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Ivan Georgievich Formov (holding Bible), an itinerant Baptist preacher who was executed in 1937, sits with his wife, children & grandchildren. Photograph dated 1927 from the private collection of Ludmila Dmitrievna (Formova) Rodionova. Used with permission.

Evangelical Women in Siberia as Preservers of Memory

by April French

Anna Kirpichnikova's unpredictable fits, which had alienated her from friends and family, drove her to seek assistance at several Russian Orthodox churches in St Petersburg, but not one priest was willing to help. So Anna, the wife of an alcoholic factory worker, then turned to the self-proclaimed 'Baptists', led by Colonel Vasili Pashkov and Count Modest Korf. As the story goes, Pashkov and Korf prayed over her for hours until the evil spirits that tormented her – convulsing her body violently and provoking screams of blasphemous profanities –

miraculously abandoned her. Anna's dramatic life change prompted her husband, Vasili, who had been on the verge of filing for divorce, to take her back, stop drinking, and make a personal decision to follow Jesus Christ,

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whom he attributed with freeing his wife from her demons. After the couple were re-baptised, Pashkov employed Vasili at his Tambov estate, essentially sending the Kirpichnikovs out as missionaries to testify to how Christ had saved them from sin. In 1887, Vasili was exiled to Siberia for preaching a new and politically suspect message about salvation and adult baptism. Chained to common criminals and political revolutionaries, he rode and walked thousands of miles until he arrived in the southernmost reaches of the Eniseiskaya Guberniya (present-day Krasnoyarsk Krai). By 1889, Anna and their three children followed, and the family took up residence in the town of Minusinsk. This isolated couple began to hold meetings in their home for those interested in studying the Bible and, hence, became the founders of the longest-standing Evangelical community in Siberia.¹

Just over 125 years later, the Evangelical Christian-Baptist church in Minusinsk is working to preserve their history, to uncover lesser known details about certain figures in their history (including the Kirpichnikov family), and to publicise their story more widely. On my visit to Minusinsk in early March 2015, this community proved eager to tell their story. On 29 October 1937, in the midst of the Great Terror, 22 Baptist leaders were shot in a forest outside Minusinsk, having been sentenced by the provincial NKVD Troika to death by shooting. The head pastor (presbyter) of the Minusinsk church, Ivan Anatolevich Bulychev, took me to the memorial their church had recently erected at the site of the shooting. In my interview of Valentina Efimovna Kiikova, whose father was one of the victims and who has chosen to keep his surname in honour of his sacrifice, I sensed a deep respect for her parents' faith and a desire that their story be

told. When Ludmila Dmitrievna Rodionova, the granddaughter of one of the 1937 victims, heard that I was in town, she contacted me with a sense of urgency that her family's memory be preserved. Her grandfather, Ivan Georgievich Formov (1877-1937), had worked as a village doctor based in Turan and Aziut in the Tuvan People's Republic, and seems to have served for years as an itinerant preacher to several villages in the area. The photograph on the front cover shows the Formov family in 1927, at their home above Aziut: Ivan Georgievich, holding a Bible sits in the front row next to his wife, Pelagia Nikiforovna, with their four sons, two daughters-in-law, and oldest two grandchildren (born 1925 and 1927). Ivan Georgievich and Pelagia Nikiforovna lived the final seven years of his life with one of their sons in Minusinsk, where he continued his professional work as a doctor and his service within the church. For 'organising and conducting an illegal congress of Baptists in the town of Abakan,' he was charged according to Statutes 58-2, 58-10, and 58-11 of the Criminal Code and sentenced on 22 October 1937, along with 21 others, to death by shooting.² Thus, although Bulychev, the current head pastor at Minusinsk, has done much to uncover and preserve the church's history, I found that the women of the church have also taken on an unofficial role as the keepers of their families' and church's story.

Such an observation is hardly surprising. Most member lists from Evangelical churches in the late Soviet period, for example, reveal that 75% to 80% of members were women. Women have, accordingly, done much to preserve their churches' histories, often in the course of preserving the memories of their social circles and extended families. Over time, memory can fail or deceive, but historical documentation,



A page from one of the albums of the Cheremkhovo church. Top left: photo of the former Prayer House, purchased in 1948, located on Prikhanov Street in Cheremkhovo. Bottom right: Mavra Efimovna Lychagina (right) the paternal grandmother of V.P. Lychagina, with three other Baptist 'sisters' in 1946. The upper text (with an unexplained date of 1956) states: 'Yes, it was a difficult time for Christians. Authorities sentenced them for their faith, imprisoned them, and hated them. Yet, despite this, they continued to serve God, read His Word, pray for each other, and sing praises to Him. They could receive all of this in their favourite Church, and for them, this Church was dear and beloved.' Used with permission.

including photos and official state documents can do much to confirm the significant stories shared in oral history interviews and memoirs. And the women I encountered in my travels around Siberia were actively involved in photographic and documentary collection and preservation.

During my time in Cheremkhovo, a small coal mining town in the Irkutsk oblast, I discovered two albums documenting the Evangelical Christian-Baptist church's history. In 2005, two women, including long-time member Vera Pavlovna Lychagina, gathered photographs and information from the older members of their church and created the albums in honour of the church's 85th anniversary. When asked

why she and her friend decided to create these albums, Vera Pavlovna replied,

'We must leave something behind for our youth and children, because it is important that the church continues its dynasty of how our ancestors lived and suffered.'³

In Novosibirsk, I came across another album, compiled by Vera Zakharovna Barysheva (d. ~2011) and currently located in the offices of Posokh Publishers. While the Cheremkhovo albums are by and large a chronological record of that church's history, Barysheva seems to have put together her Novosibirsk album with little regard for chronology. In the image of



A page from a photo album of the Novosibirsk church, created by V.Z. Barysheva. Used with permission from Andrei Grigorevich Melnikov.

one of the pages from the album, the top photo is from the Harvest celebration in 1958 in the Evangelical Christian-Baptist prayer house on Zhurinskaya Street (this building, located in the city centre, was torn down by officials three years later, and another building on the property was confiscated and repurposed; believers were then forced to 'relocate' to a remote area, where they built a new prayer house with the wood scraps from the old building); the bottom left photo documents the official visit by Billy and Franklin Graham to the church in Sep-

tember 1984; and the bottom right photo shows two church members in what appears to be the late 1970s. Despite the lack of chronological organisation, Barysheva's Novosibirsk album is a rich source of photographic documentation of this registered church's history during the Soviet period. Several oral history interviewees also showed me their baptismal albums, painstakingly created by 'sisters' with beautiful art work and scripture verses for each person baptised, as a way of reminding them of the importance of this sacrament.

In addition to albums, women also created and collected handwritten notebooks – personal memoirs, poems, short stories, handwritten reproductions of Christian journal articles, hymns (with and without musical notes), books of the Bible and sermon notes. Evidence suggests that such notebooks were used as mutual discipleship tools, with various women writing in other women's notebooks with spiritual poems and scripture passages for spiritual edification. In the context of a severe shortage of Bibles and no opportunities for an official theological education – due to the forced secularism of the Communist Party, the tight



'God is Love.' A page from a spiritual notebook of Lia Stepanovna Fedosova when she was a young woman (Novosibirsk, 1946 or 1947). From the private collection of Eduard Adolfovich and Ludmila Anatolievna Genrikh (Lia's daughter). Used with permission.



Antonina Borisovna Chernova holding her mother's pre-revolutionary New Testament & Psalter. Krasnoyarsk, 19 March, 2015

state control of religious organisations, and the frequent Evangelical view that only men should receive a theological education – such notebooks often formed the backbone of women's theological knowledge. Despite the Bible shortage, some families were able to preserve pre-revolutionary Bibles, New Testaments, and hymnals. Multiple family members would read from the one family Bible, occasionally with the younger, literate generation reading to the older, illiterate generation. Special hiding places were designated within the home in case officials came to search for illegal spiritual literature.

The women in churches belonging to the Council of Churches (also known as the *'Initsiativniki'*, 'separate', or 'unregistered' Baptists) played a particularly prominent role in documenting and preserving the memory of the suffering experienced by members of their churches in the period from 1961 to



Baptist believers meeting with Mikhail Sigarev (back row, far right). Nikolai Savchenko is second from left in the back row. Among the women who helped to prepare the meal are Ludmila Savchenko (centre, third row) & Tatiana Gavrilovna Perova (front row, second from left), a single woman who was regularly fined well beyond her salary for hosting prayer meetings at her home.

From the private collection of Ludmila Leontevna Savchenko. Used with permission.

1991. While in Omsk in June 2015, I interviewed Ludmila Leontevna Savchenko, the wife of Nikolai Romanovich Savchenko (1925-1989), who was imprisoned three times for his faith. Ludmila is an expert chronicler; her collection contains several photographs with lengthy, historically useful descriptions on the back. The photo above contained the following description:

‘1977 or 1978. Misha [Mikhail] Sigarev’s visit after his second imprisonment. After Sigarev’s release from his second imprisonment, the KGB put him on a train with his children who had come to meet him, sending them from the Isil’-Kul’ station, where he had finished his term, directly to Labin, where

his family was located. They did not allow him to pass through Omsk. After some time had passed, in order to meet with the church where he had been a minister and to thank everyone who had helped his orphans for the five years he was sitting in prison, M[ikhail] R. traveled to Omsk. Among those he thanked was the choir of the registered community, which had helped the family, unbeknownst to the leaders of their church. The sisters in this photograph had prepared the lunch for the brothers, among whom N[ikolai] R[omanovich] was also present.’

Ludmila Savchenko, the mother of six children, was never officially a ‘member’ of the Council of Prisoners’

Relatives (CPR) – an association started and run by women in order to petition for the release of their imprisoned brothers, husbands, and fathers (and occasionally sisters, wives, and mothers) – but she did serve as a *pomoshchnitsa* (assistant) for the Siberian branch. In this capacity, she traveled to various locations to interview believers' families, including several trips to Barnaul to interview the wife of Nikolai Khmara, several years after the famous Baptist martyr had died at the hands of violent interrogators in 1964. Much of what was reported within the CPR Bulletin in the 1970s regarding believers in Siberia came directly from Ludmila's clandestine work.⁴ Thus, when she recently read a brief retelling of Nikolai Khmara's story in the Russian translation of a devotional put out by Voice of the Martyrs, she was upset that the story, in her view, spread misinformation concerning Khmara. In-

deed, Evangelical women place great significance on protecting the 'pure history' of their church.

Most histories of the Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union focus almost entirely on the presbyters and spend much less time on the stories of those sitting in the pews and serving behind the scenes, the vast majority of whom were women.⁵ In my dissertation project, I am exploring the everyday faith of these women and their children. From the Anna Kirpichnikovas in the late 19th century, to the Ludmila Savchenkos of the late 20th century, to the current generation in the 21st century, women have continued to play a vital role in preserving their churches' history and memory. Thanks to the work these Evangelical women in Siberia have done, I have no shortage of primary sources to analyse.

1. A. L. Magdalin, *Slovo Khrista narodam Eniseiskoi zemli* (Abakan: Strezhen', 2003), I:11-22; Sharyl Corrado, 'The Philosophy of Ministry of Colonel Vasilii Pashkov,' M.A. Thesis (Wheaton College: 2000), 55-56, 86.
2. Letter No. 12730 from Arkhivnoe agentstvo administratsia Krasnoyarskogo kraia to Formova L.D. (10 December 2007).
3. Informal interview with Vera Pavlovna Lychagina, 7 April 2015, Cheremkhovo Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church.
4. Oral history interview with Ludmila Leontevna Savchenko, 150609_001. Interview conducted by April French. Omsk, 9 June 2015.
5. Noteworthy exceptions include: Nadezhda Belyakova and Miriam Dobson, ed., *Zhenshchiny v evangel'skikh obshchinakh* (Moscow: Indrik, 2015); A.I. Savin, 'Repressii v otnoshenii evangel'skikh veruyushchikh v Sibiri v 1939-1941 gg.,' in *Kniga pamiati zhertv politicheskikh repressii v Novosibirskoi oblasti*, Vypusk 2, ed. V.N. Denisov and S.A. Papkov (Novosibirsk: Sova, 2008).

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Muslim Radicalisation in the North-West Caucasus

by Sergei Filatov

Religious belief among the mountain peoples of the North-West Caucasus – in three republics, Adygea, Karachai-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria containing five ethnic groups, the Adygei, Kabardins, Cherkess, Balkars and Karachais – is unusual if not unique. Although the Adygei, Cherkess and Kabardins belong to the Abkhazian-Adygei language group (they call themselves the ‘Adygei peoples’ and see themselves as one group) and the Balkars and Karachais to the Turkic group, although there are significant differences in the history and culture of these peoples, when it comes to religion they have much in common. The unusual nature of their religious beliefs stems primarily from their contact over the centuries with a great variety of religious influences, each of which left

its mark but none of which became dominant. Today these peoples are the focus of a radical Muslim Salafi [Salafism is a militant movement within Sunni Islam. *Ed*] jihad which aims to end their lack of clear religious commitment.

To this day the ancient pagan religion of the ‘Adygei peoples’ is an important thread which runs through the complex religious patchwork of the North-West Caucasus. This religious system is strictly monotheistic with reverence for the ‘One God Tkha’ who is the creator of the world and its laws. Tkha does not interfere in everyday life and gives mankind freedom of choice, he is present everywhere but has no image; in hymns he is described as ‘the only source of hope’, ‘the source of all true



gifts' and is associated with a 'mountain of happiness' called El'brus. Worship of Tkha takes the form of rituals which are performed by the older members of a community in special locations such as beautiful woods. This religious system includes a belief that the souls of ancestors can see and judge the actions of their descendants. Its concept of the afterlife includes

ruler of birds who could foretell the future, and many Kabardins before the New Year feel duty-bound to perform their own kind of hadj to El'brus; as it is impossible to climb to its summit, pilgrims instead climb a hill nearby on the western bank of the Terek River, where images of the Mother of God and St John the Baptist were once discovered!



In the 10th century an area called Alania was converted to Christianity and churches were built along the River Arkhyz on land which is now inhabited by the Adygei, Karachais and Balkars. In the 13th century Alania was invaded by the Mongols and although Christianity went into decline some elements of a Christian tradition have survived in popular customs and folklore.

neither physical suffering nor pleasure, only spiritual satisfaction or pain as a soul repents for its past deeds before its ancestors. The aim of a person's earthly life is 'to perfect the Spirit' which means guarding personal honour, showing mercy, offering help unselfishly as well as demonstrating the valour and courage of a warrior. Such behaviour enables a soul to join its ancestors after death. This code of ethics is called '*adyge khabze*' and commitment to it is confirmed by an oath in the name of Tkha. Aspects of this pagan religion have become intertwined with Christian traditions: in Kabarda pine trees, like Christmas trees, are decorated with different coloured ribbons as an expression of reverence for the sacredness of nature. After Islam arrived, El'brus became the dwelling place of the king of spirits and

From the 13th–15th century Genoese colonisers settled in areas east of the Black Sea, and brought with them Catholicism which also left a faint imprint. Two factors brought to an end the activity of Christian missionaries, both Orthodox and Catholic: the fall of Byzantium and the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate in the 15th century when the influence of Islam became significant.

Islam had begun to spread in the North-West Caucasus, though only sporadically, as early as the 13th century. It spread very slowly, however, even after the 15th century. Only as late as the 19th century during the Caucasus war, when Islam became the ideological basis for resistance against Russian expansion, was the dominance of Islam and of Sharia law established. Before the

1917 Revolution Islam flowered at a time when western education was being brought to the mountain peoples of the North-West Caucasus by Russia; this prevented Islam becoming too fundamentalist. Seventy years of Communist atheism almost completely destroyed all forms of legally organised religion, while unofficial religious life was weakened drastically. At the same time Soviet policy supported the development of national culture and thus helped to preserve and indeed develop elements of the area's early paganism. After the fall of Communism, Islam was revived but within a culture which retained its ancient spiritual traditions, rediscovered under Soviet rule: the most widespread formula of national identity among the mountain peoples of the North-West Caucasus became a combination of Islam and ancient religious tradition. Today the preservation of spiritual and cultural identity is the one unifying factor among these people and in the ideology of national organisations and their leaders.

Intellectuals in the area believe that Adygei ethics or '*adyge khabze*' is the only real national religion among these five peoples: it is seen as a religion sent by God (God is understood to be both the pagan Tkha, Allah and the Christian God) while Islam is only one element within it. Barazba Bgazhnokov, a contemporary social activist and academic, gives the following Adygei definition of Islam:

'Islam is the observance of Adygei ethical principles, combined with a knowledge of the Koran and observance of Muslim rituals. In traditional public opinion, a Muslim is a cultivated, educated and pious person who as a consequence belongs to the élite within Adygei society. [...] this gives a basis for affirming humane Islam in which a

culture of peace, reconciliation and mutual understanding dominates.' (B.Kh. Bgazhnokov: *Adygei Ethics*, Nal'chik, 1999)

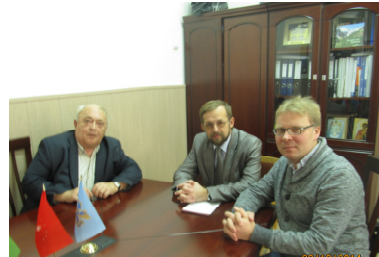
Bgazhnokov believes that Kabardin Islam has become more tolerant and cultivated, and that a class of educated Muslims, the aristocrats of Kabarda who were totally destroyed by the Soviet system, has been created all thanks to the influence of Adygei ethics.

Throughout the Soviet period ancient popular customs were preserved in villages and in recent years have visibly gained support. Often '*adyge khabze*' is considered more important than Sharia law; it includes only one ritual which is clearly Islamic – the ritual burial of the dead ('though even this includes some pre-Islamic elements). '*Adyge khabze*' plays such an important part in the life of the North-West Caucasus that Bgazhnokov described it as:

'given by the Muslim Allah or by the pagan-Christian god Tkha in the same way as sacred scripture is given to humanity by the Creator. Thus if someone does not observe the commands of *adyge khabze* he attracts the anger of God. [...] Adygei ethics are the equivalent of an immovable national religion which loyally and tolerantly accepts the world religions of Islam and Christianity.' (B.Kh. Bgazhnokov: *Adygei Ethics*)

The Adygei, Karachais and Balkars still remember their Christian past and take an interest in their ancient monuments, especially in church buildings. Russian Orthodox priests told me that the former often enter a church, touch the holy water and light a candle. Their interest in their Christian past is also confirmed by the conflict which arose over the ancient churches in Arkhyz: the Rus-

sian Orthodox diocese (the Pyatigorsk and Cherkess Diocese) has tried to gain possession of all the ancient churches of former Alania, but Karachai national organisations, the Ministry of Culture and the director of a local museum have claimed that these buildings are part of the history of Karachai-Cherkessia and belong to these mountain people. (It is interesting to note that local national activists often prefer to link their Christian past with the western Christian tradition.) Suleiman Khadzhi Botashov, the deputy chairman of the most important Karachai organisation called Karachai Alan khalk, showed me a photograph of a typical Byzantine



*Sergei Filatov & Roman Lunkin
(Keston's Encyclopaedia team) with
Evgeni Kratov, the official dealing with
religion in Karachai-Cherkessia*



Sergei Filatov beside one of the churches in Arkhyz

church in Arkhyz and said: 'We built this church with the Genoese.' At the same time the Adygei, Karachai and Balkars do not wish to associate their culture with Russian Orthodoxy; they deeply fear losing their identity and see Russian Orthodoxy as a form of assimilation – the medieval Genoese are more attractive to them! It is interesting to note in this context that they have been receptive to Protestant missions: Baptist and Pentecostal congregations have been established in the North-West Caucasus with local pastors who use the local language in their church services.

Russian Orthodoxy remains the religion of the Russians. There are few conversions and these are mostly women, the children of mixed marriages (there are also some secret believers). There are about 200,000 – 25% of the population – Russians and other groups who are traditionally Orthodox in Kabardino-Balkaria. In Karachai-Cherkessia there are 150,000 Russians – 32% of the population. In Kabardino-Balkaria the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) is represented by the Nal'chik *blagochinie*, a subdivision of the Pyatigorsk and Cherkess Diocese based in Pyatigorsk, capital of the neighbouring Stavropol Krai with Archbishop Feofilakt in charge; in Karachai-Cherkessia there are two *blagochinie*.

Russian Orthodoxy began to be revived in 2009 thanks to Archbishop Feofilakt who described to me in October last year the following unusual principles which underpin his ministry:

'The Church must build an independent position for itself within society; she must be a part and sometimes the arena for public discussion and dialogue. Once the church has gained its independence from the government, it can gradu-



Suleiman Khadzhi Botashov (left) , Deputy Chairman of Karachai Alan khalk, with Sergei Filatov

ally start to represent the voice of the people before the government. I am constantly receiving complaints from people and I stand up for them.'

After only a few years in post, Archbishop Feofilakt has achieved much in the social, missionary and cultural spheres. He is tolerant towards religious minorities and has built up good relations with the Catholics and Baptists. Although the majority of his successful projects are in the Stavropol Krai, he has had significant successes both in Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachai-Cherkessia. He emphasises the unifying power of the ROC for Russians and especially for Cossack settlements in these mountain republics. There are Russian representatives involved in every cultural and social project: 'Russians are not guests here; they are as important as the mountain peoples,' he said to me. The diocese supports folk groups and allows them to hold exhibitions and concerts on its premises. Local Cossacks who form a section within the Kuban Horde are the main support of the ROC in Karachai-Cherkessia: Archbishop Feofilakt, him-

self from a Grozny Cossack family, believes Cossacks are unique and can be revived as an influential element within society. He respects Cossack democratic traditions and usually grants requests allowing them to choose their own priests; he believes they understand the indigenous people better than Russians. He confirmed that the mountain peoples of the North-West Caucasus are interested in their Christian past but rarely convert to Orthodoxy.

While Archbishop Feofilakt has been in charge, the cathedral in Nal'chik and the one in Cherkessk, which began to be built many years ago, have been completed. The long-running conflict over the ancient Christian churches in Arkhyz has been resolved with the ROC allowed to celebrate the liturgy from time to time in them, while the diocese has relinquished any claim on ownership. Thanks to the Archbishop, Orthodoxy has begun to play an important part in local affairs. Orthodox clergy have established good relations with local officials and have begun to



Archbishop Feofilakt with Sergei Filatov

receive funding for building and restoring churches. He supports co-operation with Muslims and has set up joint social-work projects and cultural projects. On the official diocesan website, material is presented in three languages, in Russian, Karachai and Cherkess. To foster good Muslim-Orthodox relations, clergy from both faiths together visit schools, institutions of higher education and social gatherings. The Archbishop and his senior clergy have developed good relations too with the Intelligentsia, both Russian and those from among the indigenous people. Concerts and exhibitions which the Orthodox helped to organise have attracted not only Russians but wider circles of the Intelligentsia. The Archbishop's focus on developing Sunday schools has borne fruit: every church has its own and they appear to be popular. In 2013 an Orthodox youth centre called 'Peace to All' was created at the Nal'chik cathedral, with the young Fr Konstantin Osipov in charge who focuses on developing lay leaders. The Centre runs classes about Orthodoxy which are led by lay people, it organises help for the elderly and poor and organises concerts in children's homes. Some young Cossacks attend the centre: they are closer to the church than the older Cossacks, commented Fr Osipov.

Since the mid-1990s all three republics – Adygea, Karachai-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria – have witnessed the growth of radical Islam which is opposed to the indigenous tolerant spirituality. It first became strongly evident in Karachai-Cherkessia. A battle developed between traditional Islam, which is faithful to local tradition led by the official Muslim Spiritual Directorate of Karachai-Cherkessia (MSDKC), and a variety of radical



Sergei Filatov & Roman Lunkin with Fr Evgeni Subtelnyi, in charge of a blagochinie

Muslim Salafi groups with frequently changing leadership. The MSDKC was founded in 1990 (it included Stavropol until 2010) and recognised the secular authorities, both at a republican and federal level. It placed Sharia law above federal law in theory, but at the same time did not believe Sharia could be imposed in the near future. MSDKC was closely linked to the republic's government which funded an Islamic Institute founded in 1993, while the police monitored religious dissidents who opposed the leader of MSDKC, Mufti Berdiev. Until 1991 the most striking creation of Karachai-Cherkessia's radical Muslims was the Party of Islamic Revival founded by Akhmed Bidzhi-ulu, who also set up a Karachai Imamate independent of MSDKC and the Karachai-Balkaria Independent Information Centre, as well as the Centre of Islamic Culture. On 31 November 1991, Bidzhi-ulu's supporters gathered in Karachaevsk and announced the opening of the first Congress of Karachai Muslims at which the Karachai Imamate was publicised with Bidzhi-ulu as leader. Only a month later, however, at a Congress of Karachai-Cherkessia and Stavropol Mus-

lims, Bidzhi-ulu's plans were rejected as illegal and he soon left the area. Meanwhile strong separatist tendencies along ethnic lines developed and the MSDKC threatened to break up: an intense conflict between the Cherkess and Karachai led to increased Cherkess discontent over the domination by the Karachai of their Muftiate; the Cherkess emphasised how different were their religious traditions from those of the Karachai. Mufti Berdiev, however, was able to take decisive action and made sure each ethnic group was represented on the governing body of MSDKC.

Although the Karachai-Cherkessia government was able to quickly suppress an initial wave of Muslim dissent, centres of opposition continued to be active: the main centres were in a few villages high up in the mountains on the border with Georgia and in the Ust'-Dzhugut district. One important opposition group, the Muslim Jamaat led by Ramazan Borlakov, was based in the village of Uchkeken where some of Borlakov's supporters took over a madrassah, installing within it their own people as teachers. Unlike Akhmed Bidzhi-ulu, Borlakov was careful in his relations with the government, never publicly attacking the authority of MSDKC. In response the authorities took no decisive action against him for a long time, and partly gave him what he wanted by officially accepting his teachers at the madrassah in Uchkeken. Borlakov's group was badly organised and ideologically muddled; it was influenced by missionaries from Syria, Saudi Arabia and Jordan as well as by leaders of nationalist organisations within the Caucasus. With Arab money Borlakov built a number of madrassahs in which he installed graduates from the Uchkeken madrassah as teachers. In 1998 he moved to Chechnya and handed the reins of power within the Jamaat to Khyzyr Salpagarov. Some of his

graduates also moved to Chechnya and formed what was called the 'Karachai Battalion' which took part in the invasion of Dagestan in 1999. That year information was published in the press about training camps in Karachai-Cherkessia for local Muslim dissidents led by Chechen instructors. According to *Izvestia* (12 September 2000) young men, who had been taught in the Uchkeken madrassah, were later sought by the federal police as suspects following the terrorist attacks in Moscow and Volgograd (1999) and then tried for these crimes. The Uchkeken madrassah was thought to have been financed by Turkey via Azerbaidzhan, and it was closed once it became clear to the authorities that it was a training ground for terrorists. One of Borlakov's pupils, Achimez Gochiyaev, organised the Moscow apartment block explosions (1999) and then went into hiding in Karachai-Cherkessia in early 2000 where he tried to oust Salpagarov. In 2001 Gochiyaev fled abroad while Salpagarov was arrested. In August 2002 members of Salpagarov's Jamaat were tried for acts of terrorism (*Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1 October 2002).

The leaders of MSDKC were firmly opposed to the dissidents, and with the secular authorities undertook a number of measures to control the life of Muslim communities, imposing restrictions on radicalising missionary activity. Ismail Bostanov, Rector of the Muslim Institute in Karachai-Cherkessia, told me in an interview in October 1998: 'Muslims must obey the democratically elected Mufti. He who does not obey is not a Muslim. To oppose our customs, our parents and those in authority is to oppose Islam.' Bostanov and Mufti Berdiev were the key people who could unite Muslims round MSDKC, but in 2010 Bostanov was murdered by radical Muslims from Karachai-Cherkessia under the leadership of Nazbi Adzhiev,

imam of a mosque in Kislovodsk. The killers were caught, tried in 2012-2014 and given long prison sentences.

By 2010 it was clear that the problem of Islamic extremism in Karachai-Cherkessia was serious. *Interfax* on 18 January 2010 reported that according to the calculations of police in Karachai-Cherkessia there were about 500 Muslim extremists; the Interior Ministry had reported that with the addition of 150 the number of extremists had increased by a third. During 2009, this *Interfax* report continued, two jamaats had been dispersed and destroyed, seven Muslim extremists had been sentenced to death, and there was evidence of a particular group who could 'help fill the ranks of illegal armed formations'. In 2010 both Russian Orthodox and Baptist churches were set on fire. After 2011, however, there were no major acts of terrorism in the republic: the administration, imams, representatives of society, including Russians, observed that the situation had stabilised, MSDKC's authority had been strengthened and radical Islam had weakened. Of all the republics in the North-West Caucasus, Karachai-Cherkessia is the only one in which traditional peaceful Islam has been strengthened. Traditional Islamic observance has grown, the number of practising Muslims has increased and interest in ancient ethnic culture has become evident. Radical Muslims are few in number and have retreated to hide-outs in the mountains and forests; they are demoralised and not ready to take any decisive action.

In contrast, dangerous developments in the religious life of the North-West Caucasus are taking place in Kabardino-Balkaria which has the largest population and is the most advanced economically. It has more educated people and more in the creative professions. The Salafi movement developed there later

but has gradually gained in strength. During the 2000s there were frequent terrorist attacks; the law-enforcement agencies regularly announced the elimination of new leaders, but the situation has not calmed down. The republic is in a state of constant low-level civil war. Radical Muslim views are prevalent among secondary school pupils and in higher education. When in November 2013 I interviewed Svetlana Akkiva, a leading sociologist in the republic, she said that according to a number of surveys 30% of Kabardin and Balkar students held radical Muslim views or were sympathisers, while the Kabardins were more religious than the Balkars. During the past 16 years a number of Russians had converted to Islam, she added, of whom some had joined the terrorists. Within Adygei and Balkar society I learned that people fear their land is becoming the arena for a full-blown war as happened in Chechnya and Dagestan. I spoke to a number of prominent members of the Kabardin Intelligentsia who told me that they had decided not to speak publicly about religion so as to avoid 'adding fuel to the flames'.

The tension between radical Islam and the mountain spirituality of the North-West Caucasus, which blends ancient pagan values with traditional Islam, is growing. Followers of '*adyge khabze*' find themselves in a particularly difficult position: the ethnographer and philologist, Arsen Tsipinov, was one of its most popular adherents and spent much time reviving a whole series of pagan festivals and ancient Kabardin beliefs. He was head of the Cherkess Folklore Department within the Kabardin-Balkar Humanities Institute, and gave many lectures in the Kabardin-Balkar State University. He often organised Cherkess folk festivals in Nal'chik, spoke about traditional Cherkess values and resisted the Islamisation

of society. Tsipinov was open-minded, open to the whole world, to all its spiritual and cultural values. More than anyone he spoke out against Islamisation: 'No religion, neither Christianity nor Islam, has dominated our people at any time [...] People have tried to Islamise us through fire and the sword [...] Our ancestors, who knew the missionaries who brought Christianity to our people, said: "Religions come and go, but we will remain faithful to our people".'

(<http://adigasite.com/archives/1668>).

A significant number of educated people have this same outlook and are proud of secular Kabardin culture: for example, the famous Kabardin musician Yuri Temirkhanov, the sculptor Mikhail Shemyakin, and the artist Mukhamed Kishev who lives permanently in Spain; they keep in touch with their homeland, participate in the development of the republic's culture and are much admired by the Kabardin people. Islamisation threatens the European-leaning culture of these mountain people.

In the 2000s Tsipinov's activity led to a stormy polemic in the Nal'chik media with such article titles as 'Who is leading us towards paganism?', 'Who does not want Kabardins to be Muslims?' Tsipinov's views were condemned not only by supporters of pure Islam but also by the more traditional: to reject Islam was really going too far. On 29 December 2010 Tsipinov was murdered

by Muslim fighters. Soon after an announcement appeared in the Internet declaring that Tsipinov was the enemy of Islam and had corrupted the young. In March 2011 an official announcement stated that Tsipinov's murderer was Amir Ratmir Shamaev who had been killed by law-enforcement officers.

After Tsipinov's murder, the movement in support of Adygei spirituality went into decline, and Tsipinov's supporters either ended or drastically curtailed their public activity, not only for the sake of their own safety but also because they believed that, in the face of inter-religious strife, it was more important to preserve their own people: it was better to give way than to destroy their people in a bloody conflict.



Arsen Tsipinov

The peoples of the North-West Caucasus have to a significant degree preserved elements of their ethnic pagan religion and morality; they retain a memory of their Christian past; their Islam is influenced by contemporary secular European (both Russian and western) culture and swings between traditional popular forms and the radical Islam of Salafi fundamentalism. To this must be added the clear success of Protestant missions among these peoples. The interaction of such varied religious strands on the consciousness of these small ethnic groups has created a cultural and spiritual mix which is possibly unique.

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The Russian Orthodox Church and Religion in Ukraine

by Michael Bourdeaux



*Patriarch Kirill at President Putin's Inauguration,
7 May 2012*

The Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) are waging what they see as a 'holy war for the values of the Russian world against the values of the godless and decaying West'. This was the forthright view of Archbishop Evstratii Zoria, representing the Kiev Patriarchate, expressed at a Consultation on religion in Ukraine arranged by Mission Eurasia at Lambeth Palace on 28 April. The larger Ukrainian Orthodox Church (under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate) was not represented.

The ROC is a profound enigma. On the one hand, shaking off the shackles of Communism has given it the opportunity to develop its spiritual patrimony. On the other, it inherits traits that spring directly from its subjugation to state policy under Stalin.

Over the past 15 years, Keston Institute's field trips to almost all the Russian regions, near and far, provide evidence that this spirituality is very much alive. The revival, begun long before

the collapse of Communism, continues and parish priests take every opportunity to improve the spiritual and social lot of the faithful. Yet most of the bishops and senior clergy exhibit an unswerving dedication to the political powers that be. How did this come about?

Under Lenin, then Stalin, all structures were abolished and the ROC came within a hairsbreadth of extinction before the Nazi invasion of 1941.

The 'Great Patriotic War' saved the church, as the four Russian Orthodox bishops at liberty threw their weight behind the war effort. The establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate was Stalin's resulting gift to the faithful in 1945, but it was a tainted award, born of his ceaseless cunning. From the first, the task of the Patriarchate was to back the dictator's policies, both domestically and internationally. The price of enjoying a new limited freedom was the obligation to support the Kremlin without question. Bulgaria and Romania were Orthodox countries: their church and people also had to show unswerving loyalty to Moscow.

The most devastating example of the backing by the Moscow Patriarchate for Stalin's policies was in Western Ukraine. This huge swathe of land, newly conquered, newly Soviet, had been subject to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and then to Poland. Its church, the Greek Catholic Church, which accepts the jurisdiction of the Pope, though following the Orthodox rite,

was also fiercely Ukrainian. Stalin used the Moscow Patriarchate as a direct instrument of subjugation. Immediately after the end of the war it suffered an assault, terrifying in its violence, leading to its extinction as a legal body. All its ten bishops were imprisoned and only one survived, Cardinal Slipyj. Parish priests had a choice: suffer the same fate or join the Moscow Patriarchate. In secret, the Soviet Union's largest underground church would continue to exist – and to make its presence increasingly felt during the 1970s and '80s. Finally it would emerge in the Gorbachev period, regain its legal status in 1989 and begin to recover its lost churches throughout the region.

The ROC, inheriting its geographical coverage from Soviet times, continues to dominate the scene in Central and Eastern Ukraine, but is it surprising that there is a degree of distrust of Moscow's dominance? It was inevitable that a Ukrainian 'Kiev Patriarchate' would emerge after 1991, 'uncanonical' though the Orthodox world claims it to be. The World Council of Churches (WCC) – a fact emphasised by several speakers at Mission Eurasia's Lambeth Consultation – fell into a trap by sending a delegation to investigate the fate of the churches in Ukraine, with Archpriest Mikhail Gundyayev, a nephew of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, as its main adviser. Unsurprisingly, the WCC report stated that the only mediator could be the majority (canonical) church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate). The report failed to mention the great contribution to peace-making which could potentially be made by the strong Protestant churches, fully represented at the Lambeth Consultation.

It is understandable that Russians have a strong attachment to Kiev: it was,

after all, the cradle of Russian civilization. There is, however, another side to this. In the post-1917 turbulence, Ukraine declared independence, lasting for four years. The ensuing Soviet conquest drove incipient Ukrainian nationalism underground, but did not totally suppress it. Tensions were high and in the 1930s Ukrainians experienced the terrible *holodomor* ('death by starvation'). The Soviets denied Ukrainian peasants the right to eat their own produce. They farmed the bread-basket of the Soviet Union, yet millions died of starvation.

Proclaiming the Orthodox tradition of *symphonia* – the belief that church and state should act in harmony – the Moscow Patriarchate continues to justify the suppression of the Greek Catholic Church. It is doubtful whether, in fact, *symphonia* ever applied elsewhere after the fall of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire in 1453. Moscow, inheriting its religion from Kiev from the 14th century, believed, from time to time, that it was the 'Third Rome', where church and state would act in that harmony, but this was at best a damaged concept. *Symphonia* did not exist in the first three centuries of Christianity. It may be argued, too, that this *symphonia*, with its deafness to reform, was a contributory factor to the catastrophe of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Willingly or unwillingly, the new Moscow Patriarchate in 1945 dedicated itself to *symphonia* from the first. In return for limited permission to exist, the bargain was that the Patriarchate would never criticise Kremlin policies. This led to a constant denial that persecution was a reality – even when the Soviets stepped up the level of attack in 1959 and removed the last vestiges of freedom in 1961. After 1991, the late Fr Gleb Yakunin, as a newly elected

deputy, gained brief access to the state archives and discovered that the extent of collaboration between the church leadership and the atheist state went far deeper than even he had imagined. When Communism collapsed, the church leadership naturally saw its opportunity to re-establish itself as a leading influence in the new Russian state. With the accession of President Putin, followed by the election of Patriarch Kirill in January 2009, that relationship was sealed as though in perpetuity. It is time, though, to assess its legitimacy. In essence, it is a betrayal of the basic Christian – and democratic – belief in freedom of conscience.

Here are just a few examples. When Kirill was elected, he lost little time in making public his allegiance to Kremlin power. Can one imagine Archbishop Justin Welby acclaiming our new Prime Minister with the words, 'He is a miracle of God'? This was precisely what Kirill said about President Putin on 8 February 2012 at a meeting of religious leaders in Moscow. On 15 April this year, dedicating a new church to the 'special forces' who gave their lives in service to the Fatherland, the Patriarch consecrated it to the KGB

and the FSB. This is in line with bishops who have blessed Russian nuclear weapons and the soldiers who carried out atrocities against the Chechen people earlier this century.

Freed from Soviet constraints, church leaders might have been expected to write dispassionately about the troubled history of the Soviet period, but this is far from happening. There has been no act of repentance for the collaboration with the Soviet regime. Those who fought for religious liberty during the later Soviet period have been largely edited out of history, even though many lost their freedom – and some their lives – in the cause of religious liberty.

These attitudes explain why the Moscow Patriarchate has not been willing to use its voice to attempt to rein in the forces leading to the Kremlin's aggression in Ukraine and the Crimea. The wait goes on for the ROC to discover a prophetic voice and use its immense influence in an attempt to reach a just resolution of the conflict.

(A version of this article was published in The Times on 9 May 2015.)

Metropolitan Onufri Appeals to Patriarch Kirill

Metropolitan Onufri of Chernovitsy and Bukovina was elected head of the Kiev Metropolia (within the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate) on 13 August 2014. Whilst still acting head, or locum tenens, he sent the appeal below to Patriarch Kirill on 1 March 2014. The President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, had fled the country on 22 February after being removed from power. On 27-28 February pro-Russian gunmen had seized key buildings in Crimea; its parliament under siege

then appointed a pro-Moscow Prime Minister. On 6 March 2014 Crimea's parliament voted to join Russia; on 16 March, a hastily organised referendum was said to have produced an overwhelming majority in favour of seceding from Ukraine. Among those opposed to secession were nearly all the Crimean Tatars, but their voices were not heard, or were ignored.

Without exaggeration Ukraine today is experiencing the worst period in its



Metropolitan Onufri

contemporary history. After a social and political crisis – a bloody conflict in the centre of Kiev and the death of dozens of people – which lasted three months, we now face another no less fearful threat.

On 1 March, statements have been made by some official figures of the

Russian Federation about the possible moving of a limited contingent of Russian armed forces into Ukraine. If this should take place, the Ukrainian and Russian people will find themselves drawn into a conflict which will have catastrophic consequences for our countries.

As the *locum tenens* of the Kiev Metropolia I am turning to you, Your Holiness, with a plea that you do all that is possible to prevent the shedding of blood on the territory of the Ukrainian state.

At this time of great tension we pray fervently to our Lord Jesus Christ that He, through the prayers of His Pure Mother, might protect us from clashes between the brotherly nations of Ukraine and Russia

Open Letter from Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk

America's National Catholic Register on 23 August 2015 published an Open Letter dated 1 September 2014 from the leader of the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine, Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk. This letter is addressed to the Catholic Episcopal Conferences, the world's religious and political leaders and to all people of goodwill.

For nine months, Ukrainians have been on an arduous pilgrimage from post-Soviet fear to freedom and God-given dignity. Traumatized by the 20th century world wars, brown and red totalitarianism and genocide, they seek a just society and a democratic European future.

With patience, endurance and great human sacrifice, they overcame in Feb-



Archbishop Sviatoslav

ruary [2014] the brutal regime of Viktor Yanukovych. This moral triumph was answered in March by Russia's territo-

rial annexation of Crimea. Now, for months, the country endures foreign supported destabilisation, separatism and terrorist activity in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions; in one word: war. Tragically, as became manifest in the criminal shooting down of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17, the Ukrainian trial affects the global community.

All the churches and religious organisations of Ukraine stood together against the violence of the Yanukovich regime, the annexation of Crimea and the division of the country. On the Maidan Square for months, every day and hourly in the night, in common prayer, they insisted on respect for civil rights, on non-violence, on unity of the country and on dialogue. This civic, ecumenical and inter-religious harmony and cooperation has been an important source of moral inspiration and social cohesion in Ukraine.

In annexed Crimea and in the eastern war zone, some of the churches and religious communities have been targeted for discrimination, enduring outright violence. In Crimea, the most exposed have been the Muslim Tatars. The Tatar community as a whole is in daily danger. Some of its leadership has been exiled, barred from their homeland. The existence of the Greek and Roman Catholic ministries, Orthodox parishes of the Kiev Patriarchate and the Jewish community in Crimea has been variously menaced.

In April, violence was instigated in Eastern Ukraine. According to the Ukrainian authorities, some 1,000 people, including international journalists and peace monitors, were kidnapped or detained; dozens were tortured or killed. The anti-terrorist operation, launched by the Ukrainian government, faces a foreign aggression that co-opts local rebels and local and international

criminal delinquents. As a result, to date there have been over 1,000 civilian casualties in the densely populated cities, with the number rising by 50 deaths or more daily, not to mention the 298 victims of flight MH17. The infrastructure of the cities, including roads and bridges, electric substations, coal mines and industrial installations are being destroyed to cripple the economy and future reconstruction which will become the responsibility of the Ukrainian state. Hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee the warfare that has been brought into the heart of the cities by the so-called 'separatists'.

Amidst the horrors of war, the tiny Ukrainian Greek and Roman Catholic minorities experience oppression on the territories controlled by the 'separatists'. Three Catholic priests were kidnapped: Pawel Witek and Wiktor Wąsowicz (Roman Catholic) and Tykhon Kulbaka (Greek Catholic). The latter was kept in captivity for ten days and deprived of the medicine he needed. The episcopal residence of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic bishop in Donetsk was robbed and sealed shut, depriving him of his chancery and all documentation. The cathedral courtyard was hit by 'separatist' rocket fire, damaging the building and windows with shrapnel. The bishop and almost all Ukrainian Greek Catholic priests were forced to leave the environs of Donetsk. Armed representatives of the 'separatist' regime entered the church and desecrated the sanctuary. They 'allowed' priests to stay and conduct services but put them on travel restrictions. Terrorists blackmail the clergy by threatening to harm their parishioners.

Most recently, on Saturday 16 August, the small convent of the Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate in Donetsk was

seized and violated. The sisters, who have been serving the community generously and humbly and who were on a summer retreat or at summer camps for children outside Donetsk, cannot return to their home, now being used by the 'separatists'.

Protestants are targeted by the pro-Russian terrorist groups and have suffered the gravest violence: two sons of the pastor of the evangelical church 'Metamorphosis', Alexander Pavlenko, and two deacons of that church, Victor Brodarsky and Vladimir Velichko, were taken from a church service, tortured and killed by the terrorists. Their bodies were exhumed from a mass grave in Sloviansk.

Unfortunately, the beleaguered Ukrainian Catholics, Greek and Roman, the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate and Protestants in the East of Ukraine are further endangered by the rhetoric of the Orthodox leadership in Russia, which is becoming increasingly similar to the propaganda of the Russian political authorities and media.

In recent documents, issued in Moscow at the highest level of the Russian Orthodox Church, particularly in a letter to the primates of the Orthodox Churches, Greek Catholics and the Ukrainian Orthodox of the Kiev Patriarchate, disrespectfully called 'uniates' and 'schismatics', are defamed. They are held responsible for the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine and are accused of generating the warfare, especially the violence against Orthodox clergy and faithful endured as a result of military operations. Russian Orthodox leaders spread libellous information about the Ukrainian Greek Catholics and other confessions, thereby putting them in danger from the 'separatist' militants who identify themselves as Russian

Orthodoxy's warriors. We strongly reject these claims and accusations. The Ukrainian military is not structured as a denominational entity. Therefore, chaplains of various denominations serve in the zone of the anti-terrorist operation. Chaplains are not permitted to interfere in the life of local religious communities. Accusations that chaplains of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church have committed acts of violence against members of other churches and religious groups are not true.

The tragedy that Ukraine is experiencing today, due to military aggression, is a tragedy for all peoples, believers of all faiths and all social groups. Buildings, churches and monasteries of all religious and ethnic groups are being damaged or destroyed. Clergy of all faiths who exercise their pastoral ministry in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and Crimea have suffered, some risking their own lives. Two Orthodox priests who were killed in the region are among more than 1,000 civilians killed during the conflict, and their terrible deaths are not connected with their religious beliefs. They were accidental victims of shelling.

We pray for all the innocent victims and for peace in Ukraine. Our Church is doing everything it can to bring peace and to alleviate the suffering of those affected by this terrible conflict.

Ukraine needs the effective support of the global Christian community and the support of all people of goodwill. In a media context rife with propaganda, we ask you to evaluate information critically. We need your prayers, your discernment, your encouragement and effective action. Silence and inaction will lead to further tragedy. The fate of flight MH17 is an example of what may happen if the terrorist activity is allowed to continue.

Protestants: Different Views on Ukraine

On 18 March 2014 William Yoder, an American Mennonite in Moscow, issued the following official statement on behalf of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (RUECB).

One could attribute the current crisis in Ukraine to the lack of sympathy for democratic practice. Repeated fisticuffs in Ukraine's parliament were one indication of that deficit. And why was it not possible for the protestors on Maidan Square to wait for upcoming elections? They had been set for March 2015, then moved forward to December 2014. Was one too uneasy regarding the possible outcome? Henry Kissinger noted in his article for the *Washington Post* on 6 March, that East and West Ukraine had never gotten around to appreciating compromise. Both parties 'have not been willing to share power'. For a while, the Eastern party was on top, then the Western one. Under Yanukovych, the East was on top, but Euro-Maidan inverted the power structure once more. So the East responded by splitting off the Crimea. Which brings us to the next crisis: East Ukraine.

In the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, ex-German chancellor Gerhard Schroder conceded on 9 March that lopping off Crimea from Ukraine had been a clear infraction of international law – as had also been the case in Kosovo. He sees it as multiple-layered illegality: the 'power grab' on Maidan was illegal as well as the resulting independence drive in Crimea. One injustice caused the next. I believe Russian Christians now celebrating the apparent return of Crimea to the Fatherland dare

not forget the unfortunate chain of illegalities which caused it.

The West has every cause to beat its own breast. Is it proper to demand that one half of a profoundly divided nation take sides at the expense of the other half? Schroder stated in *Der Spiegel*: 'I ask myself if it was correct to force a culturally divided nation like Ukraine to choose between association with the EU and a customs union with Russia.' It was this either-or alternative which finally capsized the ship. Kissinger once again: 'Any attempt by one wing of Ukraine to dominate the other would lead eventually to civil war or break up.' In early March he was still of the opinion that Ukraine should attempt to fulfil the role of a bridge between East and West.

Only the Eastern military bloc was abolished after 1990. That's at the core of the continuing division between East and West, which has now come home to roost in Ukraine. The West decided to create a European security net against – and not with – Russia. That has consequences.

I find the explanation of a Moscow Baptist helpful: he compared the presentation of Crimea to Ukraine on 19 February 1954 with a modern-day wedding ignoring the need for a marriage contract. In the early goings, the groom promises his beloved heaven and earth. But when the time for a divorce rolls around, the man suddenly demands that a portion of his gifts be returned. Some reports claim the presentation of Crimea to Ukraine was

brought about by the self-serving conniving of Nikita Khrushchev. Precisely during that month, Politburo members were engulfed in a power struggle and the future General-Secretary hoped to curry favour among the Ukrainians by presenting them with a token gift. Who would have thought, that 60 years later a divorce would be imminent?

Political orientation of Protestants

Even the most conciliatory statements from the leadership of Ukraine's largest Baptist Union exhibit a clear political preference. A helpful statement on 24 February from Valery Antonyuk, the leading Vice-President of this Union, reads: 'We supported the nation's demand to put an end to the tyranny of the authorities and repressions by the police.' Yet this 'nation' is divided. Kiev's Protestants speak of 'Ukraine', yet usually they are speaking only in terms of West and Central Ukraine. Those truly concerned about national unity would express themselves differently.

Russians have the impression that West Ukrainians can only think in terms of their own side. Demands out of Kiev that Russians form forces opposed to Putin reminds me of life in the former East Germany. Westerners would say: 'You must raise your voices, you must protest against the misdeeds of your government!' Easterners would respond: 'What, don't you have a few issues yourselves? Have a look at Hiroshima, Korea, Vietnam, Chile, Nicaragua, etc. Let us take care of matters in the GDR ourselves. We live here and it's our necks that are on the block – not yours.'

More than a few Protestant articles in the West are euphoric regarding the naming of Alexander Turchinov (Oleksander Turchynov in Ukrainian) as Acting President of Ukraine. Turchi-

nov occasionally preaches in a Baptist congregation in Kiev. Billy Graham's *Decision* magazine stated on 6 March: 'God is mightily at work in Ukraine'. Yet Russia's faithful are more sober regarding developments: a Baptist heading a coup-instigated 'illegal' government with at least five far-right ministers does not make for great Baptist PR in Russia. Russia's tiny Baptist flock is worried about the long-term consequences.

But is it really the Baptists and Protestants who are calling the shots in Ukraine? In the British *Globe and Mail* on 8 March, Olga Bogomolets, who attained acclaim as a doctor attending to Maidan's casualties, explained the reasons for her distance from the Kiev government. She accused the new government of having brought very few 'new faces' into play. Turchinov of course belongs to the 'old faces': for 20 years he served as the right-hand-man of the oligarch and politician Yulia Tymoshenko.

Possible moves forward

Would you permit a non-prophet to prophesy? The RUECB and Russia's other larger Protestant denominations will not be going to bat for the new Kiev government at the expense of Putin's administration. And this is not primarily because they fear Vladimir Putin, but rather because they don't recognise any clear moral superiority on the part of the Kiev government. And this is the case even though Russians are clearly in-the-know regarding the local sins and shortcomings of their own government.

A wordy statement from the RUECB on 13 March reads: God 'accepts them all as his children. Let us not claim that God is on our side and against the others! God is above and beyond our petty

preferences and loyalties. In the political sphere, God is not for one side at the expense of the other.'

In short, despite the unavoidable contradictions in our political assessments, being one in Christ has consequences which express themselves in public life. What could some of these consequences be?

1. The heated atmosphere at present results in belligerent and unbridled language. In a release from *Christianity Today* on 24 February, Turchinov speaks of the 'unprecedented cruelty and brutality of the dictatorial regime'. Was Yanukovich's administration more despicable than Cambodia's Khmer Rouge? Cries of 'fascism' are volleyed to-and-fro. A prominent Crimean election placard essentially stated: 'Nazism or a Free Crimea'. But such exaggerations happened on both sides of the barricades and travelled at least as far as Washington. We need linguistic disarmament. Only a cautious and respectful diction can point the way towards peace.

2. Putin-bashing does not sit well on a Christian frame. Henry Kissinger stated it differently: 'The demonisation of Vladimir Putin is not a policy; it is an alibi for the absence of one.' Ex-chancellor Gerhard Schröder is lambasted for being a friend of Putin. But should not every Christian have at least a few friends who would not be welcome at most Pentagon parties? That could serve the cause of peace; more than a few contacts could be struck up via the Schröder-Putin connection.

3. The webpage of the Wheaton/Illinois-based 'Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries' (RM) appeals for donations to the family of 26-year-old Alexander Khrapachenko. This young Baptist from Rovno was tragically killed dur-

ing the shootings on Maidan. But why should the mission not also start an appeal for the bereaved family of a policeman? The death total of roughly 90 included something like 15 state-supported policemen. That would underline the non-partisan peace-making character of the Gospel. This would allow the mission to better fulfil the task stated in the page's heading: 'Healing and Reconciliation in Ukraine'.

This would also demand a significant change in course for the mission. A primary representative of this mission in Ukraine, the young Baptist professor Mykhailo Cherenkov, is struggling mightily in cyberspace for Euro-Maidan and against Russia. Is Russian Ministries (RM) willing to voluntarily abandon its ministry on the ground in Russia for the sake of this? That would be a great pity, for RM has done good work in gathering the new, young 'evangelical intelligentsia' in the former USSR. Irpen near Kiev has until now functioned as a kind of Wheaton and think-tank for the evangelical movement in Russia and beyond. Is that role now over? It is difficult to reconcile myself with such an eventuality.

Yet the political-strategic aspect dare not remain central. More important is the question: how does God think and what is he expecting from us? In the interview with *Decision*, Alexander Turchinov quotes Romans 8:31: 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' Yet the RUECB statement sounds otherwise: God is impartial and finds himself beyond the battle. He does not struggle for West Ukraine against East Ukraine – nor vice versa.

Of course, Acting President Turchinov is in need of our prayers! Can he at least keep the remainder of the country (without Crimea) in one piece? Can he

defend moderate forces against the onslaught of the radical right? His task is not an enviable one.

A note regarding myself: why do I formulate relatively political commentaries on the present danger? I'm being asked to do this – most Russian Protestants will remain silent for psy-

chological, educational and linguistic reasons. Which doesn't mean they aren't thinking. I hope that Western Christendom will notice the existence of other, alternative perceptions. I believe that recognition is vital for future co-existence. We can make progress only if we first of all understand how things really are.

In response to the views on Ukraine of William Yoder and the RUECB, Jenny Geddes, a Scottish Baptist, has submitted to the Keston Newsletter the following detailed rebuttal of some of their arguments.

In recent months a steady stream of bizarre pro-Russian posts supporting Vladimir Putin's policy in Ukraine has appeared on the website of the RUECB. As someone who, until recently, had not been following the online debates between Russian and Ukrainian Baptists, it seemed to me at first glance, that the website of the RUECB had been 'hacked' by a pro-Kremlin trolling organisation.

Only on further reading does it become clear that these curious pro-Kremlin statements were not the work of Internet trolls, but had apparently been written by an American, William Yoder, working for the press department of the RUECB. On the basis of having lived in Moscow for a number of years, Mr Yoder claims to be an expert on the issues about which he writes. However, despite the author's apparent academic credentials (he conspicuously displays the initials, 'PhD', after every statement), his understanding of the political and religious backdrop to the current crisis in Ukraine can be charitably described as 'limited'.

The statements that have appeared on the RUECB website are reminiscent of Soviet times, when evangelical Christians, who suffered disproportionately from Stalin's purges, sent congratulatory telegrams to Stalin, who was hailed as the 'great friend of all believers'. Russian Baptist leaders at that time assured the West that 'within the Soviet Union there is not a single prisoner of conscience'.

In a resolution issued by the RUECB on 30 May 2014 we find the Russian Baptists writing similar words of praise and gratitude to Putin: 'We express to you our special gratitude for defining the protection and strengthening of the spiritual and moral values, to which the traditional family belongs, as a task of primary importance.' Moreover, in a second letter addressed to Putin, the RUECB praises the Russian President for 'his contribution to the strengthening of civil peace and harmony in Russian society'.

Given Putin's recent clampdown on the freedom of 'religious minorities' in Russia and the routine murder of Ukrainian soldiers and civilians by Russian armed forces in Eastern Ukraine, I wondered at first if these statements by the RUECB were made tongue-in-cheek, as a kind of satirical farce designed to subtly undermine the

Putin regime with mock professions of praise.

However, it soon becomes apparent that the Russian Baptists' praise of Vladimir Putin is deadly serious and that there is nothing satirical about it. Given the Russian Baptists' praise of Stalin during Soviet times, it seems that history is indeed repeating itself but that – given the tragic implications for thousands of Ukrainians who are dying as a result of the Russian invasion of their country – it is doing so more in tragedy than in farce.

However, any criticism of the RUECB should be qualified by two mitigating factors: (1) in Russia, unlike Ukraine, there is no tradition of prophetic critique of government or political authority, and the Russian Baptist community lives in an atmosphere of intimidation, threat and surveillance by the Russian authorities; (2) it is far from clear about the extent to which either Mr Yoder or those who drafted the official pro-Putin resolutions represent the views of the Russian Baptists. It is possible that most Russian Baptists secretly deplore Putin's policies and that they have considerable sympathy for their Ukrainian counterparts, but are understandably apprehensive about expressing their views openly.

Nevertheless, by offering crude justifications of Putin's policies, the press department of the RUECB has become just another snowflake in the Siberian blizzard of lies that has been unleashed on the world by the Kremlin-sponsored media outlets. In the light of the Kremlin's concerted propaganda campaign against Ukraine and the West, these pro-Putin statements must be seen as a deliberate attempt to throw sand in the eyes of the English-speaking worldwide Baptist community by providing paper-thin justifications for Putin's

invasion of Ukraine using pseudo-theological notions.

Moreover, in the course of browsing some of William Yoder's commentaries on the Ukrainian crisis, I discovered that he has already insulted and compounded the grief of the devastated family of the young Ukrainian Baptist, Alexander Khrapachenko, who was shot dead at the age of 26 by Victor Yanukovych's snipers in Kyiv [Ukrainian spelling for 'Kiev'] in February 2014. In another curious and offensive post, Mr Yoder criticised a Ukrainian Christian charity for supporting Alexander's grieving family. In a perverse gesture, Yoder, apparently speaking on behalf of the Russian Baptists, suggested that, instead of supporting Alexander's family, the Christian charity in question should have been supporting the families of the pro-Yanukovych paramilitaries who had shot him dead.

The various statements coming from Mr Yoder on the RUECB website in recent months contain so many distortions, misrepresentations, half-truths, and falsehoods that in trying to respond to them, it is difficult to know where to begin. For now, we will focus briefly on Mr Yoder's omission of the two most basic facts of the current situation in Ukraine.

These are: (1) Russia's 'invasion by stealth' of Ukraine's Eastern territories and the Russian army's direct involvement in the murder of Ukrainian citizens (both soldiers and civilians); and (2) the overwhelming rejection by the vast majority of the Ukrainian people (in both East and West Ukraine) of the discredited ideologies of Pan-Slavism, Sovietism and Putinism.

In recent statements we find Yoder supporting the Russian and pro-Russian

terrorists currently occupying parts of Eastern Ukraine, arguing that the terrorists' views about Ukrainian evangelicals as 'pro-Western agents' are at least partly justified. Yoder writes that, 'Baptists above all are seen as the pro-Western agents of Kyiv's dubious ex-president Oleksander Turchynov. The separatists are not completely wrong on that point: Protestantism (including this author) is a profoundly Western entity.'

But this is a historically inaccurate statement, since, as major recent studies have shown, the evangelical movement emerged in Ukraine primarily not as an import from the West, but grew more as a renewal movement within Orthodoxy. However, let us not quarrel over a historiographical debate.

Far more serious is the fact that at a time when Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine are murdering Baptist and evangelical pastors (as they did in Sloviansk) – and when, as Ukrainian Baptist leader, Pavel Unguryan, notes, these terrorists are 'repeatedly breaking into the churches or believers' homes and furiously shouting: "Our faith is Orthodox and you are traitors. You are American subjects and agents so we are going to eliminate you"' – any statements by the RUECB which justify the perception of Ukrainian Baptists as 'foreign agents', are not merely naive; they are positively dangerous.

Yoder further claims that the Russian and pro-Russian fighters occupying parts of Ukraine are 'not genuinely "terrorists"'. Let us also be clear, therefore, that the appellation of 'terrorist' is entirely justified when it is applied to those who are terrorising the local population of Donetsk, Luhansk and Crimea, including the disproportionate targeting of local evangelical communities as 'foreign agents'. Many of the senior leaders of the Russian-led insur-

gency have known links with neo-fascist, far-right extremist groups and apparent connections with organised crime syndicates operating in Russia, Belarus and Eastern Ukraine. These Russian separatists are planting mines in train stations and metro stops. Throughout Ukraine innocent people are being intimidated and killed by these terrorists.

Yoder, again claiming to speak for the RUECB, also reiterates the flagrant fabrication that Ukraine is divided between the 'Russian East' (which supports the Russian-led insurgency) and the 'Ukrainian West' (which supports the post-Maidan government in Kyiv). In fact, the vast majority of Ukrainians (including those in the East who speak Russian as a first language and have strong cultural ties to Russia) have decisively rejected the attempts by Russia to turn Ukraine into 'another Belarus' – i.e. into a pro-Russian dictatorship and a failed state controlled by mafia interests in which the hegemony of 'Putinism' is maintained by unprecedented restrictions on the freedom of the press, and violent clampdowns on religious minorities and political dissidents. Putin knows that any normalisation of the political system in Ukraine would lead to Ukraine's moving away from Russia, and any genuinely free national elections would result in pro-European parties gaining large majorities in the Ukrainian parliament. It is therefore in Putin's interest to sabotage Ukraine's democratic process and to derail Ukraine's economy.

Yoder's statement may also give uninformed readers the impression that the insurgency in Eastern Ukraine is a 'popular uprising' of Russian-leaning Ukrainians. But this is not the case. The insurgency is part of an 'invasion by stealth' in which Russian soldiers, tanks, BUK missiles and truckloads of

sophisticated military hardware continually cross the border from Russia into Ukraine. The violence in Eastern Ukraine is being orchestrated by a tiny minority of well-armed pro-Putin miscreants, who have a vested interest in maintaining a state of political corruption and perpetual economic anarchy, because they are afraid that the transparency and accountability that come with democracy might harm their corrupted businesses and lead to their political ruin.

Furthermore, Mr Yoder writes that the notion of defending your country, your neighborhood and your family 'to the end' (*до кінця*) 'has no real meaning'. Of course, such courageous sacrifices will have 'no real meaning' to an armchair observer pontificating from a safe distance, who is far removed from the conflict, and apparently lacking in any feeling of human compassion or Christian empathy for those who have been killed or are right now suffering horrific injuries inflicted by Russian shells and guns.

But, on the other hand, if you are one of the dozens of Ukrainian soldiers now writhing in agony in the state hospital of Dnipropetrovsk, having received third degree burns to 95% of your body from Russian flamethrowers and artillery, or if you've had all your limbs blown off by Russian shells, or if you're a grief-stricken Ukrainian mother who has lost her only son to the cruel bullet of a Russian sniper – if this were you, you would well understand what it means to fight 'to the end' (*до кінця*) in defense of your community against a foreign aggressor.

Ever since it gained independence in 1991, Ukraine has been the major hub for evangelistic and humanitarian activity throughout Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia. Despite major re-

sistance from entrenched Soviet mentalities and the passing of unfavourable legislation, Ukrainian Christians succeeded in establishing various NGOs, Christian missions and centres of theological education. For those with ears to hear and eyes to see, the activity of the Holy Spirit has been manifest in various ways in Ukrainian society in the past 25 years. Given Ukraine's obvious potential as a spiritual centre capable of bearing the torch of the Gospel and dispelling the remaining dark corners of the enduring Soviet legacy, it should not be surprising that the dark powers and principalities should have descended on Ukraine with such vehemence and fury.

There is so much more that could be said, but in conclusion, we note that when the Ukrainian people were suffering from the unjust yoke of a corrupt tyrant (the criminal-turned-President, Victor Yanukovych), all the Russian Baptists could do was to call on Ukrainian Baptists to 'repent' by a lame appeal to a proof-text from Proverbs 24:21 ('Do not join with rebellious officials'). We also note that now, as Ukrainian citizens are being murdered and mutilated by hostile Russian invaders, all the RUECB can do is offer pseudo-theological justifications for Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine. So, instead of calling on Ukrainian Baptists to 'repent' and to make peace with corrupt and unjust regimes, the RUECB itself should repent for betraying its Ukrainian Baptist brothers and sisters, for failing to demonstrate its solidarity in their suffering, for failing to speak truthfully to those in power, and for failing to stand on the side of the oppressed in the name of justice. One can only hope that the bizarre opinions of this spokesman writing on the RUECB website do not represent the views of the majority of Russian Baptists.

Finally, we all want reconciliation and, while speaking to Ukrainian Baptists, I can sense that they are deeply grieved and perplexed at the Russian Baptists' support for the regime which is oppressing them and even killing their citizens. One of the lessons of recent history (as demonstrated by South Africa and Northern Ireland) is that truth and empathy are the vital prerequisites to reconciliation. If there is no truth, there can be no forgiveness; if there is no empathy, there can be no reconciliation.

Reconciliation will occur *not* when Russian and Ukrainian Baptists reach pitiful compromises with corrupt political regimes concerning particular policies (i.e. towards Ukraine); rather, true reconciliation will happen when Ukrainian and Russian Baptists together join forces in solidarity and friendship to transform post-Soviet society according to the values of honesty, integrity and compassion that characterise the Kingdom of God. Together, Ukrainian and Russian Baptists can be in the vanguard of a new movement for the reformation of the church and the renewal of society, which casts off the dreary legacy of corruption, inhumanity, inefficiency, unaccountability and servitude associated with the Soviet past, and moves towards an open future with hope for greater freedom – freedom both to participate in the transformation and renewal of civil society and the freedom to proclaim the Gospel openly.

For the vast majority of Ukrainians – including the Ukrainian Baptist community – Maidan was a vital first step away from the post-Soviet vices of corruption, cynicism, and irresponsibility, and marks a return to the values of

freedom, compassion and solidarity. Maidan may prove to be God's gracious call not only to Ukrainian evangelicals, but also to Russian evangelicals to engage proactively in the transformation of social structures, to demonstrate solidarity with those fighting for freedom and justice and thereby to become salt and light to their society.

Ukraine has blazed a new trail out of the post-Soviet captivity of the church, which other countries in the region may now follow. Perhaps, whenever Putin and his Kremlin apparatchiks are finally forced to release their stranglehold on Russian public opinion and when the church in Russia (Orthodox and Evangelical) rediscovers its true prophetic voice, even Russia itself will have its own non-violent 'Maidan moment' on Red Square.

When this happens, and when the Russian Baptists stand by the people in their legitimate aspirations for freedom and democracy (as their Ukrainian counterparts did in 2013/14), the Russian Baptists can expect from the Ukrainian Baptists not sniping comments or feeble proof-texts on the Union's website about the need to uphold the rule of corrupt tyrants; nor will Russian Baptists read any perverse appeals to Christian charities in Russia to provide financial assistance to those who are killing their fellow Baptists.

Rather, when Russia undergoes its own 'Maidan experience', Russian Baptists can expect fervent prayers, material support and spiritual solidarity from their Ukrainian brothers and sisters as they take a stand with the people on behalf of the Christian values of truth, justice, compassion, honesty, integrity, freedom, and altruistic sacrifice.

Postscript

Ukraine: A Few Historical Reflections

While reading the reportage on the war in Ukraine, I have often been struck by one thought: the lack of historical context which journalists display. Looking at the history of Ukrainian-Russian (or should one say Soviet?) relations since 1917, I note certain episodes which, in retrospect, could do no other than underline Ukraine's desire to be independent as soon as the possibility arose.

After the 1917 Revolution Ukraine proclaimed independence from Russia. Civil War ensued, leading to the brutal suppression of the Ukrainian movement. Final and forceful incorporation into the Soviet Union as a constituent republic came only on 30 December 1922. Cynically, the Soviet Union continued to proclaim Ukrainian independence in order to secure it a separate voting right in the League of Nations (from 1934) and later the UN.

Although a controversial issue, the Ukrainian desire for independence did not die out. So great was Stalin's fear in the 1930s that the breadbasket of Europe, the Black Earth region of Ukraine, would break away that he induced an artificial famine, militarily enforced, with catastrophic loss of life running into the millions. The late Robert Conquest researched this issue in a brilliant book, *Harvest of Sorrow*, in which he claimed that the number of victims ran into millions. This aspect of the Soviet purges is known as the *holodomor* (death by starvation).

A dramatic turn for the worse in relations between Russia and Ukraine occurred in 1945 and after. Western Ukraine (the region around Lviv) had not been part of the Soviet Union dur-

ing the inter-war years, but the Red Army overran it and incorporated it into the Soviet Union at the end of World War II. Catastrophically, Stalin, egged on by the leadership of the ROC, abolished the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, imprisoning all its bishops, nearly all of whom died. Parish clergy, who were married in that tradition, were terrified when their families were threatened and they were forced to transfer allegiance to Moscow and the Orthodox Church, which explains, in part, the more numerous presence of 'Orthodox' churches in that region than anywhere else in the USSR. Neither the Kremlin nor the Moscow Patriarchate has given up the fight over the religious allegiance of that vast territory, but this crass act of religious persecution will never be forgiven or forgotten until Moscow apologises for it.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church went underground, to resurface in a major way in the later days of Communism. Again the story is not well known, but I have recounted it in some detail in my book, *Gorbachev, Glasnost and the Gospel*, published in 1990. Ukrainians do not have to belong to that church to feel, still today, the deepest resentment at this act of barbarism by Moscow. When nationalism and the desire for independence began to break the surface again in the 1970s and 1980s, once again the Russian reply was brutal, but the protests could not be suppressed.

The Ukrainian workers in the Donbas may have forgotten these episodes of history, but the majority of the nation has not and will not.

Michael Bourdeaux

Report from the Director

The Keston Center at Baylor 2014-2015 Highlights



*Professor Kathy Hillman, Director of the
Keston Center*

The Keston Center for Religion, Politics and Society joins with the Keston Institute to achieve its mission and is committed to the preservation and utilization of the library and archive. The Center seeks to promote research, teaching, and understanding of religion and politics in Communist, post-Communist, and other totalitarian societies.

During 2014-2015, the Keston Center for Religion, Politics and Society focused on working with the Keston Institute in Oxford to fulfil the mission:

To promote research and encourage the study of religion in Communist, post-Communist, and other totalitarian societies and the relationship between religion and Marxism.

Keston Public Lectures

The Keston Center sponsored two public lectures during the academic year. The occasions, held in the Michael Bourdeaux Research Center [the room which contains the Keston Archive and library], attracted between 60 and 75 attendees each.

- On 13 November, two-time Keston research award recipient Alina Urs, expert at the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and Memory of the Romanian Exile in Bucharest, spoke on 'Gender and Faith in Former Communist Countries: Yesterday and Today.' After the presentation, Keston Advisory Board Chair Stephen Gardner facilitated a question and answer session.



Alina Urs

- On 26 February, Keston presented 'Defenders of the Faith: Then and Now' which included an address by Keston Council Chair and Advisory Board member Xenia Dennen followed by a panel moderated by Julie deGraffenried. Dennen lectured on 'The Keston Institute and the Defense of Christians in the USSR before Perestroika.' Panelists Wallace Daniel, Stephen

and Warhola also serve on the Keston Center Advisory Board.



Xenia Dennen

Gardner, and James Warhola discussed 'The Post-Soviet Challenge Today.' Drs. deGraffenried, Daniel, Gardner,



Dr Warhola



Dr Gardner



Left to right: Dr deGraffenried, Dr Wallace Daniel & Xenia Dennen

The Keston Center Advisory Board and the Keston Council

The Keston Advisory Board, which assists and advises the Center, met twice in coordination with visits by Keston founder Michael Bourdeaux and Council Chair Xenia Dennen. All but two members attended at least one of the meetings either virtually or in person.

The November Board meeting introduced Raquel Gibson, Keston's first joint graduate assistant with Museum Studies, and featured brief reports as well as comments by Keston founder Michael Bourdeaux. Baylor President Ken Starr joined the Board for part of the lunch meeting. Judge Starr expressed his commitment to religious liberty and his support for the mission of the Keston Institute and Council. Pattie Orr, Dean of Libraries and Vice President for Information Technology, hosted a luncheon honouring Canon Bourdeaux

that included campus and community leaders.

In addition to comments by Xenia Dennen, Chair of the Keston Council, and some brief reports, the February Board meeting offered a hands-on experience. After a discussion of copyright issues and risk categories (low, medium, and high) for online availability, the group



*June 2015 Keston Council meeting.
Left to right: Kathy Hillman, Xenia Dennen,
John Briggs & David Gowan*

attempted to determine the likely legal risk of making an item available. Those who participated expressed a new appreciation for the challenges faced in mounting digitised materials on the web, particularly for those in the medium risk category.



Left to right: Judge Ken Starr, Alina Urs & Michael Bourdeaux

As a member of the Keston Institute Council of Management, Director Kathy Hillman attended the June 2014 meeting in Iffley near Oxford at the home of Michael Bourdeaux. During the year, she read materials provided and participated in the Council's work through e-mail. She also joined the group in June 2015 for their summer meeting.

Day-to-Day Operations: Staffing, Facilities, Processing, Preservation, and Digitisation

Keston retained staff members Kathy Hillman, Director; Larisa Seago, Administrative and Processing Archivist; and Janice Losak, Library Information



Left to right: *Janice Losak & Larisa Seago*

Specialist. Midway teacher and native Russian Tanya Clark continued part-time during the summer and one afternoon each week during the academic year. Elena Borisova earned her doctorate in May 2014 and worked as a temporary employee through the summer. Keston Scholar Alina Urs organised and inventoried Romanian files as part of her research experience. She sorted and organised the files on religious denominations. After developing a form, she created a comprehensive file of content information. These will become the basis of a finding aid for the categorised Romanian files.



Left to right: *Elena Borisova, Larisa Seago & Tanya Clark*

In 2014-15 for the first time, the Center and Museum Studies partnered to employ graduate assistant Raquel Gibson who created inventories of materials contained in unpacked boxes which will be crafted into preliminary finding aids. Lauren Tapley, Church State graduate assistant, completed the final year of her assistantship. She officially received her PhD in the May 2015 commencement ceremony. Her dissertation utilised samizdat and other materials



Left to right: *Becca Reynolds & Raquel Gibson (Museum Studies)*

from the Keston library and archives. Undergraduate Rachel Zimmerman also helped after graduate assistant Jason Hines completed his degree. Students accounted for 1,844.50 hours or .89 full-time equivalent.

These individuals allowed the Keston Center to accomplish the beginning-of-the year goal. They organised and inventoried files, processed 140 periodical titles, scanned and added metadata to 150 photographs, and reduced the backlog of boxes from 150 to 102. Progress continued on copyright discussions with plans to open low-risk items and some medium-risk materials on the worldwide web.



New scanner for Keston Center

The flatbed Epson Perfection V850 Pro Photo Scanner offers high-quality images, particularly for photographs. Additionally, two sections of Z-line shelving were added to the Carroll Library [where the Keston Center is located] basement level facility.

Research Activities and Visiting Scholars

During the year, the Center processed more than 100 individual requests for information from visiting and virtual scholars and walk-in visitors, including requests received by telephone or email. Visiting scholars and other researchers found profitable materials for their research, and the Keston Center benefited from their insights into the collection and their presence at Baylor University.

Larisa Seago provided each researcher access to the Keston materials related to his or her specific topic and assisted with their accommodation, transportation and paperwork as needed. Additionally, Kathy Hillman and her husband John provided further support with airport pick-up and delivery, tea and breakfast items, shopping, church attendance, and numerous other needs. Dean Pattie Orr hosted visitors for special activities and events.



Z-line shelving in Carroll Library basement

Public service yielded a gate count of 266, 280 reference transactions, 65 virtual reference transactions, 50 photocopied pages of articles; and 186 scanned copies of documents, samizdat publications and CCDBR volumes. Delivery services catalogued 1,721 monographs (2,104 volumes) and 61 periodical titles (6,734 issues).

To better serve Keston Scholars and other researchers, the University purchased two new scanners for the Michael Bourdeaux Research Center with end-of-the-year funds. The Zeutschel Zeta Comfort overhead scanner includes a book cradle and allows users to download documents to USB drives.

Keston Scholars and Advisory Board Members

- April French, PhD candidate in Comparative and European History at Brandeis University, did research for her dissertation 'Female Religious Activism in the Soviet Union after World War II: Evangelical Women in Siberia in Comparative Perspective.' April French had earlier travelled to the Keston Center to research Fr Aleksandr Men' for her master's thesis (14 July-8 August, 2014).



April French

- Alina Urs, Expert, The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and Memory of the Romanian Exile, researched religious persecution during the Communist dictatorship in Romania (21 October-7 December, 2014).
- Michael Bourdeaux, Founder of the Keston Institute, worked with his personal and professional papers in the Keston archive (30 November-5 December, 2014).

- Wallace Daniel, Keston Advisory Board member, researched Fr Alexander Men', Fr Gleb Yakinin, and Fr Nikolai Eshliman (February 2015).

Other Topics

- History of the Soviet dissident movement (Lauren Tapley)
- History of Byzantine-Ruthenian Catholic Church and Catholics of the Gulag and Soviet Exile (long-time Keston researcher Christopher Zugger)
- 'Accessible' history of Christianity in the USSR
- Kenoticism and Godmanhood (Stephanie Solywoda)
- Overview of *Keston News Service* articles about freeing of Baptist pastor Georgi Vins, the use of psychiatric hospitals instead of prison camps for religious dissidents in the 1970s-early 1980s, and the Helsinki Accords (1975) (Baylor undergraduate assignment utilising primary sources for Zac Wingerd's History 2395)
- Anti-religious posters (Phillip Jenkins)
- Review of Hungary materials as prelude to leading study abroad trip (Mary Ann Jordan)

Keston Virtual Scholars, Research Topics

Virtual scholars applied for short-term access to the Keston Digital Collection by submitting a request, curriculum vitae, and brief research proposal. Nine scholars accessed the collection from Russia and the United Kingdom as well as the United States. Their topics included:

- Photographs for a new edition of Georgii Vins' book *The Gospel in Bonds*
- Baptist Dissidents in Soviet Russia (issued and renewed)
- History of Religious Movements in the Former USSR
- Producer of 'Forgive me, Sergei' interested in viewing the Keston Digital Archive
- Soviet religious samizdat (two researchers)
- History of Christianity in Russia
- Keston Archive as a Depository Compiled to Reflect the Perspectives of Religious Believers in the Soviet Union (renewed)
- Anti-religious Posters

Special Visitors, Presentations, and Articles

The Center hosted scholars, students, and other researchers as well as a session of the Crossroads Symposium on Georgia. During the academic year, nine groups toured the Michael Bourdeaux Research Center. For the five planned tours, Keston staff created temporary displays featuring original



Kathy Hillman with a researcher in the Keston archive

Soviet religious periodical publications, samizdat, photographs, documents, and anti-religious posters. Some 400 people learned about Keston in 20 presentations which ranged from formal lectures to more casual occasions. Kathy Hillman or Larisa Seago made presentations at the annual meetings of the Baptist History and Heritage Society; Association of Librarians and Archivists at Baptist Institutions; the Association for Slavic, East European, & Eurasian Studies; and History 5370.



Larisa Seago (back to camera) introduces students to Keston material

In June 2014, the Director spoke on 'From Russian Baptists with Love: The Keston Center and Other Resources' in a workshop at the 2014 joint annual meeting in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, of the Baptist History and Heritage Society and the Association of Librarians and Archivists at Baptist Institutions.

In September, Larisa Seago also made a ma-

jor presentation to Barry Hankins' graduate History 5370 historiography research and writing seminar.

In November, Larisa Seago organised two panels for the 46th Annual Convention of the Association for Slavic, East European & Eurasian Studies in San Antonio marking the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. As part of the 'Samizdat in the Digital Era: Archival and Legal Perspectives' panel, she presented a paper, 'Making Voices Heard: Digitising Soviet Religious Samizdat and Providing Online Access,' with Kathy Hillman as the discussant. Larisa Seago also organised a conference panel of Keston researchers on the subject 'Through Believers' Eyes: Samizdat, Religion, and Persecution in Eastern Europe'. Julie deGraffenried moderated the session while James Warhola served as discussant (both are Advisory Board members).

Those presenting included:

- Alina Urs: 'Orthodox Clerics between their Church and the Political Police'
- Lauren Tapley: 'Gleb Yakunin: Religious Dissent and the Human Rights Movement'
- Tatiana Spektor: 'The True Orthodox Church of Russia in the 21st Century'

In May 2015, Kathy Hillman made a presentation which included Keston at the 2015 annual meeting of the Association of Librarians and Archivists at Baptist Institutions in Nashville. All sessions received country song titles. Hers was 'Workin' 9 to 5 for Service and Devotion: Evaluating Duplication Policies and Fees for Baptist Libraries and Archives.' An extensive question

and answer period followed the three session papers.

Kathy Hillman featured Keston Scholar Alina Urs in the Baptist General Convention of Texas president's column 'Are we there yet?' in volume 126, number 48 of the *Baptist Standard Digital Edition* on 1 December 2014.

Goals for 2015-2016 and Beyond

Future goals focus on publicising the Center, strengthening partnerships, processing additional materials, creating finding aids accessible online, hosting researchers, and holding lectures in coordination with Advisory Board meetings as appropriate. Specific details include:

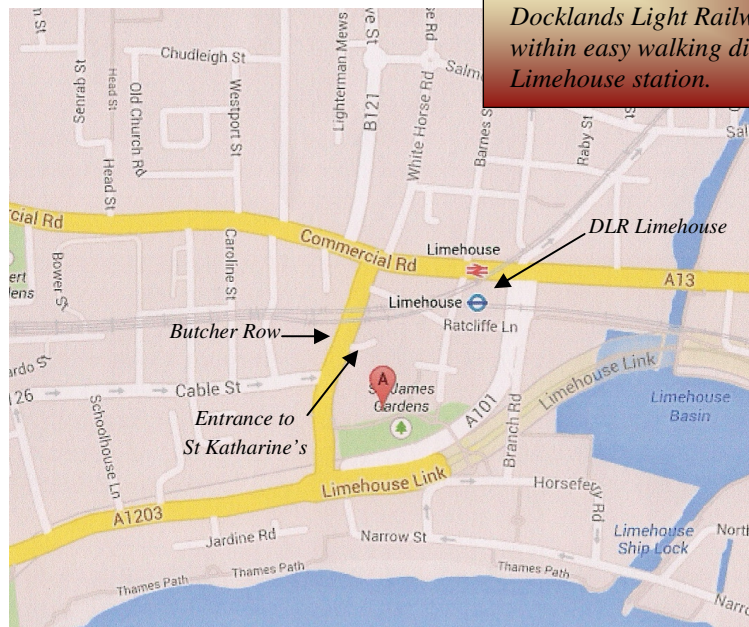
- Prioritising Keston materials for processing and digitisation based on use of the material, ease of the process, and likelihood of making the items available online outside of the University based on copyright and safety issues rankings.
- Planning at least one lecture or programme by a visiting Keston Scholar or other researcher.
- Conducting at least one meeting of the Keston Advisory Board during the year.
- Participating in one meeting of the Keston Institute's Council of Management in Oxford. Utilising 2015-2016 Museum Studies graduate assistant Courtney Berg to create and/or edit inventories for inclusion in BARD (Baylor Archival Repositories Database).
- Making preliminary finding aids available online.
- Reducing the number of Keston backlog boxes from 102 to 70.

Keston AGM

Saturday 7th November 2015 at 12 noon

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

12 noon	AGM
12.45pm	Lunch
2.00pm	Talk by the Lithuanian Ambassador in London: 'New (Old) Security Challenges in Europe: View from Lithuania'
3.00pm	Talk by Mr Robert Brinkley: 'The Ukrainian Catholic University'
4.00pm	Tea



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

Home News



Keston's trustees were delighted to welcome Professor Kathy Hillman, Director of the Keston Center at Baylor, to their June meeting and were greatly encouraged to hear about the many developments at the Center described in Professor Hillman's report on pp.32-39.

Work on the second edition of Keston's Encyclopaedia is continuing and the second volume is due to be published later this year. Since the spring issue of the *Keston Newsletter* a field trip to the Komi Republic was organised by the Encyclopaedia team, Sergei Filatov, Roman Lunkin and Xenia Dennen, who flew to Syktyvkar, the capital of the Komi Republic, from Moscow (1,200km) on 14 June. Further field trips are planned: in November to Mari-El; in January 2016 to Saransk; and in March to Kurgan.

Keston's AGM will be held on Saturday 7 November at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine, Butcher Row, London E14 8DS. A member of Keston's Council of Management, elected at last year's AGM, Mr Robert Brinkley (a former British Ambassador in Ukraine) will give a talk on the Ukrainian Catholic University which he knows well, being a member of its governing body. Keston is honoured that the Lithuanian Ambassador, Her Excellency Asta Skaisgirytė Liauskiene, has agreed to give the second address: she will speak on the Lithuanian view of security challenges in Europe today.

The 14th century St Stefan of Perm brought Christianity to Komi and created an alphabet for the Komi language into which he translated a number of religious texts. Over the centuries the area was incorporated successively into a number of different dioceses: sometimes into the Vologda or Vyatka or Perm or Arkhangelsk diocese. By the 17th century the Komi language ceased being used in church which slowed the Christianisation of the Komi population who preserved their pagan customs and culture. As the area was so thinly pop-

ulated and a priest from a larger village rarely visited isolated communities, the tradition of 'chapel Orthodoxy' developed with the laity leading prayers and taking on responsibility for parish life. In the 17th century the northern part of



Sergei & Xenia with Pastor Sergei Elfimov (centre) in the German Lutheran chapel

today's Komi Republic was one of the main places where the beliefs of priestless Old Believers spread. In the 20th century during the Soviet period the area was named the Komi ASSR (Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic) and became a place of exile and hard labour for many thousands who suffered under the Stalin regime. The ethnic composition of the area was changed by the influx of exiles – of Germans and Poles for example – so much so that the Komi population became a minority. By the mid-1980s, before *perestroika*, only four Orthodox parishes remained while a number of other denominations to which many exiles had belonged, for example Lutheranism and Catholicism, managed to survive from the 1940s. The first Baptist congregation was founded in 1943 by Nikolai Antonov who was exiled from the Pskov oblast because of his faith.

The team's first interview was with an historian Mikhail Rogachov who had

invited a journalist Evgeni Suvorov from an independent Russian Orthodox publication to join him. Mikhail was working on a project gathering documentation about the 'unjustly repressed' called 'Repentance'. There had been more labour camps in the Komi ASSR than in any other region of the USSR. Evgeni told us that more than 200 different religious groups were active in the Republic; the number of Orthodox churches was growing (the oldest churches only dated from the 18th century; in the 20th century some churches had been used as transit centres for kulaks and Poles). During the Communist era Syktyvkar had had only one working church – all the rest had been destroyed; now there were 20. 'Chapel Orthodoxy' was typical of the area: the diocese did not have enough priests in this vast territory so the laity had set up chapels and were leading morning and evening prayer.

Pastor Sergei Elfimov from the Lutheran Church of Ingria had much to tell the team. He met them at a small house on the edge of the city belonging to the German Lutherans. Pastor Sergei was a Komi as were nearly all his congregation. His grandmother had been a believer, he said, and his great grandfather a church warden. 'In the north we are more tolerant – it's cold. But we northerners are not frozen; we just haven't thawed out.' There was hardly any summer in Komi and in winter the temperature could drop as low as minus 40-50⁰. The land was poor and you needed cows for their manure rather than their milk. Few people were Komi nationalists these days, though many like him wanted to preserve Komi culture. 'I separate church and state. The church is not a tribune for politics. My politi-

cal views are my own personal views and I do not speak for the church.' The Finno-Ugrian ethnic group, that is Komi, Mordovia, Udmurtia and Mari-El, felt that Lutheranism was 'their own', said Pastor Sergei. The Komi area was converted to Christianity earlier than these other areas which to this day retained elements of paganism. The New Testament and Psalter have been translated into Komi and in the 1970s a Baptist presbyter had translated the whole of the Bible. 'I and other non-Orthodox are not listened to,' complained Pastor Sergei. The Russian Orthodox Church influenced the authorities and their policy on Lutherans who were blamed with other Protestants for the events in Western Ukraine. Only the Orthodox had been allowed to participate in the organisation of a memorial service for the 'repressed' while the Lutherans had been excluded, he said. He was not allowed to publish in the media, his parishioners had been banned from visiting children's homes, and they were never invited to school events. There was no ecumenical dialogue; an inter-religious council existed but it only included Orthodox and Muslim representatives. There was a small Catholic unregistered group in Syktyvkar made up of Poles whom a priest from St Petersburg looked after. They kept their heads well down, fearful of attracting the attention of the authorities.

The following day the team took a taxi on a two-hour journey to the Trinity-St Stefan Monastery near Ulyanovo. Luckily it was a sunny day; limitless forests of pine, larch and silver birch stretched away on either side of the road. They entered the monastery complex through a small gate and walked up some steps to a central piazza where a young lad was kicking a

football around; nearby a solitary rabbit sat in its hutch and two goats lay sunning themselves. Fr Antoni came out to find them and first took them into the main church where there was a bird in its nest atop the light which illu-



The Trinity-St Stefan Monastery

minated the entrance. The monastery, said Fr Antoni, was founded by St Stefan in the 14th century down by the river. The current stone buildings on higher ground were only constructed in the 19th century when four monks from Solovki were sent to revive the community. By 1886, after 20 years of work, the final church was completed. In 1994 the church of St Mikhail over the entrance was restored and the first liturgy celebrated. The bones of the four Solovki monks were discovered buried under one of the churches: these had been placed in caskets in the main church where they were now revered by the community and the many pilgrims. For the monastery's 600th anniversary Patriarch Kirill had arrived at the controls of a helicopter for which a helipad had been built. The community consisted of ten monks. Fr Antoni

commented 'We are all different, so there are conflicts here too.' The monastery's main work was mission; it was not closed to the outside world: 'we talk to people, we pray for the sick.' Relations with local people had been difficult to start with, as many had lived in the monastery buildings during the Soviet period and had been evicted. Today the local people cooperated with the monks, helped to cut the hay and were allowed to use some of the monastery's land.

Back in Syktyvkar the team interviewed the head of the Diocesan Youth Department, Fr Alexandr Mitrofanov, who was originally from Ukhta. He ran an Orthodox youth blog (<http://vk.com/o.alexand>) with 3000 followers and organised internet discussions which he thought helped draw young people into the church: 'some see us church people as kind of freaks, so by using the internet I show young people that I am quite normal.' He sang and accompanied himself on the guitar too – rather unusual for an Orthodox priest! In the cities every church had a Sunday school, he said, and instead of a scout movement 'Warriors of Holy Russia' had been established with a former paratrooper as their leader. His department worked with a student theatre group directed by Marina Afanasevka who headed a Centre for Creative Art in Syktyvkar's teacher training college. Marina, whom the team later interviewed, ran three theatres, one for school children, a student theatre and a theatre for disabled youngsters called 'My Joy' (words of greeting used by St Seraphim of Sarov). She was Orthodox, she said, but did not try to impose her beliefs on anyone. Her students

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

performed in Orthodox parishes thanks to Fr Mitrofanov's support and usually asked him to bless them before a performance. Some of her students got drawn into the church and then continued their involvement after graduation. The theatre group worked with disabled children and regularly visited a home for disabled adults where the students would sing and dance; a woman who never usually spoke suddenly started to talk when they arrived. Most church theatre productions were of a low standard and boring, she thought: 'We must put on high quality drama.' She reminisced fondly about Ukhta where she was brought up. It had been full of exiled famous artists, musicians and architects and had a fine House of Culture (now a church) where the exiles had staged high-class productions: 'Ukhta was more sophisticated than Syktyvkar which I found very coarse when I moved here. Ukhta was entirely built by prisoners.' It had a children's park created by German exiles where as a child she used to walk with a baby bear on a lead! The climate was tough and the sun shone rarely. The Keston team learned a local saying which ran thus: 'Why have you not caught the sun? On the day when the sun came out I had to go to work.' For the team, too, even in June it was chilly and grey.

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