specialist on culture Alexandr Etkind. These studies (and other monographs which complement Keston's collection of samizdat and other documents) occupy a place of honour on the bookshelves of the Keston Archive, and serve as valuable reference works for visiting scholars. For Klibanov, the evolution of sects

was motivated by a rational decision to adapt to the modernisation of society and to struggle for a place in a changing world.² This view is similar to Heather Coleman's thesis about the alternative attitude to society of Evangelical Christians, and about the competition and parallel activity³ of Communists and Christians who, each in their own way, tried to establish themselves and secure a place within their particular version of the future. Etkind, however, saw as typical the anti-social response with the progressive development of 'sects' taking the form of a conscious and uncompromising exodus from society into a small group of the elect.⁴ This kind of radicalism was not for everyone; indeed one Evangelical Christian asked, 'Why don't you live like everyone else? Look at the Orthodox and the AUCECB: they are rolling in gold and travelling all over the world. Why must we, then, place our heads on the block?'⁵ For the career-minded, sectarianism was dangerous, subversive, revolutionary. Indeed, most believers had no use for radicalism.

Such methodological dualism, however, is an oversimplification. As Michael Bourdeaux pointed out, it was precisely the anti-social radicalism of the Protestants which paradoxically made them a dynamic social force.⁶ Moreover, local congregations lived their own, often double life (official façade and safe sheltered underground), and did not always carry out the instructions of their leaders.

A careful examination of the Keston Archive's materials has only confirmed my initial intuition about the heuristic approaches of Klibanov and Etkind as methodological guides when working with original sources. These two approaches may tentatively be called, respectively, modernist and radically conservative, conformist and revolu-

tionary, 'of the majority' and 'of the minority'. The first of these was represented by the AUCECB, the second by the CCECB. According to the analysis of another scholar, Ernst Troeltsch, who established a typology of church-sects, the following can be stated: the AUCECB aimed to grow from a sect into a church at the cost of concessions to the state and society; the CCECB moved in the opposite direction, towards the roots of persecuted Christianity in order to renew the spirit of the dissenting minority and to preserve the church as a sect, in the sense of a closed 'holy remnant' standing in opposition to the world.

Two images of the church – two pictures of the world

The official church considered compromise with the world to be a necessary evil and even the greatest instrument for good. The AUCECB leaders were ready to preserve the church at any cost, accepting as inevitable the country's movement towards socialism and the construction of a non-religious society. For them, the greatest sin was disobedience to the authorities, and, compared to this crime, denunciation of one's brothers and the destruction of communities were seen as collateral damage, or even as useful methods for maintaining discipline and establishing 'order'.

As a church, the AUCECB could not allow itself any kind of personal 'parallel reality', nor did it regard this as necessary. It turned to the authorities for permission on any issues that arose. Spiritual literature was printed in the state printing houses; there was censorship; KGB agents were ubiquitous. The church was firmly embedded in the socialist way of life. Self-criticism, repentance, revival and reforms were perceived as a threat to stability. A

registered church existed insofar as the state permitted it to exist – as the façade of humanity, constitutional order and religious freedom. It cannot be said that the AUCECB leaders did not understand their difficult position and their unworthy role as the legal representatives of a dying religion. But they justified their concessions when recalling Stalin's repressions.

In contrast to their registered brethren, the 'separated' ones (the *Initiativniki*) proceeded from the following assumptions in their relationship to the world: the entire outside world was mired in sin; you should serve God – it was not worth working for Satan (the state); you should not try to gain recognition in 'their' society; loyalty to God, not success, was what mattered; the reformation of the church would continue without interruption through sanctification; you could not change society; the best of all options was guerilla evangelism. Thus, instead of integrating with society, they proposed building a wall; rather than 'standing in the breach' they proposed creating an insurmountable barrier between the church and the world. The key objective was not to influence the outside world, but self defence – the preservation of one's personal holiness. The unregistered church in a totalitarian climate created its parallel social reality, with the following features: fellowship as social organisation; parallel channels of communication; sacrifice and the cult of heroes; the ability to mobilise quickly and efficiently; a distinctive subculture; maximum involvement of each member; the ability to replace another; solidarity; asceticism; simplicity; sacrifice; secrecy; discipline of the underground; willingness and ability to live and serve in an environment of secrecy and constant danger. There was nothing 'official' either in relation to the 'outside world' or within the church's life. The *Init-*

siativniki movement was concerned with the mystical, true and unseen church. It aimed to create a renewed community in the spirit of the apostolic church. Thus, when Iosif Bondarenko, an evangelist for the CCECB, was asked in court 'Do you consider yourself to be a youth leader?' he replied: 'We are completely democratic, we have no personality cult. Christ alone is our leader.'⁷

At the same time, the *Initiativniki* did not retreat into the catacombs, nor did they hide from the government. Rather, they did what they could to erect a line of defence. The usual steps taken for outer protection were: petitions to the government concerning the arbitrariness of local authorities; appeals to the international community; quotations on 'humane' Soviet legislation; references to the 'benign' Lenin; public debates on atheism as a 'scientific outlook'; petitions against segregation at school and work; acts of disobedience; the targeted education of children in a Christian spirit; and non-participation in voluntary associations and activities. In the debate on the right to existence, two types of argument were employed: a positive one ('We're just like everybody else,' 'Our rights are secured by the Constitution')⁸ and a negative one ('We're not like you, so just leave us alone,' 'We'll only be trouble for you, so let us go abroad'⁹). Most often they avoided argument and simply accepted repression as natural and inevitable: 'We are not of the world, so the world will always persecute us.'

Thus, Soviet evangelicals when deciding between the AUCECB and CCECB made a choice between different views of the world, one realistic, the other idealistic, one official, the other oppositional, and, correspondingly, they made a choice between different conceptions of the



Mykhailo Cherenkov (right) with Walter Sawatsky (Professor of Church History & Mission at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary until his retirement) by the graves of Pastor Georgi Vins & his wife Nadezhda, & that of his mother Lydia Vins

church and its mission in the world. The difference between these approaches is evident also in the attitude to the state, society and education.

My hypothesis is that the AUCECB and the CCECB could exist only in tandem; their characteristic differences unfolded as binary oppositions. To use Soviet terminology, in 'unity and the struggle of opposites', in the relation between the silent majority and the revolutionary minority a specific evangelical culture took shape.

Attitudes to the state

The attitude of CCECB believers to the state was wary; in civil matters it was law-abiding, and in spiritual it manifested radical opposition. In the words of Gennadi Kryuchkov:

'Atheism recognises only one form of separation of church and state: formal separation from the constitutional façade and full adherence to its reverse. There is only one way to legalise the church, and that is through its rejection of Christ and his Gospel, so that the life of the church might be governed by the directives of atheists and anti-evangelical laws on cults.'¹⁰

To those who were separated from it, the state was a repressive apparatus in the service of atheism which functioned not for the freedom of its citizens; rather, it worked against their freedom. CCECB Secretary Georgi Vins stated that non-registered churches recognised the state, but did not submit to it in matters of conscience and church life.¹¹ Vins was convicted, nevertheless, for violating the law and for anti-state activities:

‘Acting as Secretary of the so-called illegal Council of Baptist Churches, he [Vins] started on the path of non-fulfilment of the legislation on religious cults, and organised an illegal publication. G.P. Vins organised the activities of the Council, directing it to violate the laws

The official position of the AUCECB was steadfastly loyalist and was expressed – without excessive diplomacy and theological justification – in the writings of A.V. Karev:

‘Like Everest towering above all the other mountain peaks, so towered



Grave in Donetsk of Senior Presbyter Tatarchenko, famous among Ukrainian Baptists & imprisoned for his faith during the Soviet period

our greatest sociologist-humanist, Vladimir Ilich Lenin. Lenin not only deeply sympathised with the disadvantaged masses of peasants and workers, he also developed an ingenious plan for their liberation from the yoke of exploitation and poverty. Lenin's name is also connected with the appearance of the “Decree on the Separation of Church and State”, which put an end to religious discrimination [...]

on the separation of church and state and the school from the church, and to disseminate fabrications defaming the Soviet state and social order.’¹²

The once despised “sectarian-Baptists” were placed on an equal footing with the once privileged Orthodox Church.’¹⁴

His family could not obtain the text of his sentence, according to Lydia Vins, Georgi's mother:

This same approach was expressed more diplomatically several years later by AUCECB General Secretary A.M. Bychkov:

‘The Kyiv City Court refused to grant us a transcript of the sentence. Moreover, Judge Tyshel did not hold back on threats and gross insults, calling us (our family) enemies of the people, a “gang”. He declared that we needed the sentence transcript so that we could pass it on to the CIA.’¹³

‘We must gratefully acknowledge that the Council for Religious Affairs and the local authorities are all highly attentive to the needs of believers [...] We see in this the genuine implementation of the envisaged fundamental law of the country – under the new Constitution, the guarantee of the rights of believers who are citizens of the USSR to freedom of confession and the fulfilment of the religious needs of believers.’¹⁵

To government officials believers were not just a relic of the past – they were CIA agents, ‘enemies of the people’.

Thus, if for the 'separatists' (the *Initiativniki*) the state was a punitive organ of militant atheism, then for the 'registered', it was a protector and benefactor, a guarantor of stability.

Adaptation or protection

As society was not independent within a totalitarian system but controlled by the state, the attitude of Christians towards society followed from their attitude to the state, while society's view of them was dictated by government propaganda. If the 'registered' were perceived by society as strange but harmless elements, then the 'separatists' were alien elements and dangerous enemies.

The *Initiativniki* issued requests and demands that their civil rights be observed even within 'socialist law':

'At a time when throughout our country active preparations are underway for the 100th Anniversary of the Birth of V.I. Lenin, and the triumph of Leninist norms and principles in all spheres of life are being proclaimed, in the city of Odessa yet more storm clouds have gathered unleashing the persecution and harassment perpetrated by the militant fanatic-atheists against believers [...] Our Christian young people are deprived of the right of assembly, we are unable to walk freely in the street because the crowds of unbelieving young hooligans attack us (constant beatings). We are unable to get higher education and in addition to all this, all kinds of libel are directed at us in the press. [...] We know that you are unable to re-educate believers and therefore want to destroy them. We ask you: find our friends innocent; guarantee a normal life for believers and cease the poisoning of society against us;

provide genuine religious freedom; and give young believers the freedom to receive an education.'¹⁶

Young people were on the ideological front line. Letters of recantation written by former young believers conveyed not so much their personal feelings as the way the state tried to present believers to the public:

'There are no newspapers or Soviet books in the houses of believers, and they don't watch television. It's true, there is a radio. But it is only turned on when programmes from abroad are being broadcast. Other programmes are forbidden – they are sinful. How many "You mustn't," "it's not allowed", "it's a sin" – these prohibitive words accompanied me from the time I was a child. It was as if they locked me in a citadel surrounded by a high fence, isolated from the world outside. Thus, I grew up like stunted wormwood in a waterless desert, separated from life which like the sea splashed and seethed beyond the walls of my house. [...] I have stepped out onto the wide road of life. Right now the train is taking me to a military unit. In a few days, I will be a soldier, a defender of my great Fatherland.'¹⁷

The AUCECB positioned itself differently calling for openness and friendship with socialist society. But the relationship between the registered church and atheist society was not reciprocal, symmetrical. Society retained its antipathy. In 1979, AUCECB General Secretary A.M. Bychkov openly acknowledged these problems, while retaining unflappable optimism:

'Our Constitution guarantees freedom of religion. However, society

is dominated by the view that religion is a relic of the past. They call us ministers of “outgoing ideas” [...] Our hope cannot be determined by factors such as the nature of society, whether it is friendly or hostile to God’s church. Our hope rises like a beacon above the raging sea of history [...] In socialist countries enough room has been preserved for the activities of churches. We see ourselves as an integral part of society. Our experience indicates that the active participation of Christians in the general work helps to dispel distrust towards Christians.’¹⁸

He also showed that among the delegates at the 42nd All-Union ECB Congress, 49 people were awarded orders and medals, and that annual donations by ECB churches to the peace fund exceeded 200,000 roubles. All this was only the small visible part of the church’s capitulation to the government. For the official church, society was seen as the natural medium for life, to which the faithful needed to adapt as soon as possible; but for the unofficial church, it was an alien environment from which to defend yourself.

Pastors’ training

Having grown weary of the ‘excesses’ of the uneducated, and therefore uncontrollable *Initsiativniki*, the authorities in 1968 allowed the AUCECB to establish Bible correspondence courses aimed at providing the church with qualified pastors and leaders, and the State with properly educated potential employees. Already by 1975, the AUCECB newsletter was reporting on the successes of the correspondence courses and on the hundreds of graduates who moved on to become young, educated pastors.¹⁹

While the correspondence courses offered graduates the prospect of a career,

the CCECB leadership adopted a radically different view. They preached about the imminent end of the world, executions, court cases when loyalty



Michael Bourdeaux with Mykhailo Cherenkov beside Iffley parish church, Oxford

would be more important than knowledge and success: ‘In a little while we will need neither Bibles, nor Concordances, neither clothes nor shoes, nor what the world values as we shall behold Him, Christ, as He is.’²⁰ To the ‘separatists’ the correspondence courses were a means of educating pseudo-Christians who would be obedient to the atheist authorities:

‘The AUCECB rushed to open the Bible courses so that promising young people capable of service would be educated in a spirit of submission to illegal instructions [...] AUCECB General Secretary A.M. Bychkov, alluding to the objectives of the Bible courses, said: “Servants of the Lord must have a lofty sense of citizenship, knowledge of the



2006: Mykhailo Cherenkov leads a discussion in Moscow on the future of Evangelicals

existing legal provisions on cults. Our Bible courses are designed to meet these objectives. [...] Some forget that every believer is obliged to carry out [...] the legislation on cults" (*Bratsky Vestnik*, No. 5, 1972, pp. 65-66). What outrageous robbery! Young people who might serve God are being made to serve His enemies!²¹

According to Kryuchkov's memoirs any candidate for theological education had to be interviewed by the KGB even during the early Khrushchev years:

"This was in 1956. I was 30 years old. In order to be sent abroad for Bible courses, AUCECB General Secretatry A.V. Karev suggested to me that I write my autobiography and gave me as a sample a folder containing the autobiographies of students who had applied for the courses [...] Soon I was taken to the KGB. I rejected all sorts of proposals for cooperation and, after a long conversation, I was told: "There is no point being afraid of us. Without us among those who serve the church, you wouldn't be able to do a thing!"²²

Issues addressed by the AUCECB educational policy were presented by A.M. Bychkov at the 42nd All-Union ECB Congress in 1979:

"Our Bible correspondence courses, which we initiated in 1968, have continued efforts towards the theological training of ministers for service in the ECB Union, as well as in autonomous and unregistered religious communities and groups. [...] This is greatly helping our fellowship to improve evangelical work in the regions, to educate pastors and laity, to strengthen the unity of our fellowship, as well as to prevent divergent strains of doctrine."²³

Against the institutionalisation of theological education by the AUCECB, *Initiativniki* leaders appeared uneducated. Yet the latter were able to turn this into a virtue. When Khorev was on trial he calmly handled questions about his 'religious education':

'Expert: (Zykovetz-Trashchenko, PhD) Tell me, defendant, where did you obtain your religious education?

Khorev: I was educated at Christ's feet, with the Gospel in my hands.

Expert: Do you think that your education is sufficient to make you understand your actions? Perhaps you broke the law because you lacked education and did not understand the policy of the Party and the government?

Khorev: I always acted consciously and with clear understanding."²⁴

The attitude of the 'separatists' to education and theology followed from the tenets of 'evangelical simplicity' and the 'impending end of the world', the primacy of practical love over dogmatic knowledge. This attitude was expressed well in an article by Vladimir Martinkovsky which was published in the journal *Vestnik spaseniya* (later republished in *Vestnik istiny*²⁵):

'Christianity is the love of Christ; not the thought of love, not memories of a former love, but that very first love itself [...] Let us remember not only our first personal enthusiastic Christian faith, but the faith of the early church [...] Dogmas, forms, ideas were not the centre, the soul, the sacred passion of this love but it was Christ Himself.'²⁶

For most believers education as a route to social mobility or as preparation for church ministry was closed. In response to the need for trained CCECB leaders, Gennadi Kryuchkov announced in 1976 the launch of Bible courses:

'These will not be Bible courses in the usual sense, but we hope with God's help to provide more literature than is provided by even the standard Bible courses and gradually to offer all that is needed for six subjects.'²⁷

In 1977, an article entitled 'Pursue Righteousness' by N.G. Baturin, another CCECB leader, was published in *Vestnik istiny* (No 4) and for the first time criticised the deficiencies of theological education and the Baptist church's lack of seminaries and theological colleges. Ten years later he returned to the subject of education, and associated it with mission:

'God heard the perennial prayers of His people about freedom to preach the Gospel in our country and has given us a situation in which with His help we can carry out this great commission. You and I live in a historical period when the Lord has, perhaps for the last time, presented us with the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel on earth [...] it is vitally urgent to teach people how to talk about Christ to sinners, how to call to repentance.'²⁸

Bible courses and training for preachers and missionaries were organised by the CCECB within a 'programme of independence':

'Bible courses have been established by the CCECB on the spur of the moment against a backdrop of persecution. This ministry has aimed to fulfil the spiritual needs of God's people. The spirit of Christ's freedom has always reigned here. These courses have never been a matter of bargaining with outsiders [...] In the years of freedom this ministry was also protected from the influence of western theology, and the CCECB took upon itself the spiritual responsibility for training pastors.'²⁹

If for the CCECB, theological education was part of its programme of 'independence' and 'freedom from censorship', then for the official church, the Bible courses became a symbol of cooperation with and dependence on the government. For the unregistered church, the main aim of Bible courses was to train pastors for their own community; for the registered churches it was to develop cultured, educated 'ministers of religion' who were loyal to the state.

Mission in an atheist society

For both the CCECB and the AUCECB, questions about mission remained secondary for a long time, since both were faced with problems of survival – one faced constant repression, the other was constrained by the state. For both missions were banned.

By 1965 the CCECB had already set up a Department of Evangelists. According to reports, it appears that from that time hundreds of families set off to serve as missionaries in distant areas, such as the Far North of the USSR, the Urals and Central Asia.³⁰ All this was carried out in complete secrecy (the records were kept by the local churches). Only in 1972 did the CCECB publish information about missionary work in one of its samizdat publications under the headline 'News from Missionary Fields' with a report about an international conference on the evangelisation of students in Dallas (a Campus Crusade mission), with information about the ministry of the Gideons, about student missions in European universities, and also about the Jesus Movement.³¹ The following year a call to young people to go on a mission to areas where the Gospel was unknown was published for the first time in a Baptist samizdat periodical.³²

In 1976, the CCECB's publication *Vestnik istiny* published an article on the success of the Jesus Movement, citing the work of Billy Graham and materials from *Christianity Today*.³³ The article was the first discussion of the specifics of working with young people for whom Jesus was the 'first hippie' and a 'revolutionary hero', and for whom it was worth 'building a bridge over the chasm that separates young people from the church'; 'changing the methods' employed by the church were advocated. This was

the only time the CCECB allowed itself a kind of 'missiological liberalism' in one of its publications.

CCECB mission was focused primarily on its own communities or on large youth 'gatherings'.³⁴ By the end of the 1970s new forms of evangelism were adopted:

'All across our country, it has long been a tradition to hold youth gatherings on public holidays [...] At them, as a rule, calls for repentance are always heard, because these youth gatherings attract many non-believers, including those who persecute Christians. But Christian youth ministry is not limited to such relatively rare gatherings [...] At the end of last year in one of the communities of our fellowship, cards were distributed on which were written the names of villages where there were no believers, no divine services. After lengthy devotional preparation, groups of young people and individual preachers were sent to these villages [...] to call at all the houses, urging all who desired to hear the Gospel message.'³⁵

Mission then expanded to include prisons, the local authorities and law-enforcement agencies.³⁶ When a judge asked Khorev whether he knew that religious services could only be organised in specially designated places he replied: 'One can preach anywhere! I am ready to preach even behind barbed wire!'³⁷ Trials were turned into places where the accused could witness to their faith. During a trial in Odessa, on 2-7 February 1967, the accused G.G. Borushko in his final speech said:

'As I was studying natural science, the religious question appeared before me in a whole new light. I

saw that the greatest scholarly pillars of science [...] were sincere believers. So I finally decided to answer for myself the question: "Is there a God or not?" i.e. "To be or not to be a believer?" At this time I read the Bible a lot, and through much doubt I arrived at belief in God. My atheism, my unbelief was based on ignorance of the Bible.'³⁸

At her trial V.I. Alekseeva said:

'I thank God that today, on the day of my spiritual birth, I have been counted worthy to sit in the dock. Citizen Judges, if faith in God has brought me happiness and filled my heart to overflowing, then how can I not tell others about this. Furthermore the Constitution guarantees freedom of conscience.'³⁹

Ya.N. Krivoi said in his defence speech:

'We have a law about freedom of conscience, and it's against the law to encroach upon a person's conscience. Based on the laws of our country, I have not committed any crime before either society, or the state. And if I am to suffer as a Christian, I am ready to bear chains. I have been a Christian now for 40 years, and you will neither re-educate me nor break me with any threats.'⁴⁰

A view of mission was presented by Vladimir Zinchenko, a young CCECB leader in a *Vestnik istiny* article:

'Genuine evangelism is not a theological course, it is not a religious lecture and it is not a trendy Christian craze. Evangelism is the natural revealing of Christ dwelling within us, the warm breath of life of the awakened church. There, where there is no spiritual awakening,

there is also no genuine evangelism. Every form of missionary activity by nominal Christianity is only an imitation of true evangelism. Each new generation of Christians must live through its own experience of spiritual awakening, otherwise it will not be capable of spreading the word to its own generation in the world and in the sleeping church.'⁴¹

The position of the AUCECB on the church and mission in an atheist society was expressed by A.V. Karev:

'The aim of Christianity in relation to atheism is not to confront but to create an atmosphere of dialogue with atheism. The Christian church is not a fortress with high walls erected to make it unassailable to opponents. No, Christ's church is a dwelling place, open to all. The programme of socialist atheism includes matters which have not sufficiently concerned the Christian churches – social equality, racial discrimination, exploitation of man by man, the fight against hunger, against the threat of war and nuclear destruction, and many other problems facing humanity. [...] it is not surprising that suffering humanity, disillusioned with Christianity, has been drawn to confronting today's serious social problems which cry out for a solution.'⁴²

We see in the approach to mission of the AUCECB and CCECB the same opposing views as those on the state, society and education. One advocated the social orientation of ministry, the other stressed the importance of integrity, 'staying firm'. For the AUCECB mission had to fit in with their framework of loyalty to the state and society, while for the CCECB, the gospel had to remain 'untainted' with no societal role. The anti-Soviet revolutionary minority

and the toothless assimilated pro-Soviet majority were equally paralysed in their missionary activity: the one – too far removed from society to serve it – the other – too close to it to be distinguishable from it and to offer it a valid alternative. Both the one and the other ended up as hostages to the Soviet system.

The unity of opposites?

To compare the forms and patterns of the registered and unregistered churches leads back to the question about whether these positions were really incompatible or irreconcilable. Towards the end of the Soviet era in October 1988 three leaders of evangelical churches which did not belong to the AUCECB, called for repentance for past sins in order to restore unity to the church's mission, without insisting on uniformity or joint leadership:

'In connection with the creation of favourable external conditions and other factors, the spiritual life of the people of God at a local level is steadily undergoing renewal. In many communities, especially among the younger members we are witnessing a marked increase in preaching the Gospel [...] The AUCECB is not keeping up with the changes taking place at a local level, it is unable to lead and guide evangelism in the right direction; indeed it is holding it back. This is its nature; it cannot act in any other way [...] Not one of the existing unions can unify; on the contrary, they are constantly struggling, each to expand its influence on the fellowship, which deepens the division. We are not proposing yet another alliance. We do not propose to reform or restore existing alliances. We propose a union of all Evangel-

ical Christians-Baptists to promote dialogue and evangelisation. From this flows the other objectives of a union: not administrative leadership,



Left to right: Dr Grigori Komendant, President of the Ukrainian Union of ECB Associations, 1990-2006, & Mykhailo Cherenkov

but support for the churches and the cause of the Gospel. The structure of the union should also be based on the priesthood of all the people. This means there would be no hierarchical structure.'⁴³

This appeal remained unheard, as was the 'Appeal of Christian Ecumenists' drawn up on the margins of the AUCECB in 1972 which stated:

'We can unite within our congregations, but once and for all we reject schismatic isolation, recognising that divisions within the Universal Church are only an external necessity while at the same time it preserves its quest for inner unity. We are not creating a new church, we want to be peacemakers in the "good and ancient" Church of Christ.'⁴⁴

Today's examination of past models of the church and its survival strategies is not the result of mere curiosity. Totali-

tarianism is not a thing of the past, but manifests itself in new forms. As we have seen before, the evangelical churches today are under pressure from the state and the dominant church. Some people choose the politics of compromise, to adapt and to integrate; others choose rupture, separation, war with the world. The church's experience of survival in the Soviet period can be a useful pattern for nonconformity, dissidence, freedom in the face of fear. To study the history of the church's divisions and the unsuccessful dialogue between different evangelical strands can be a good basis for addressing mistakes and renewing relations.

At the end of the Soviet era, attempts were made to overcome Soviet and anti-Soviet isolationism. The emergence into a world that was neither Soviet nor anti-Soviet, but something new, could have widened and deepened the cultural field, theological knowledge and dialogue between traditions. An editorial in the revived Prokhanov journal, *Khristianin*, published the policy statements of a group of new evangelical leaders:

'Protestantism has not had time to develop its own culture in Russia, it has not had time to produce its own theologians, writers, scientists and philosophers. Moreover, it has not even had time to recognise the need for this, as it limits itself to the simplest, even primitive, understanding of Christianity – with a defensive and conservative approach to spiritual life. Russian Protestants were not only physically persecuted in the past; to this day they are regarded as "sectarians". The reasons for this attitude reside deep within our social history, in the conceptions formed by the Orthodox Church as the dominant, state religion. It is

essential that these conceptions be overcome if we want to live in a humane society. Those with authority and power can easily drive any group into a corner, to the periphery of life, they can marginalise them while themselves exuding religious snobbery, and then shaking a finger at them, accuse them of narrowness, alienation from national history.'⁴⁵

Unfortunately the development of church alliances after the collapse of the USSR has not followed a path of de-marginalisation, cultural constructiveness, theological analysis, historical re-evaluation, but a path of quantitative and political competition, further isolation one from another and adaptation to an unregulated market and immature democracy (as before some adapted by integrating with the new order, and others retreated even further into isolation).

After the newly-acquired freedom, the official church started talking too soon about entering society, forgetting the lessons of marginalisation under totalitarianism, the Soviet traumas and the enduring enmity between radical and modernist approaches. This hasty, naive socialisation made the church vulnerable: nobody wanted to lose any of the ground gained, so everyone was ready to make deals, trade in their principles. No less damaging has been the continuing isolation of 'sectarian' groups – self-sufficient 'in principle', beset with internal problems, and indifferent to the world and to mission in the world. The religious life of the church has been impoverished by both organised conformity and by radical isolationism.

An important lesson of Soviet history is the natural complementarity of the two images of the church – the 'official'

and the oppositional, the radical and the modernist, the public and the clandestine, the path of the majority, and the path of the minority. No one from within these strands could see this, unlike Fr Gleb Yakunin.⁴⁶ This dialectic between the different images of the church provides the necessary dynamic for the church's development as a whole. They complement each other and are interdependent. For the majority the natural response to social challenge has been adaptation, while only a minority has turned to radicalisation or isolation. This 'sociology' is applicable not only when comparing the two orientations, but it also 'works' within both; thus, the 'narrow' path (the path

of the minority) and the 'broad' path (the path of the majority) are always interdependent. In the light of this natural order and complementarity, the significance of church reformation (lauded by the 'separatists' and secretly dreamed about by the 'registered') can be understood differently – it lies not in schism, in separation from the majority, in retreat from the world but rather in the renewal of a unified church and the rebirth in it of such a variety of views so as to make it impossible to control from outside. It is a pity that neither the AUCECB nor the CCECB understood this and thus failed to discover a fruitful synergy and to win freedom from the Soviet past.

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1. The most valuable documents are open letters, internal church correspondence, appeals and petitions, minutes of meetings and judicial proceedings, and also the Baptist samizdat. Keston Archive references are given in the footnotes.
 2. 'The new tactics of sectarian leaders ...were expressed as a formal recognition of the Soviet system, and were correspondingly reflected in a kind of "reconciliation" with Soviet reality. This was a tactic of accommodation replete with Christian-Socialist demagoguery' from Klivanov, A.I., *Religious Sectarianism and Modernity*. (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), 9.
 3. This approach is described by Heather Coleman: 'Just as their descendants would discover in the Brezhnev era, so evangelicals in the first three decades of the 20th century found that their private spiritual experiences forced them willy-nilly into a public challenge to the political and cultural structures of their society. Evangelical ideas served at once to help believers to make sense of the cultural dislocations arising from rapid modernisation and to articulate a place for themselves in the emerging society. Conversion to the Baptist faith served as motivation for demanding and living out an alternate vision of society to that sponsored by the Russian state' in *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 222.
 4. 'Sects are a special aspect of Russian history, its cultural underbelly and religious underground ... In Russia, religious dissent acquired an unusually radical character. It gave rise to unique ideas and modes of life, but never managed to enter into the main body of the culture. [...] They [sects] all evolved in a clash between national tradition and western influence' in Etkind, A., *Khlyst: Sekty, literatura i revolyutsiya* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1998), 3.
 5. Open Letter by Lydia Kryuchkova, August 1974. SU/Ini 74.
 6. 'Whether or not the attempt of Prokofiev and his supporters to purify and revitalise the ECB Church is ultimately successful, they may have triggered off an urge for reform which will sweep through all the Christian churches of the Soviet Union. If this should happen everywhere with such determination as has been shown in the ECB Church, Christianity may yet prove itself to be one of the most dynamic forces in the future evolution of Soviet society' in Michael Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia. Protestant Opposition to Soviet Religious Policy*. (London: MacMillan, 1968), 189.

7. The trial of N.P. Shevchenko and I.D. Bondarenko. General overview of the trial. SU/ Ini/Docs 1962 Undated
8. 'We would have kept silent had we known that we are not given any rights by law. However, there are words in the law on the freedom of religious expression, and in his *Socialism and Religion* V.I. Lenin wrote: "Religion must be of no concern to the state."' (Open Letter, Perm, 20 May, 1974, ECB). 'Dear Leonid Ilich [...] at congresses one thing is decided and approved by you, while what we are experiencing is, in fact, quite different. All manner of insults and the persecution of believers are not stopped; rather, they are increased, although we live in a free state, with an advanced social order which guarantees freedom of conscience and religion' (Open Letter, November 1973, Kiselevsk, ECB).
9. 'We flee from tyranny and violence, from hard labour in Soviet camps. We run from the insults directed at our conscience, from intellectual depravity to which we have been demonically subjected for nearly 60 years ...' (31 May, 1979, 'Statement to the UN from 45 Believers, Christians of Evangelical Faith [Pentecostals] and ECB', Su/ pen 11/8).
10. Kryuchkov, G.K. '20 let po puti vozrozhdeniya', *Vestnik istiny*, 1981, 3-4 (75-76), 13.
11. Georgi Vins explained that the church he headed rejected state control over church affairs, but recognised the Soviet state as such and did not resist it. However his church did not observe the state's ban on religious work among children and young people because it wanted to stay true to the missionary command of the Gospel. ('Vins says it: The Future belongs to Christians', *Church of England Newspaper*, 28 September, 1979, 2.)
12. Obvinitel'noe zaklyuchenie po delu Vinsa Georgiya Petrovicha, Kiev, 1975. / USSR/ Ini 1/75
13. To the Amnesty Commission on International Human Rights from Lydia Makhailovna Vins, 26 March, 1975.
14. Karev, A., *Rozhdenie novogo mira* [Birth of a New World]// A. Karev, *Izbrannyye stat'i*. (Moscow: AUCECB, 1977), 168-179.
15. Progress Report from the AUCECB 42nd All-Union Congress of the ECB (General Secretary of the AUCECB A.M. Bychkov), Moscow, 18-20 December, 1979 SU/ Bap.
16. 13 May, 1969 Appeal from the Young Believers of Odessa and the Oblasts. SU/Ini .
17. 'Solntse svetit vsem', *Kazakhstanskaya pravda*, August-September 1975, 3.
18. Progress Report from the AUCECB 42nd All-Union Congress of the ECB (General Secretary of the AUCECB A.M. Bychkov), Moscow, 18-20 December, 1979.
19. 'More than ten young superintendents and nearly 200 pastors were recently selected to serve in different republics and regions of the Soviet Union. Many of them are graduates of the two-year Bible courses of the AUCECB' (SU 12 Bap 20 Information bulletin 28/10/75).
20. Open Letter. 'Khristianam vsego mira!' ['To Christians throughout the World!'] 7 June, 1974 SU/Ini.
21. 'Vopros registratsii i sud'ba spaseniya' ['The Registration Issue and the Fate of Salvation'] *Vestnik istiny*, 1984, 1, 2-6.
22. Kryuchkov, G.K., '20 let po puti vozrozhdeniya' *Vestnik istiny*, 1981, 3-4 (75-76), 7.
23. Progress Report from the AUCECB 42nd All-Union Congress of the ECB (General Secretary of the AUCECB A.M. Bychkov), Moscow: 18-20 December, 1979.
24. The trial of the Evangelist M.I. Khorev of the ECB Council of Churches (Moscow). Brief notes. 1966.
25. Martsinkovsky, V., 'Pervaya lyubov' *Vestnik istiny*, 1976.1 (63).
26. Martsinkovsky, V. 'Khristos gryadushchii' *Vestnik spaseniya*, 1967, 4 (20), 12-16.
27. Kryuchkov, G.K., 'Slovo otcheta.' *Vestnik istiny*, 1976, 3-4 (55-56). 15.
28. Baturin, N.G., 'Idite... nauchite...krestite' *Vestnik istiny*, 1988, No. 2, 2-3.

29. 'Programma – nezavisimost' *Vestnik istiny*, 2011, No. 3, 33.
30. *ibid.*, loc. cit.
31. 'Vesti s polei missii' *Vestnik spaseniya*, 1972, 1 (37), 36-38.
32. Smith, O., 'Pisma i yazyki, vse eshche ne dostignutyie Evangeliiem' *Vestnik spaseniya*, 1972, 2 (38), 27.
33. 'Kharakternye priznaki "Iisus dvizheniya"' *Vestnik istiny*, 1976, 1 (63), 16-19.
34. As Fr Gleb Yakunin observed, 'In recent years, the *Initsiativniki* have begun organising prayer meetings in major cities around the country (Rostov, Odessa), which believers from all over the country have been attending. At these meetings, dozens of young people are turning to God, receiving baptism, joining the community of believers. Thus, hundreds of new converts are stepping forward in place of their arrested brethren in the faith.' (G. Yakunin, 'O sovremennom polozhenii russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi i o perspektivakh religioznogo vrozozhdeniya Rossii' [The Current Situation of the ROC and Prospects for a Religious Revival in Russia.] *SSSR: Vnutrennie protivorechiya* [Internal Contradictions]. Issue 3. Ed. Valery Chalidze. New York: 1982, 191.)
35. 'Blagovestvuyushchaya molodezh' *Vestnik istiny*, 1978, 1 (61), 29
36. 'Russian people were "tired of atheism" and beginning to look for God again. There were Christians even among policemen and officers of the KGB and the Russian Secret Service.' ('Vins says it: The Future Belongs to Christians' *Church of England Newspaper*, 28 September, 1979, 2.)
37. The trial of the Evangelist M.I. Khorev of the ECB Council of Churches (Moscow). Brief notes. 1966.
38. The Judicial Proceedings against the ECB Believers in the City of Odessa, 2-7 February, 1967, 112-113.
39. *ibid.*, 122.
40. *ibid.*, 104-105.
41. Zinchenko, V.P. 'Podlinnoe blagovestie' ['Genuine Evangelism'] *Vestnik Istiny*, 1990, No.1, 2-3
42. Karev, A. 'Chelovek i evangelie v ateisticheskom okruzenii' ['Man and the Gospel in an Atheistic Environment'] in Karev, A., *Izbrannye stat'i*. Moscow: AUCECB, 1977, 70-173.
43. Kuksenko, Yu.F., Shaptala, M.T., Shumeiko, F.A. 'Bratskoe predlozhenie ot sluzhitelei nezavisimyykh Tserkvei ECB' ['A Fraternal Offer from the Pastors of the ECB Independent Churches'] 17 October, 1988.
44. Prizyv khristian-ekumenistov, 1972 [Appeal of Christian Ecumenists] 1972 / USSR/ Bap 22.
45. 'Vozrozhdeniye i novyi' ['The Reborn and New'] *Khristianin*, 1990, No. 1, 2-3.
46. 'Within the church's structure there are two communicating entities, built in a similar fashion – two church bodies: the official one registered by the state and the unofficial, unregistered one. This dynamic structure allows the church to withstand the most severe pressure from the government, because pressure on the official part of the church only reinforces and strengthens the unregistered church" (G. Yakunin, 'O sovremennom polozhenii russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi i o perspektivakh religioznogo vrozozhdeniya Rossii' ['The Current Situation of the ROC and Prospects for a Religious Revival in Russia'] USSR: *Vnutrennie protivorechiya* [Internal Contradictions] Issue 3. Ed. Valery Chalidze. New York, 1982, 191.)

Dr Mykhailo Cherenkov was Provost of the Donetsk Christian University in Eastern Ukraine 2011-2013 and now works for Mission Eurasia. He is a professor at the Catholic University in Lviv and was awarded a scholarship in 2014 by Keston Institute to work in the Keston Center at Baylor.

Home News

Keston's AGM will be held on Saturday 7 November 2015 at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine, Butcher Row, London E14 8DS. The Chairman looks forward to seeing Keston members and hopes as many as possible will be able to attend.

Close contact with the Keston Center at Baylor has been maintained: Michael Bourdeaux spent a few days working in the Keston Archive in December 2014 and was able to attend the Keston Center's Advisory Board meeting on 3 December at which Baylor's President, Ken Starr, greeted Michael and made an impromptu speech on the importance he attaches to religious liberty and the contribution Keston has made to it. In his report Michael drew attention to the on-going work of the Encyclopaedia team, stating that this fieldwork provided – even from a secular point of view – a unique insight, probably unparalleled elsewhere – into some aspects of Russia's regions. Keston, he said, was conscious of the fact that Russia now has a higher profile in the world media (for all the wrong reasons) than it has had for many years and that the time was ripe to fulfil Keston UK's plans for presenting the kernel of the Encyclopaedia work in English in a one-volume print edition. He also mentioned that the articles he had written had been an attempt to keep the name of Keston alive in the media. Later, at an informal meeting Michael commended the remarkable progress with the Archive and compared Keston's



Keston Center Advisory Board meeting (27 February, 2015). Left to right: Dr Steve Gardner (chairman), Xenia Dennen & Larisa Seago (archivist) with Raquel Gibson (in background) seconded to the Keston Center from the Department of Museum Studies.

work at Baylor with Holocaust Studies, which command massive support wherever they are undertaken. Like these the Keston Archive, he observed, speaks out to the world: 'Never again!' (referring to the failed experiment in social engineering, the exclusion of God from human affairs).



Dr Wallace Daniel & Xenia Dennen

This year the Chairman visited Baylor for a Keston Center Advisory Board meeting on 27 February and on the previous day gave a public lecture about Keston's history and its defence of persecuted Christians in the USSR which was followed by a panel discussion. Dr Wallace Daniel, a panel member (he helped engineer the transfer of the Archive to Baylor) spoke about Fr Gleb Yakunin, while Dr Steve Gardner, the Advisory Board chairman, discussed the Russian Orthodox Church's view of democracy. During the Advisory Board

meeting, the Director, Kathy Hillman, reported that 12,049 items had been catalogued as well as 14 audio tapes, while 100 boxes of material still awaited sorting. All issues of the *Keston News Service* had been digitised as well as 3,054 pages of Keston material. The digitising centre at Baylor now has a high-speed scanner which can scan 99 pages per minute!



Since the Chairman's report to the 2014 AGM, the Encyclopaedia team have taken part in three field trips – to Kaliningrad in November, to Kostroma on the Volga in January this year and to Kalmykia in March.

In Kaliningrad the team interviewed the city's Roman Catholic priest, Russian Orthodox leaders and many Protestants. They talked to members of the only Lutheran parish in the city; almost 90% of Soviet Germans who were Luther-



Entrance to the Ipatiev Monastery, Kostroma

ans and had come from Central Asia to settle in Kaliningrad after the Second World War, had now emigrated to Germany so not many Lutherans remained in the *oblast*. Some of the fine former Lutheran churches on territory which had once been part of East Prussia, were now used by the Russian Orthodox: the team were struck by the



Xenia Dennen outside St Nicholas, Kaliningrad

gothic-style iconostasis in the Church of St Nicholas which had been constructed to blend in with the church's architecture. Before *perestroika* there had been no Russian Orthodox parish in the Kaliningrad *oblast*, so many Orthodox believers had found churches to attend in neighbouring Lithuania. Highlights of the field trip to the Kostroma *oblast* included a somewhat hair-raising drive for 700km along nearly impassable snow-covered roads to a small town called Sharya, where the team interviewed a group of Orthodox clergy who ran a youth centre and social work programme. Another memorable encounter was with Fr Pyotr Andrianov, the Abbot of the Ipatiev Monastery which overlooks the Volga on the edge of Kostroma. The monastery was there, he said, 'to help

Christians dedicate their life to God and neighbour... it is a place of self-denial, a brotherhood where the ideal of Christian life can be embodied.' Kalmykia, West of the Caspian Sea, was a great contrast to European Russia. It is one of the three Buddhist areas in the Russian Federation, and although the team were told that about 20% of the population were Russian Orthodox, these they found were mostly Russians, not Kalmyks. On their field trip to Elista, the



The main Buddhist temple in Elista

capital, in 2012 the Encyclopaedia team had visited the main Buddhist temple and learned about official Buddhism which follows the Tibetan tradition, but this time they wanted to find out about unofficial Buddhist groups. Bator Elis-taev, a Kalmyk intellectual who had studied in the early 1990s at the Buddhist temple in St Petersburg, ran one such unofficial group. His first teacher, he related, had been one of the few remaining Buddhist monks who had resisted Soviet pressure to marry and live a secular working life; he had spent

Patrons

Dr Rowan Williams
The Archbishop of Westminster
The Chief Rabbi of Great Britain
The Moderator of the Free Churches
The Archbishop of Glasgow
The Archbishop of Thyateira & Great Britain
Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia

28 years in the Gulag until his release in 1957. Elistaev's parents had been born in Siberia and knew nothing about Buddhism, but his grandmother had observed rituals and meditated every evening, he said. When his father had died the family had carried out all the correct rituals but in secret, at night. Further information on the religious situation in the area was provided by Basan Zakharov whom Roman Lunkin had contacted through Facebook! He



Left to right: *Roman Lunkin, Xenia Dennen, Basan Zakharov & Sergei Filatov*

headed a group of young people who were followers of a pagan pre-Buddhist philosophy called *Tengrianstvo*, which, Zakharov claimed, was at the root of Kalmyk culture: '*Tengrianstvo* is the philosophy of the future; it is about harmony with oneself, with others, with the environment – one day it needs to spread throughout the world.'

Keston Institute

PO Box 752, Oxford OX1 9QF

administrator@keston.org.uk

www.keston.org.uk