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Fr Aleksandr Men and His Times

by Michael Bourdeaux

One day in 1990, 9 September, promised to be special for me – and so it was, in a truly tragic way. It was publication day for my *Gorbachev, Glasnost and the Gospel*, and, full of excitement, I went via Keston to a press conference in central London to launch it. On calling at the college, I was greeted by faces transfixed by grief. A telephone call from Moscow had just announced that Fr Aleksandr Men had been murdered by an unknown assassin close to his home, when at about 6.45am he was on his way to celebrate the liturgy in his church at Novaya Derevnya.

The only good to come out of this shocking news was that I could an-

Also in this issue:

nounce Fr Aleksandr's death at the press conference and dedicate the book to him, pointing out that his photo was included. I called him the 'apostle of Gorbachev's church *perestroika'*. Although I had never met him, news of his lecturing on the radio and TV over the past two years had made me realise that here was a new voice, one for which the Russian people, starved of religious education, had been longing to hear. In truth, even 26 years after his death, his is far from being a household name worldwide, though his spiritual legacy is strongly alive in Russia.

Promoting his name and teaching outside Russia will now be much easier as a result of the magnificent book entitled *Russia's Uncommon Prophet: Father Aleksandr Men and His Times* by Professor Wallace L. Daniel, of Mercer University, Macon, Georgia, who has been a friend and benefactor of Keston for many years. He draws on earlier biographies, but adds a depth of scholarship and humane perception which is inspirational to read. I would go as far as to ask whether this is the best book on the Russian Orthodox Church ever written in English. It compares with *The Russian Orthodox Church: a Contemporary History* which Jane Ellis wrote 30 years ago. It is far more than the mere story of the life of a great man, a fine preacher and an outstanding Biblical scholar. It is, almost incidentally, a history of the church from the time of Nikita Khrushchev to that of Mikhail Gorbachev. What is truly outstanding is the depth of perception from an author who did not start to study the modern church until the 1990s, having previously been a student of the period of Catherine the Great; further, I would contend that no commentator from the Orthodox tradition has ever come closer to a spiritual empathy with this priest and his ecumenical vision, and that from a Baptist. That no British publisher has yet commissioned a British edition is scandalous. The book is readable and inspiring in every sentence.

I always thought of Fr Aleksandr Men as a miracle: a man who sprang into being in a vacuum, his intellect fully formed almost from birth. Well, that cannot have been true and no section of this book is more revealing than the long

exposition of the influences on him. As a Jew, he was not a convert to Christianity. He was nourished in the faith by his mother and other women and baptised by a remarkable priest of the Catacomb Church, Fr Serafim, who somehow survived Stalin's purges and conducted a secret ministry in a nondescript house at Zagorsk near Moscow.

When I was preparing a radio programme about Fr Aleksandr for BBC Radio 4 a few years ago I had the privilege of visiting that house and experiencing the atmosphere surrounding it which Wallace Daniel captures wonderfully. The author does not mince his words in presenting this branch of the faith as the true bearer of the greatest spiritual tradition of Orthodoxy. The exposé of the collusion between priests of the official church and the KGB to silence Fr Aleksandr is one of the remarkable features of this book: it failed.

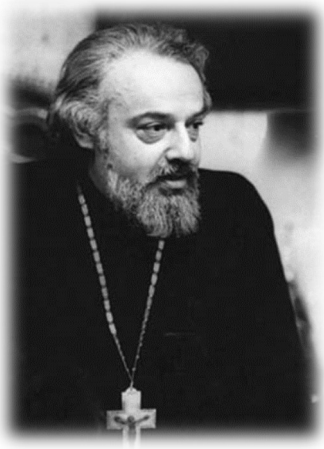
As a young man Alek, as they called him, scoured Moscow's second-hand bookshops and stalls for copies of the Bible, of the writings of Russian philosophers such as Bulgakov and Berdyaev and many others. He not only educated himself, he became a polymath. He painted icons, absorbed classical music and was set on a career as a scientist, studying at the Institute of Fur, first in Moscow, then in Irkutsk, after it was transferred to Siberia. He was on course to become one of the outstanding experts in the field of zoology, but – *mirabile dictu* – the KGB stepped in and prevented him from taking his degree, even though he was an outstanding student in his year. His Jewish origins had caught up with him. This intervention threw him straight into developing his other qualification, his self-study for the priesthood. Once ordained to a suburban Moscow parish, he dedicated himself to his new life with heart and soul, though never neglecting his young wife Natalya and later the children they had.

Every aspect of his life rolls before our eyes in vivid colours: his parishes, often hounded from one to the next, his teaching of a small group who became his spiritual children, his interrogations by the KGB, the conflicts, not of his own making, with the church authorities. One fascinating aspect of his work, previously unknown to me, was the articles he was, at an early stage in his life, able to publish in the official *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate.* Again, the closing of this door led to his writing of voluminous works which he believed could never be published. However, they were. He found an avenue for them to be taken out of Russia, printed by a remarkable group, *La Vie avec Dieu*, in Brussels under a pseudonym and then smuggled back into Russia. This continued for many years:

his *Son of Man* became an inspiration to all who read it – the story of Christ's ministry for a starving public. There was so much else, informed by his ecumenical vision and overpowering generosity of spirit.

Then came Gorbachev, who soon set a new course, *glasnost* and *perestroika* (openness and reform). One might have imagined that Fr Aleksandr's ministry would immediately have been transformed. Not so. Unpleasant forces were released as well as beneficial ones and he came close to catastrophe. Chapter 11 ('Under Siege') illustrates that threats and intimidation became worse for a time in 1986, more than a year after Gorbachev's accession. Being forced to sign a 'letter of confession', even though he resisted the catastrophe that this could have become, cost him more spiritual anguish than anything else in his ministry.

Then came the change: two years of ceaseless public ministry, every day of which might have worn out a lesser man, recounted here in detail by Wallace Daniel, who goes on to list the various theories for his murder, which, needless to say, like that of 40 or more investigative journalists, was never solved. As the KGB still controlled the police and the judiciary, how could it have been? We shall now never know for certain who ordered it, unless the secret nestles still in some closed archive, waiting some day to be uncovered. My theory, for what it is worth, is that the trigger was Gorbachev's new law on religion, just passed after much public discussion, which promoted virtually complete freedom for believers, both to evangelise and to teach children (Fr Aleksandr would have had some views on Putin's present-day restrictions!). Surely the KGB had to react after that?



Some said it was anti-semitism, perhaps more rampant in the Church than outside. The unspeakable Metropolitan of St Petersburg, Ioann, wrote of him in an obituary: 'The priest A. Men was an ordinary, common, dull, average servant of the church. He had no musical talent, no ear for music, a strong, deep, but unpleasant voice… His attention was directed almost exclusively to those of Jewish nationality and to those parishioners who had one Jewish parent.' Others accused him of being a crypto-Catholic. Yet others said his ecumenism barred his teaching from support by the Church. However, after years of hesitation, the official Church, in the words of Patriarch Kirill, has finally proclaimed his devotion to the 'living and inspirational word, through which many people had come to faith and had become active members of the Holy Church'.

Astonishingly (for a man who never received a rouble for his published books), *Son of Man* has sold 440,000 copies, his total titles more than five million. There are now translations into 14 languages, including Portuguese for Brazil, where *Son of Man* has sold 22,000 copies. His more material legacy is in a foundation headed by his brother, Pavel Men, at the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Moscow, and a children's hospital which he co-founded with the late Fr Georgi Chistyakov.

One hopes and prays that this superb book will not only find a British publisher, but will also secure as many foreign translations as Fr Aleksandr's own books have done. It is a fitting memorial to a man, who when history judges, will rank among the very greatest Christians of the second half of the 20th century.

Russia's Uncommon Prophet: Father Aleksandr Men and His Time
by Wallace. L. Daniel,
North Illinois University Press, 2016
(LCC BX597.M46 D36 2016)

The Siberian Seventy

by Emily Baran

The Chuguevka Pentecostals

In the final decades of Soviet power, at least 30,000 Soviet Pentecostals petitioned their government to allow them to emigrate abroad, where they could practice their faith without regulation or repression by the state.[1] This movement was largely unsuccessful for much of its existence. Even as a significant number of Soviet Jews resettled abroad, nearly all Pentecostals remained at home. In 1978, seven Pentecostals from Siberia made a dramatic bid to break this stalemate. They entered the American Embassy in Moscow, and refused to leave until their families were safely abroad. It took nearly five years and much diplomatic negotiation before the so-called 'Siberian Seven' were allowed to exit the country.[2] Their long stay in the embassy brought international attention to Pentecostal emigration demands, but no broader resolution.

This article examines the Siberian Seventy, a more obscure moment in the history of the Pentecostal emigration movement. The nickname was given to the group by Western supporters who explicitly linked their cause to that of the Siberian Seven. The two groups shared much in common beyond their location in Siberia. Both wanted to leave the Soviet Union, and both attempted to leverage Western sympathy for their plight into concrete actions on their behalf. Yet even the Siberian Seven, who literally placed themselves within the walls of American power, struggled to sustain international interest. The far more isolated Siberian Seventy, who

remained far outside of Moscow, attracted even less outside attention. Neither episode has generated significant scholarly discussion since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Funding from the Keston Institute made it possible for me to conduct research on this topic in the Keston Center's archive, which contains a wealth of samizdat and secondary information on the Pentecostal emigration movement.

The story of the Siberian Seventy begins among the ethnic German communities of the Soviet Union. Forcibly resettled (primarily in Central Asia) by Stalin, ethnic Germans were forced to begin again in distant regions after World War II.[3] There, some encountered Pentecostalism, spread by Ukrainian preachers, and converted to this faith. After Stalin's death, the communities regained freedom of movement, and migrated to new locales. Several dozen German families travelled to the Far Eastern Primorsky region on the Pacific coast. Their relocation was also sparked by heightened repression of religious communities under Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev. The remoteness of the Far East promised a chance to start anew, and perhaps avoid close state scrutiny.

The newly established Pentecostal community in Primorsky region was quiet, and largely inactive. After several years in the wilderness, and with many of their children drifting away from the faith, community members began to move back to Central Asia. It was during this return to Central Asia that a more ambitious movement for Christian living took root. Clustered in the town of Akhangaran, Uzbekistan, the younger generation voiced the desire to build a new community based on the early Christian church. They rallied around one of their own, a newly married man, Viktor Walter, who became their pastor. From their base in Akhangaran, the youthful congregation began to travel to nearby and more distant villages, seeking out lapsed Pentecostals and other individuals who might be receptive to their evangelism. Back at home, the families pooled resources and property. Women no longer worked, allowing them to focus on childcare, a major concern among families who rejected any form of birth control.[4]

Yet Walter and others ultimately decided that their Christian community would best be served by returning to the Primorsky region, a location their parents had abandoned years earlier. Walter once claimed that the remote town of Chuguevka was chosen because it would be 'financially easier to support our large families'. This may have some merit, as the timber industry promised steady if backbreaking work for the men.[5] In early 1981 the families began the long trek eastward. Upon arrival, they were initially welcomed by the local government, perhaps eager for new sources of labour. The families received plots of land and purchased farm animals. Having exhausted the existing housing stock, they set about building new homes along the Ussuri river.[6]

The Soviet Union had hosted numerous communes during its early existence, but the Chuguevka experiment was unusual in its appearance in the 1980s. In the

Young men belonging to the Chuguevka Pentecostal community

immediate aftermath of the Civil War, Protestants and Old Believers had enjoyed a brief period of relative freedom to establish religious communities in rural corners of the Soviet Union. Some Soviet officials cautiously embraced 'sectarians' both as a counterforce to Russian Orthodoxy and as potential allies in the construction of an egalitarian society.[7] This collaboration ended with Stalin's attack on religious life and ruthless persecution of believers. Communities unraveled in the wake of arrests. German Mennonites fled abroad.[8] The Chuguevka congregation appeared to revive this abandoned vision of a Christian commune within a socialist society, and it faced similar opposition.

Local authorities took notice of the arrival of so many large families in such a remote region. For decades the state had barred the registration of Pentecostal congregations, denying them any legal existence. Instead Pentecostals were expected to join the legal All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, a compromise that many found unacceptable.[9] Under the tenure of Leonid Brezhnev, the state had moderated its position. Registration offered a means to control congregations that otherwise existed in the shadows, and it allowed officials to monitor religious activity more closely.[10] As a result, local officials in Chuguevka demanded that the new arrivals register and conform to the legal restraints of the religious law.

This request may have been the first time the congregants had been offered registration, since the community responded by asking the state for a copy of the relevant legislation to review. The state complied, and the church brothers gathered to determine the appropriate course of action. What the men read in the law troubled not only them, but many other Pentecostals (and other believers). In exchange for registration, the law sought to restrict religious activity to the confines of designated churches,

and to adult members. Charitable work, evangelism, and outreach to children was not allowed. Many congregations felt the benefits of public worship offered the best option in this situation, while others preferred to risk persecution to practice their faith as they saw fit. The Chuguevka congregation settled on the latter option.[11] In this regard, they shared common ground with the Siberian Seven, who had also spurned registration as incompatible with their faith.

Steady reprisals against the community followed this decision. In the Brezhnev era, the state's most ubiquitous measure against believers was the administrative penalty. Police and local officials arrived at unauthorised religious services, and documented the participants. They then issued summons to the hosts and preachers, who were required to appear before a hearing, and typically given some form of punishment. Fines were most common, although some individuals had their wages garnished, or spent short stints in the local jail. Given the regularity of church services and the poverty of the community, such measures represented a heavy financial burden. State sanction of these tactics also encouraged local residents to take the law into their own hands. Neighbours yelled obscenities and threats at the newly arrived families as they walked down the streets or stood outside their homes. By night, some residents became even bolder, throwing rocks through windows, and even setting fire to one family's home.[12]

Unlike other Pentecostal emigration seekers, including the Siberian Seven, the Chuguevka congregation had a distinct advantage in appeals to the Soviet government. When Pentecostals appealed for emigration, the Soviet state repeatedly told them that such requests would only be granted on the basis of 'family reunification'. For most Pentecostals, who lacked relatives abroad to sponsor their application, this represented an insurmountable barrier to emigration. In contrast, nearly all of the Chuguevka Pentecostals had relatives in West Germany. Theoretically, the Soviet government's own regulations demanded that they be allowed to rejoin their families abroad.

In the face of the state's unwillingness to acknowledge this fact, the families posted their passports to the central government, which quickly forwarded them back to regional authorities. By handing in their passports, the families symbolically renounced their citizenship in the Soviet Union. This gesture had no formal power, and indeed, it put the families in an awkward position because without documents they were unable to fill out the necessary paperwork to petition for emigration. The lack of papers created an even more immediate problem for pregnant women. In the Soviet Union, while hospitals formally documented the birth of a child, the parents were also required to register the child's birth with the civil authorities, who then issued the birth certificate. Without papers, the families could not complete this process. The state hoped that this barrier would put sufficient pressure on mothers to accept their passports, but instead it led to numerous undocumented births in the community.[13]

As school resumed in the autumn of 1983, children from the congregation returned to hostile classrooms. Teachers and students alike called the children 'fascists' and 'our enemies'. The public campaign against the adults in the community now extended to the younger members of the congregation. Attempts to work with the schools to resolve the situation went nowhere. In frustration, parents began to keep their children at home rather than send them back into this environment. This decision further antagonised the state, which issued warnings that custody rights could be revoked for parents of chronically truant children. This harkened back to the Siberian Seven, who had lost custody of some of their children after removing them from the school system.[14]

That same autumn, the families also ratcheted up pressure on the state by shifting to a new tactic: the hunger strike. Soviet dissidents had repeatedly used prolonged fasts and hunger strikes to draw the attention of the outside world over the previous decade. As such, the congregation would have been fully aware of both the risks and rewards of such an approach. This may have been what led the community to adopt a programme of time-limited fasts, which reduced the danger of death and gave the families a more flexible time frame for their demands, as a new strike could always be declared in the future. The first strike lasted less than two weeks. Moreover, setting specific parameters based on age and health concerns meant that the entire community could participate to some degree, even some children.[15]

The strikes immediately escalated the situation. The men in the community, who stayed home from work during the strike, lost their jobs and were unable to support their families. When Walter's father became ill, and then unexpectedly died in the hospital, the congregation suspected foul play. Following this incident, families refused to accept medical care at state facilities. Some women gave birth at home.[16] To attract even more attention for their actions, families placed banners on the sides of their homes announcing the strike. When the authorities removed the homemade signs, some of the families used stencils to paint their messages directly on the walls of their homes.[17]

In December, the state arrested Walter, and handed down a five-year sentence the following spring. A second trial of seven other men from the community followed.[18] The hunger strikes and arrests took a heavy toll on the community. Almost no one in the congregation had a steady income. Families were reduced to 'collecting empty bottles for recycling, searching for medicinal herbs in the taiga,' and other desperate means to support themselves.[19] Without documents, they could not visit the men in prison or collect packages at the post office sent by sympathisers abroad. The state confiscated two cars owned by the congregation which further limited congregants' mobility.[20]

Despite its remote location, the community's actions can only be understood in a global context. Certainly the congregation understood this fact. It framed its methods and appeals to garner maximum

publicity abroad. The community even filmed some of its interactions with officials and smuggled the film abroad to Keston College.[21] Much of the Chuguevka activism directly built on the lessons of the Siberian Seven. The use of hunger strikes is the clearest parallel. A prolonged hunger strike by some of the Seven in 1981 resulted in the hospitalisation of Lida Vashchenko. This was also the period in which the Seven received the most media attention, a fact not lost on the Seventy. Once the Seven had emigrated to the West, Lida herself became involved in advocacy for the Seventy, telling reporters in 1984 that the Chuguevka Pentecostals 'are following our example [by hunger striking] because they also want freedom to worship God without fear of persecution.'[22]

That said, the Seventy were less successful in attracting Western support than Lida had been. The bulk of attention came from denominational publications and advocacy organisations. There are numerous plausible reasons for the more limited coverage. Despite attempts by the American embassy to restrict access, foreign journalists and advocates had a much easier time reporting on the Seven than they did on the Seventy. Simply put, Moscow is a lot closer than Chuguevka. The first hunger strike by the Seventy also came only months after the Seven emigrated. Foreign journalists had intermittently followed the Seven for five years, making media fatigue with this story perhaps inevitable. The parallels between the two groups certainly elevated the Seventy's profile, but it may also have made it hard to see their situation as either new or newsworthy.

Further, it was hard to replicate or outdo the Seven's bold decision to occupy the American embassy. Although the Seventy apparently never contemplated a prolonged standoff in a foreign embassy, they did attempt to speak directly to foreign diplomats in Moscow. Representatives from the Chuguevka congregation travelled to the American and West German embassies in Moscow on two occasions. In both instances, some (but not all) of the individuals managed to get into the embassy grounds. They found little in the way of direct support for their efforts from embassy officials, who must have been eager to avoid a repeat of the Siberian Seven affair.[23]

Although for different reasons than those of Western diplomats, the Soviet government also did not want a second Siberian Seven incident. It hoped to control the situation and limit outside attention. To prevent more trips to Moscow, the state instituted stricter passport control in the Primorsky region, making it difficult to travel even within the region without identity papers.[24] It also attempted to keep the congregation from communicating with foreigners. At his trial, Walter was accused of leaking information to Western media outlets.[25] Meanwhile, local officials worked to isolate the community and prevent it from garnering sympathy from neighbours. Local newspapers offered an official interpretation of the congregation that ignored members' human rights concerns, and instead stressed their outsider status and hostility to Soviet authority. Articles enflamed resentment and fears about the congregation's almost entirely German makeup by drawing vague connections to alleged

Nazi relatives abroad. A local Russian man, who had recently joined the community, saw a past conviction for hooliganism dredged up for public scrutiny.[26]

Members of the Chuguevka community working in the fields

Finally in spring 1987, the state acceded to the community's request for emigration. The repeated hunger strikes and Western attention certainly played some role in this policy shift as it put pressure on the state to resolve the situation. At the same time, it seems hard to imagine this dramatic *volte-face* without the tenure of Mikhail Gorbachev and his more liberal attitude towards dissidents.

The first Chuguevka family arrived in West Germany in April, and others followed.[27] In the meantime, the community kept up pressure on the state. In January a small delegation travelled to Moscow and unfurled protest banners before police arrived and sent them back to Chuguevka.[28] By May 1988 nearly 150 individuals had emigrated. This included the Walter family, but not Viktor himself, who remained behind in a labour camp.[29] Then in November 1988, the last men were released from the camps and emigrated. The entire community had abandoned Chuguevka for West Germany.[30]

Ultimately, the Siberian Seventy incident has several valuable lessons for the study of religion in the late Cold War. First, emigration demands were a major current among Soviet Pentecostals. More work needs to be done to integrate this history into a broader narrative about freedom of movement in the Soviet Union, one that incorporates both Jewish Refuseniks and unregistered Christians. Second, Pentecostal émigré seekers were not isolated loners. They borrowed methods from one another, communicated with other unregistered communities and with Western supporters abroad, and learned from others' experiences in making their demands to the state. Third, the success of emigration campaigns depended on the consent of the state, which seemed more willing to accede to requests if they were backed by public advocacy and significant Western attention. While the flood of

Pentecostal emigration from the Soviet Union began only in mid-1988, and picked up more steam in 1989, the Seven emigrated much earlier, and the Seventy began their emigration abroad nearly a year before it became possible for most others.[31]

Lastly, the Seventy represent an attempt to create a viable Christian commune in the late Soviet period. A report in the Keston archival files about the community sums up this point well: 'The idea of Christian communism is not one that appeals to the Soviet authorities. There is only one kind of real communism in their eyes.'[32] The Seventy challenged the state's ideological monopoly on socialist values. Ultimately, the Seven and the Seventy make clear the need for more scholarly attention to the emigration movement among Protestant religious communities in the postwar Soviet Union.

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1. Arkady Polishchuk, 'Why Do Christians Want to Emigrate from the Soviet Union?' *Religion in Communist Dominated Areas* 18, nos. 1-3 (1979): 3.
2. Timothy Chmykhalov and Danny Smith, *Release! The Miracle of the Siberian Seven* (Basingstoke: Marshalls, 1984); John Charles Pollock, *The Siberian Seven* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1979).
3. Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 123-29, 285-89.
4. The early history of the Siberian Seventy is described in detail by Peter de Bruijne, who conducted interviews in the community after their emigration abroad. Peter de Bruijne, *Siberian Miracle*, trans. Adrian Peetoom (London: Marshall Pickering, 1991).
5. Open letter to all Christians from the Chuguevka congregation, undated (c. 1986). Archive file <SU/Pen 6 S Chuguevka (V. Walter Trial)>, Keston Center for Religion, Politics, and Society, Baylor University.
6. Report on the Chuguevka community, no author or date indicated. Archive file <SU/Pen 11/8 Chuguevka>, Keston Center.
7. See, for example, early Bolshevik policy towards the self-castrators (Skoptsy) and the Baptists. Laura Engelstein, *Castration and the Heavenly Kingdom: A Russian Folktale* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Heather J. Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).
8. Hans Werner, *The Constructed Mennonite: History, Memory, and the Second World War* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 23-28.
9. Steve Durasoff, *Pentecost behind the Iron Curtain* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1972), 27-29.
10. Emily B. Baran, *Dissent on the Margins: How Soviet Jehovah's Witnesses Defied Communism and Lived to Preach About It* (New York: OUP, 2014), 174-75.
11. Letter from the Chuguevka congregation to the Soviet government. February 1982. Archive file <SU/Pen 6 S Chuguevka (V. Walter Trial)>, Keston Center.
12. Letter from the Chuguevka congregation to the Soviet government. February 1982. Archive file <SU/Pen 6 S Chuguevka (V. Walter Trial)>, Keston Center.
13. 'Siberian Pentecostals to Renew Hunger Strike,' *Keston News Service* (*KNS*) no. 189, 15 December, 1983, pp. 4-6. The families sent letters to the West German government, asking that it register these births. See archive file <SU/Pen 11/8 S Chuguevka>, Keston Center.

14. 'Repressions Lead to Demonstration in Siberia,' *KNS* no. 217, 27 January, 1985, p. 4.
15. It should be noted that the congregation itself tended to refer to these actions as 'fasts' or 'hunger fasts'. That said, the congregation's documentation of significant weight loss and the sustained nature of these actions make the term 'hunger strike' an appropriate description. 'Hunger Strike by "Siberian Seventy",' *KNS* no. 213, 22 November, 1984, p. 2.
16. Indictment of Viktor Walter, 1 March, 1985. Archive file <SU/Pen 6 S Chuguevka (V. Walter Trial)>, Keston Center.
17. Trial of Viktor Walter (record produced by Chuguevka congregation), April 1985. Archive file <SU/Pen 11/8 S Chuguevka>, Keston Center.
18. 'Continued Persecution of the "Siberian Seventy",' *KNS* no. 229, 11 July, 1985, p. 10.
19. 'Hope for the Siberian Seventy?' *Redemption*, November 1987, pp. 17-20. See also an open appeal letter to Ronald Reagan, Helmut Kohl, and Franz Josef Strauss, by the Chuguevka congregation in early 1986. Archive file <SU/Pen 11/8 S Chuguevka>, Keston Center.
20. 'Chuguyevka Prisoners Scattered All Over the USSR,' *KNS* no. 243, 6 February, 1986, pp. 4-5.
21. 'The Chuguyevka Pentecostals,' *KNS* no. 239, 28 November, 1985, p. 24.
22. 'Village "On Hunger Strike",' *Baptist Times*, 23 February, 1984. Archive file <SU/Pen 11/8 Siberian Seven; Vashchenko and Chmykhalov families, 1 of 4>, Keston Center.
23. 'News of Chuguyevka Pentecostals,' *KNS* no. 226, 30 May, 1985, p. 2.
24. Samizdat materials from Chuguevka, reprinted in 'Materialy samizdata', *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty* no. 32/86, 13 October, 1986, pp. 1-9. Archive file <SU/Pen 6 S Chuguevka (V. Walter Trial)>, Keston Center.
25. Indictment of Viktor Walter, 1 March, 1985. Archive file <SU/Pen 6 S Chuguevka (V. Walter Trial)>, Keston Center.
26. V. Shak, 'Priznany vinovnymi,' *Kommunistichesky trud*, 13 July, 1985; N. Barabash, 'Za glukhoi stenoi,' *Kommunistichesky trud*, 16. 18 July, 1985; N. Kalina, 'Poslednee slovo? *Kommunistichesky trud*, 20 July, 1985.
27. 'First "Siberian Seventy" Family Arrives in the West,' *KNS* no. 273, 16 April, 1987, p. 14.
28. 'Chuguyevka Christians Detained after Moscow Demonstrations,' *KNS* no. 292, 21 January, 1988.
29. Report from Johann Vins, 23 May, 1988. Archive file <SU/Pen 11/8 Chuguevka>, Keston Center.
30. 'Freedom Chuguyevka Pentecostals Arrive from USSR in West Germany,' *KNS* no. 313, 17 November, 1988, p.5.
31. Ralph Mann, 'Prophesies, Glasnost, and the Soviet Union,' *Charisma & Christian Life*, April 1989, 53-56; Douglas Ens, 'INS Unprepared for Mass Exodus of Soviet Pentecostals,' *News Network International*, 15 February, 1989, p.13.
32. Undated report on Chuguevka community. Archive file: <SU/Pen 11/8 Chuguevka>, Keston Center.

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Enver Hoxha: The Lunatic Who Took Over The Asylum

by Alex Sakalis

Between 1944 and 1985, the small Balkan nation of Albania was ruled by a strange, sociopathic and, frankly, completely mad dictator by the name of Enver Hoxha. While Stalinism effectively ended in Europe with the death of its namesake, or at least with the Khrushchev reforms that followed, it continued unabated and unquestioned in Albania until 1990.

When Hoxha died in 1985, Albania was officially the third poorest country in the world, with the GNP of a small town and an average income of $15 a month. Four decades of collectivisation had led to near starvation in the countryside, where Hoxha's aggressive isolationism meant people were still using farming technology from the 1920s. When the regime finally collapsed a few years after Hoxha's death, it left behind a tired, hungry, confused and fearful population. As Albanians marched towards democracy, like proverbial moles blinking into the sunlight, few had the time or will to reflect upon the man who had ruled them with unimaginable cruelty for over four decades.

The first substantial biography of the dictator to be published, *Enver Hoxha: The Iron Fist* of *Albania,* by the journalist Blendi Fevziu, having proven both hugely popular and hugely controversial in his homeland, has now been published in English. Enver Hoxha was born in the southern Albanian town of Gjirokaster (then part of the Ottoman Empire) in 1908. He seems to have shunned his father, a simple-minded Imam who abandoned him in his youth to go to work in the United States for several years, in favour of his uncle Hysen Hoxha, the town's mayor and a radical atheist and anti-colonialist. Despite this, Fevziu argues that Hoxha appears to have shown little interest in politics either at home or at his secondary school in Korea. He left to study botany at the University of Montpellier despite, in his own words, having no interest in the subject. He abandoned his studies and travelled to Paris where he passed himself off as a representative of the Albanian Communist movement and ingratiated himself into the city's social circle of Communist publishers and avant-garde artists. While there, he attended the notoriously debauched parties of Marxist socialite Paul Vaillant-Couturier. It was perhaps at this point that Hoxha first tabulated his political beliefs. He was to remain an ardent Francophile throughout his life – one of the few countries he maintained any sort of relationship with.

After returning to Albania, Hoxha did a few odd jobs before getting involved

with the Albanian resistance during World War II. Within a few years Hoxha – a little known and even less liked character – had somehow manoeuvred himself into the Communist Party leadership. How he accomplished this is, by Fevziu's own admission, 'one of the greatest mysteries in Albanian history'. Much of it seems to be down to his chance friendship with two mysterious Yugoslav agents who effectively ran the Albanian Communist Party as a proxy of Tito's Partisans. Fevziu's biography devotes a large amount of space to this mystery, and suggests that the Yugoslavs were instrumental in bringing Hoxha to power and helping him consolidate it in the manic post-war years. Despite this, Hoxha broke ties with Tito in 1948 along with the rest of the Warsaw Pact.

Hoxha would later break with the USSR (Khrushchev was a traitor and revisionist, he claimed) forming an unlikely alliance with China which lasted until that country's opening to the West in the 1970s. When Hoxha split from China in 1978, Albania was well and truly flying solo.

One depressing leitmotif which recurs throughout Fevziu's book is Hoxha's paranoid purges. At the start, they made some contextual sense; of course he would execute collaborators and political opponents – that's just how things went. But soon he began to execute rivals in his own Party – including those he had only a few years earlier commended as war heroes. All dissidents were crushed, as were the clergy and aristocrats. Old school friends and high school crushes were also purged; the person that had given Hoxha his scholarship to study in France was executed, as was the friend who let him live rent free in his Paris apartment. Former prime ministers, signatories to the Albanian Declaration of Independence in 1912 and founders of the Communist movement were among the many victims of summary executions that were *de rigueur* until the late 1980s. Hoxha also killed off much of the intelligentsia to the extent that, by the time of Hoxha's death, virtually no one in the Politburo could boast more than a high school education. One of the most dangerous positions to hold during Hoxha's reign was Minister of the Interior – he killed all of them, bar one. As one woman, whose husband was executed by Hoxha, explained: many Albanians had great ideas on how to run the country after the liberation, but only Hoxha was willing to kill his own brother-in-law to realise them.

In 1967, Hoxha turned Albania into the world's first atheist state. He closed down all churches and mosques, and even destroyed several religious buildings of priceless cultural value. Clergy were among the most purged of all groups, with few living to tell the tale. In one depressing episode, a priest was executed for the crime of performing a baptism in a couple's home. Hoxha even banned beards due to their association with Islam and Orthodox Christianity. He cultivated a cult of personality perhaps only equal to Kim Jong-il in the 20th century. His published works, which even by the standards of autohagiography are particularly galling, were mandatory reading in schools.

Hoxha – or Uncle Enver as he liked to be called – fomented his cult by fastidiously rewriting history books to present himself as, among other things, the founder of Albanian Communism, the founder of the Albanian Communist Party, and the most important figure in the Partisan struggle. This, of course, raised some eyebrows among veterans of these movements, although only those lucky enough to be based outside Albania would live to tell the tale.

Hoxha also kept his people in a constant state of fear by playing up the threat of a foreign invasion. He had around 750,000 concrete bunkers built across the country, mostly on the coast and along the borders with Greece and Yugoslavia, but also in cities, parks and other seemingly random locations. As well as costing a large part of the country's GDP, this perpetual paranoia project also took the lives of many of the builders, who were mostly forced labourers. The architect of the bunkers, Josif Zagali, was himself eventually sent to a labour camp in one of Hoxha's regular and largely nonsensical purges.

Beginning in the 1960s, Hoxha and other leading Party members began confining themselves to a self-sustaining district of Tirana known as Blloku (literally: The Block). Hermetically sealed from the rest of Albania, Hoxha and his cronies rarely ventured outside, preferring to make all the country's decisions from within their living rooms and parlours. The chapter in Fevziu's biography on Blloku is written with all the dystopian intrigue of a J.G. Ballard story. There are special shops to buy the best groceries and Western clothes, a leisure house to view 'banned' Western films, and pharmacies with Western medicine procured by Albanian agents abroad. Every luxury denied to the rest of the country was available in this privileged compound. However, tenure within the Blloku was by no means guaranteed in those turbulent times, and families would often have their children intermarry among each other to forge alliances and guarantee political security, at times descending into quasi-incestuous engagements. Ensuring your child married one of Hoxha's children was the goal to which many families aspired, although considering Hoxha had his own brother-in-law murdered, even that did not guarantee safety.

Not that there was any joy inside Blloku. Paranoia and fear was rife, as families were casually purged when Hoxha felt like it and replaced by families from 'outside', desperate to get into this privileged snowglobe world. When the son of Mehmet Shehu, whom Hoxha was grooming as his successor, decided he wanted to marry a girl from outside the Blloku – a sweet volleyball player called Silva Turdiu – it sent shockwaves through the community. As Fevziu writes, 'little did [Shehu's fiancée] know that she had just manoeuvred herself into the eye of a terrible political storm.' The event ended with the engagement called off, the entire Shehu family purged and Mehmet Shehu dead in an apparent suicide.

Hoxha, a weird, sociopathic, mass murdering tyrant, died a free man. His death ushered in seven days of unprecedented

mourning from his indentured subjects. His memoirs, which ran to 13 volumes, were the mark of a man determined to disprove Oscar Wilde's famous maxim: that no man is rich enough to buy back his past. Fevziu's biography does not let this injustice stand. His meticulous research, helped by the opening of the previously sealed Communist archives, lays out the horrors of the man and his regime for all to see. This book is also important in another way: it provides a voice to the dead, the disappeared, the exiled, and the purged, who are brought to life in a number of absorbing vignettes throughout the book. Giving them a voice and a story, something which Hoxha desperately tried to deny them, is perhaps Fevziu's most profound achievement.

Enver Hoxha, The Iron Fist of Albania, by Blendi Fevziu, is published by I. B. Tauris. This article was first published in *Open Democracy,* 15 March 2016, www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-itlalex-sakalis/enver-hoxha-lunatic-who-took-over-asylum, and is reprinted with kind permission.

Legacies

Keston's trustees are very grateful to all members for their continuing support for the Institute's work. We are, however, a dwindling band of enthusiasts so we would be delighted if you were able to recruit new members. If you are thinking of remembering Keston in your Will, the following suggested form of words, which can be copied directly into a Will, may be helpful:

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

With best wishes,
Xenia Dennen (Chairman)

Remembering the Lessons of Communist 'Re-education'

Does 'de-radicalisation' risk the political misuse of psychiatry?

by Dr Alexandru Popescu

The following text is a paper presented at the 3rd UK Conference on Philosophy and Psychiatry at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, London, 25th September 2015.

I was disturbed to learn in *The Times* that NHS psychiatrists are being used by the government in its *Prevent* programme which forms part of its counter-terrorism strategy:[1]

> 'MI5 and anti-terrorism police are monitoring more than 3,000 home grown Islamist extremists willing to carry out attacks in Britain, security sources have told *The Times*. British men and women, many in their teens, are being radicalised to the point of violence within weeks. Investigators have also detected a significant overlap between Islamist suspects and those suffering mental health problems, leaving them vulnerable to grooming. The NHS now has full-time staff attached to the anti-extremism *Prevent* programme who try to identify signs of extremist behaviour.'[2]

The phrase 'within weeks' is uncannily reminiscent of the UK government's assurance prior to the invasion of Iraq that Saddam could mobilise weapons of mass destruction within weeks, giving an impression of precise yet unverifiable intelligence. Vagueness – 'security sources', 'investigators', 'willing to', 'signs of' – is manipulative when not substantiated by facts and analysis. The phrase 'those suffering mental health problems' is likewise vague, and taps into the already well-recognised phenomenon of demonisation of those suffering mental distress. This article stirred deeply uncomfortable memories for me of how we experienced 're-education' in Romania during the Communist period.[3]

Although there are clearly fundamental differences between the situation of the UK today and that of Romania when re-education was introduced in a Stalinist form in the 1950s, it is instructive to see how theory has been implemented in practice in Europe within living memory. Political 're-education' was intended to create 'the new man'. Reactionary ideas and emotional attachments were seen as hostile to the State. Armed resistance to the imposition of Soviet Communism was denounced as terrorism. Young people considered mentally vulnerable and ideologically labile due

to their adherence to monarchist, liberal or anti-Communist ideals were imprisoned. Their aspirations and beliefs had to be abjured, all ideas opposed to Communism were to be erased from their minds. This phase of 're-education' involved extreme mistreatment and physical and mental torture.

Official records were doctored or are no longer extant, but it is known through numerous personal accounts, including interviews I myself have conducted, that psychiatrists were actively involved. There are also innumerable accounts of religious believers in particular being classified as counter-revolutionaries, detained in psychiatric hospitals and 'treated' for political deviancy equated with mental illness. According to a report published in *Current Psychology: Research & Reviews* under the Geneva Initiative for Psychiatry in Romania, it is likely that between 1965 and 1989 (the Ceaușescu era) the most senior forensic clinicians of the country's 1,000 psychiatrists were actively engaged in practices amounting to torture.[4]

Communism rejected religion as illusion; dialectical materialism, sustaining the official values of society, was a compulsory subject in all schools. Good marks in this were essential for access to university. It is relevant to note that for many people of faith (Christianity being the overwhelmingly dominant religion) 're-education' led, not to genuine embrace of those official values, but to a quality of friendship and sense of solidarity that gave them extraordinary spiritual strength.

'Re-education' was destructive and reconstructive. Nicolae Călinescu describes how in prisons such as Pitești and Târgu Ocna[5] the slightest divergence from the official Marxist line was a criminal offence. In these 'academies' of terror, victims became torturers. Suicide was excluded by an ever vigilant system. The slightest resentful thought had to be confessed and registered as a cause for concern, and such acknowledgement was a sign of progress in the re-education 'course'. 'Sincerity' was judged by one's readiness to denounce parents, friends, and collaborators.[6]

Călinescu speaks of irreversible psychological change brought about by physical abuse and endless interrogation, involving the unmasking of others and unmasking of personal thoughts; continuous scrutiny of one's memory and consciousness to expose lurking hostility to Marxist orthodoxy; 'sincerity' imposed through shock tactics; submission imposed through electric shocks; constant correction of ideological 'position'. The prisoner's change of attitude and newly acquired convictions were continuously tested. Torturers would apply 'treatment' to remedy 'infidelity to the working class'. Inflexibility, especially resistance to Communism, was 'treated' with narcotics, electric shocks, or brain surgery. The victim was forced to perform shameful acts. Personal guilt would prevent a return to normal life. It is salutary to recall that these horrors grew out of the theories of the respected Soviet educationalist Anton Makarenko (1888-1939), whose book *The Road to Life: an Epic*

of Education was intended to rehabilitate young offenders.

Victims were also bribed into adopting the required slogans and committing themselves to the programme (e.g. 'co-operative' prisoners were offered the chance of returning to their families from whom they had been separated for years). Natural altruism was manipulated: 'your fellow prisoners will all be freed if only *you* would stop being stubborn and accept us'. Networks of Securitate informers, initially a prison phenomenon, gradually proliferated throughout the whole of society.

What was it like to live in such a society? For certain sectors of British society today, despite all the material advantages of national affluence and democratic freedoms, there is a sense of intrusive surveillance in everyday life. A sense of breakdown of social trust, felt both by those in authority and those within local communities, results from and further engenders complex feelings of resentment, antagonism, suspicion, and complicity. This is a reality, not just a potential risk. A securitised government focus on Muslim communities exacerbates this reality.

Re-education in China

Abuses such as were perpetrated in Romania are not confined to the historical past. Amnesty International reported in 2013 that for nearly 60 years China's Re-education Through Labour system (RTL) has allowed people to be imprisoned for up to four consecutive years, without judicial review, appeal, or due process. RTL originally targeted anyone the authorities considered 'politically unreliable', often for simply exercising their civil and political rights. Hundreds of thousands of individuals suffered arbitrary detention. Tens of thousands were subjected to torture. In 1982 RTL was expanded to include rural residents and 'anti-Party' elements such as sex-workers, 'undesirables', 'hooligans', and those involved in fraud but not deemed 'criminally liable'. By 2012 more than 400,000 people were detained in 351 centres.

Abolition of RTL in December 2013 was hailed as a step towards a more just rule of law. However, people in China are still sent to labour camps without trial – drug users and small-time dealers, for instance, to so-called 'drug rehabilitation centres'. According to Human Rights Watch, around 100,000 people are detained in such centres, which are little different from the old labour camps. People are also detained without due process in psychiatric hospitals. Chinese police run their own psychiatric clinics, which are independent from private clinics and those run by the Ministry of Health. While a law was recently passed providing guarantees against enforced commitment to psychiatric facilities, if the police wish to put someone in a mental hospital, they can use their own psychiatrists. Referring to the abolition of RTL, Amnesty's report concludes that:

> 'this promise will not be fulfilled if the authorities simply use alternative means to arbitrarily detain, subject to forced labour, and in some cases

torture and otherwise ill-treat the same individuals and groups that were formerly targeted through the RTL system, many of them for simply exercising their human rights.'

Practitioners of the peaceful Falun Gong movement continue to be sent to 'brainwashing centres' and other places of arbitrary detention. Petitioners likewise are still subjected to harassment, forcibly committed to mental institutions, and sent to 'black jails'. Human rights defenders, democracy advocates, whistle-blowers and other political activists are also being increasingly targeted through criminal detention, 'black jails', short-term administrative detention, and enforced disappearances.[7] One set of camps is specifically for prostitutes, who have to earn their keep through hard labour. There is no medical care. An estimated 20,000 women are currently detained.[8]

CIA mental health professionals and torture

The political system and circumstances in China and Romania in the past are very different from those of the UK and might therefore seem irrelevant if, that is, we consider ourselves immune from the manifest capacity of human beings to legitimise cruel actions, offensive to declared principles, by the argument of an overriding need to protect society.

There is a recent example nearer to our own culture and political traditions that gives cause for concern. In April 2015 a group of health professionals and human rights activists published a report claiming that the American Psychological Association (APA) secretly collaborated with the administration of President Bush to bolster a legal and ethical justification for the torture of prisoners swept up in the post-September 11 war on terror. Three months later, in July, the Special Committee of the Board of Directors of the Association received an 'Independent review relating to APA Ethics Guidelines, National Security Interrogations, and Torture.'[9] The review, headed by David H. Hoffman, confirmed that:

'The Central Intelligence Agency's health professionals repeatedly criticised the agency's post-September 11 interrogation program, but their protests were rebuffed by prominent outside psychologists who lent credibility to the program.'[10]

The report reveals that:

'officials at the American Psychological Association colluded with the Pentagon to make sure the Association's ethics policies did not hinder the ability of psychologists to be involved in the interrogation program.'

The APA ethics office, it states:

'prioritised the protection of psychologists – even those who might have engaged in unethical behaviour – above the protection of the public.'

Not only did the Association's ethics director, who is named, coordinate the group's public policy statements on interrogations with a top military psychologist, but he then received a Pentagon contract to help train interrogators himself while he was still working at the Association, apparently without the knowledge of the Association's board. The agency's interrogations were conducted at so-called 'black site prisons' around the world where prisoners were held secretly for years. One of these sites incidentally was in the Romanian capital, Bucharest.[11] The immediate response from the APA was that:

> 'The actions, policies and lack of independence from government influence described in the Hoffman report represented a failure to live up to our core values.'

Then in August the Association's Council of Representatives voted 156-1 to ban psychologists from participating in 'national security interrogations at sites found to be in violation of international law.' It stipulated that:

> 'psychologists shall not conduct, supervise, be in the presence of, or otherwise assist any national security interrogations for any military or intelligence entities, including private contractors working on their behalf, nor advise on conditions of confinement insofar as these might facilitate such an interrogation.'

It also began a review of the APA's ethics policies and procedures, which had proved all too malleable in response to Defence Department wishes. In this context it is also worth noting the opposition of human rights groups to the UK's bid, through the Ministry of Justice's little known commercial body, Just Solutions International, to deliver services to Saudi Arabian prisons (this was later withdrawn). Melanie Gingell of the Gulf Centre For Human Rights comments:

> 'It is hypocritical of the government to publicly condemn barbarity such as is meted out to Raif Badawi [sentenced to 10 years imprisonment and 1,000 lashes for advocating freedom of expression online], while at the same time implicitly condoning such activities by bidding to provide services on a commercial basis to those who perpetrate the abuses.'[12]

Such actions, together with the UK's valued relationship with Saudi Arabia in the field of arms sales, not only lends credibility to a political and ethical system entirely incompatible with our own; it also raises the question of whether our liberal constitution can really continue intact in such relationships. In seeking to have some involvement in the Saudi prison service there was clearly a significant overlap with the UK's domestic *Prevent* strategy.

Psychological disciplines have an important role not only in one-to-one casework, but in contributing to public discourse about norms and integrity across society as a whole.[13]

Radicalisation

How do these various examples relate, if at all, to the issue of mental health clinicians in the UK participating in *Prevent*? It will be helpful first of all to examine the language being used.

The term 'radicalisation', with its corollaries, 'violent radicalisation', 'de-radicalisation', 'counter-radicalisation', became central to academic discussion after the bomb attacks in Madrid (2004) and London (2005). Despite its lack of precision, it has become something of a political shibboleth. Professor Mark Sedgwick at Aarhus University in Denmark observes that before 2001 the word had been informally used to refer to a shift towards more radical politics (usually not referring to Muslims), while in 2004 it came to mean a psychological or theological process by which Muslims work toward extremist views.

Etymologically, 'radicalised' derives from Latin *radix*, a root. In normal community contexts to 'be in touch with' one's roots is highly desirable. An 'uprooted' person, family, or community is adrift, vulnerable. The relevance for *Prevent* is obvious. And while uprootedness can lead to disturbed behaviour, this is surely a natural emotional reaction, to be handled rationally through community nurture and positive cultural initiatives, rather than a mental illness to be addressed by psychiatrists. 'Radicalisation' more narrowly defined is:

> 'a process of adopting an extremist system of values combined with expressing approval, support for, or use of violence and intimidation as a method of achieving changes in society or encouraging others to such acts.'[14]

'Violent radicalisation involves embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to acts of terrorism.'[15] However, there is no uniform usage of these terms. Some experts see 'violent radicalisation' as involving violent behaviour; others regard the mere acceptance of ideas which condone or justify violence as an indicator of violent radicalisation. For some, the path to violent radicalisation is individual, for others it is collective. It also needs to be remembered that there are many forms of violence that are not political. Terrorism is a special kind of political violence.

'Radicalisation' must be distinguished from 'radicalism' as an expression of legitimate political thought (still reflected in the titles of some mainstream European political parties).[16] Radicalism as advocacy of, and commitment to, sweeping change and restructuring of political and social institutions, has historically been associated with left-wing and right-wing politics – at times even with centrist and liberal ideologies. As an ideology, it challenges the legitimacy of established norms and policies, but does not in itself lead to violence. Within contemporary political Islam, one can thus find Salafist groups which are non-violent. Some are even reluctant to become involved in politics at all.

Religious radicalism uses various strategies, including political and reformist

actions, cultural struggle and the strengthening of the community of believers through missionary work.[17] As violence against 'wrong-believers' and non-believers is not an automatic outcome of every kind of religious radicalism, radicalism in itself cannot be treated as a terrorist threat. To treat religious radicalism *per se* as potentially dangerous, as part of a path towards violence, may make sense in security terms (though violation of the rights to freedom of belief and expression becomes a danger then). However, this does not as such give grounds for psychiatric intervention.

Radicalisation implies a process of change in which non-violent individuals come to endorse and promote violent activity. As the American author Brian Michael Jenkins states,

> 'Terrorists do not fall from the sky. They emerge from a set of strongly held beliefs. They are radicalised. Then they become terrorists.'[18]

It is beliefs and grievances that drive individuals to murder their fellow citizens. In radicalisation the individual enters a transformative mental process that conditions him/her to violent behaviour. Thus,

> 'radicalisation comprises internalising a set of beliefs, a militant mindset that embraces violent jihad as the paramount test of one's conviction.'[19]

The growth in numbers of extremist detainees helps entrench radicalisation in prisons, which have become an ideal environment for recruitment and development of the jihadist narrative.

As Rohan Gunaratna, another authority on international terrorism, puts it: 'Individuals are ideologically driven and not operationally driven.'[20] Ideology is therefore the enemy. A successful counter-terrorism strategy must be undertaken by those who understand the ideology from within, and who can provide positive, theologically informed alternative role models, to whom those being 'de-radicalised' can deeply relate, and more importantly, to whom those impressionable young people at risk of being drawn into the discourse of violent action can relate. At-risk young people need genuinely *radical* alternative models of the positive values our society professes. Many of the available alternatives, relating to 'normal' Western perspectives and lifestyle, have in fact contributed to pushing radicals towards their extreme views. At best, the use of force, whether coercive through confinement or persuasive through re-education, provides a solution that addresses symptoms rather than root (radical) causes.

We must differentiate between terrorism and other forms of political violence. Some violent resistance to political oppression, while illegal under certain national laws, is tolerated under international humanitarian law. Violence should be seen within the whole spectrum of political action – persuasive politics, pressure politics and violent politics – by those holding state power as well as non-state players.[21] Torture

and extra-judicial renditions in recent years have been a drastic departure from commonly understood democratic rule of law procedures and international human rights standards. They are indicative of how, in a polarised political situation, holders of state power through their actions betray their own form of subconscious 'radicalisation'.

Counter-radicalisation

When it comes to de-radicalisation/disengagement and counter-radicalisation, there is no universal agreement about what works, what does not work, and what is counter-productive. Academics and policymakers alike increasingly recognise the importance of local context. But the lack of clarity and consensus with regard to key concepts (terrorism, radicalisation, extremism, *et al.*) – ill-defined yet taken for granted – needs to be overcome. Where there exist discrepancies of cultural outlook and understanding of terms, psychological interventions require extreme care. Furthermore, two major gaps persist in current counter-radicalisation efforts: first, the role of the media and the internet; second, the role of counter-narratives to those of jihadist terrorists.

There is not time in this paper to examine the crucial role of the internet; suffice to say that 'hearts and minds' are obviously won and lost there. In terms of counter-narratives to violent jihad, research has identified credibility and legitimacy as core elements needed to hold the imagination of people at home and abroad. Governments need not be perfect before they can effectively engage in successful de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation. However, in the eyes of domestic and foreign publics, they have to be markedly better than extremist parties and terrorist organisations.

British criminologist Phil Edwards, in his contribution to a recent book on counter-radicalisation policies, highlights the strange reluctance of policymakers to consult the extensive sociological literature on desistance from gang violence, arguing that this could inform policy approaches toward potential terrorist subcultures. Counter-intuitively he shows that a functioning and anticipatory strategy for counter-terrorism might even require a more open attitude to illiberal yet non-violent groups, to make them feel less marginalised. He claims:

> 'The influences and pressures exerted by *Prevent*, in either of its forms, do not represent the kind of approach that has been effective in promoting desistance from criminal careers or from gang involvement; if anything, they are its opposite.'[22]

> 'A general programme of isolating, stigmatising and penalising non-violent extremists – and those only suspected of holding "extreme" views – will impose immediate costs on individuals who have not been found guilty of any offence, and who may be entirely innocent; it will increase social division and exclusion, at the cost of ethnic and religious minorities whose members already suffer from prejudice and

discrimination; it will have a chilling effect on public discourse, flagging certain views as criminal in themselves and marking certain areas of discussion as off-limits; and it will promote alienation and disaffection, tending in the longer term to increase the numbers who turn to illegal and violent means of political expression.'[23]

British values and *Prevent* strategy[24]

What is meant by British values?[25] What does the present British government, indeed any contemporary Western government, have to offer a young Muslim, caught as he/she is between intergenerational values and cultures? On the one hand there are the consumerist values of a materialistic society. On the other hand, against all humane reason and the benefits of a Western upbringing, violence is presented as a 'noble' fight for a just cause. It is not subversive to ask what might be lacking in contemporary British society to precipitate such a choice. There are numerous mainstream critiques of our society's commercialism, media triviality, double standards and social inequalities that are directly relevant to the frustrations now being expressed by British Muslims who at the same time remain *radically* opposed to violent jihad. Is enough being done to welcome and encourage these mainstream Muslims?

Does *Prevent* adequately take into account the impact of cultural humiliation and marginalisation? How does UK foreign policy and defence discourse sound to people whose relatives, friends, and cultural communities are 'collateral damage' in the West's foreign policy? Connection with the everyday life experience of young Muslims is essential to ensure that de-radicalisation is not, either openly or covertly, confrontational.

Psychiatrists need to have a holistic approach if they are genuinely to facilitate rather than manipulate people away from violent extremist views. Strategies must address the whole spectrum of human gifts and nurture in the communities where young people are being radicalised. *Prevent* is a major initiative seeking to address the urgent issue of possible 'violent extremist' actions. We are all deeply disturbed by the situation and recognise the urgent need for a solution. But if the solution is to be long-term and beneficial for all, it is incumbent upon us to reflect on the nature of the society we wish to live in and protect. This needs to be done with appreciation of the positive achievements of British culture, and also, as part of that culture itself, with self-critical honesty.

'British values' have become central to the issue of identity, and thus also to the issue of radicalisation, which is about our ultimate identity as human beings as well as our responsibilities as citizens. They are part of the national educational curriculum from pre-school up. We need to look at how these values are defined – or perhaps more significantly, not defined – in public discourse, and distinguish what is distinctively 'British' from what is universal. We must also examine our actual behaviour and policies, particularly on the international stage, in relation to our professed values.

Honesty about our assumptions and expectations, at both an individual and a societal level, requires acceptance that people elsewhere in the world may have very different perceptions about 'British values' from how we ourselves see them. Their perceptions cannot be simply dismissed. Greater global trust and co-operation can only be built on mutual respect. The emphasis on values has been the initiative of the government, but there has so far not been any real public airing of the issue. This is fundamental to achieving genuine consensus about what in the UK is considered as normal. Without such public debate there is no secure basis for deciding what deviations from the norm might be attributable to mental health problems rather than to perfectly sane, albeit unacceptable, repugnant, and destructive, political decisions.

Psychiatrist's role

Psychiatrists work with mental illness, using compassionate dialogue as well as pharmacology, to effect improvement in health and well-being. The psychiatrist's role is surely not to dictate thoughts or to change people's minds, from a position of moral or political guardianship, but to facilitate the development of independent personal identity.

We have seen how in other contexts fears for the stability and security of society have, at the invitation or behest of the state, led qualified people in the medical profession to engage in profoundly shocking practices. We might remember that it is little more than half a century since Alan Turing accepted oestrogen injections, in preference to going to prison, so that society could be protected from the threat of his homosexuality. Is it the case that we today now have the ultimate healthy vision of human nature and society? Are our 'Healthy Identity Interventions'[26] no longer susceptible to being skewed by our own assumptions, feelings, and judgements? To enter intimately into another person's psyche, across differences of faith and culture, is an awesome privilege. It is a path that must be trodden, if it is to be trodden at all, with immense care and no less humility.

1. The *Prevent* programme 'aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism': https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-terrorism-strategy-contest
2. *The Times*, 18 September 2015, p. 1.
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Alexandru Popescu *is a Senior Research Associate, Balliol College, Oxford, and works as a Community Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist in the Oxford Deanery.*

The Keston Center for Religion Politics and Society 2015-2016 Highlights

by Kathy Hillman (Director)

Professor Kathy Hillman

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

Keston public lecture and book-signing

The Keston Center sponsored one public lecture during the academic year which was held in the Michael Bourdeaux Research Center. On 14 April Dr Julie deGraffenried, Associate Professor of History at Baylor and Secretary of the Keston Advisory Board, spoke on 'Combating God and Grandma: Soviet Anti-Religious Policies and the Battle for Childhood.' She examined the Soviet anti-religious campaigns through the eyes of a child and considered conflicts between state and family and tradition and modernity, focusing on the children affected by their policies.

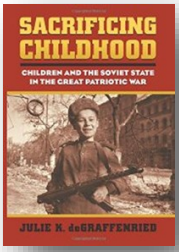
Dr deGraffenried

Lecture poster

Dr deGraffenried's mentor Dr Wallace Daniel introduced her, and Keston Council Chair Xenia Dennen moderated a question and answer session. The speaker illustrated her remarks with digitised images from the Keston archive. The Department of History and the McBride Center for International Business co-sponsored the event

Xenia Dennen in the audience

which drew a crowd of about 125 students, faculty, staff and community guests, including several high school students. Afterward, Dr deGraffenried signed her book *Sacrificing Childhood: Children and the Soviet State in the Great Patriotic War* (University of Kansas, 2014).



Children: Library Fellows Christmas program and children's exhibit

The Libraries chose 'Christmas through Children's Eyes' as the theme for the 2015 Library Fellows Christmas Reception prior to the Christmas at Baylor concert. The program featured Christmas

Readings at Christmas reception

depicted in children's literature held in the various collections. Library Board of Advisors members and the Dean of the School of Education along with their spouses read the selections. Guests enjoyed an exhibit of the material displayed throughout the evening. The Keston Center for Religion Politics and Society selected:

- 'Holy Wish,' *Herald of Salvation* 4 (Christmas 1967): 32-33. 'Святое желание,' *Вестник спасения* and
- 'He is born…' *Herald of Salvation* 4 (Christmas 1967): 33. 'Он рожден…,' *Вестник спасения.*

Children's exhibit

A children's exhibit in the Keston Center featured the items along with photographs, samizdat, and other materials. The display was part of the Libraries' focus on children as part of the Alice at 150 Libraries Symposium celebrating the sesquicentennial of the writing of *Alice in Wonderland.*

Processing and promotion

The Keston Center worked extensively with the Libraries Marketing and Communications staff and an external firm to

develop a new brochure as part of a suite of similar pieces for each of the University's special libraries. The Director wrote the copy and the staff participated in the selection of images, scanning, and proofing. The pamphlet has a pocket that can be used to add personal notes, photos, and flyers.

New brochure

Processing continued in the Center with ongoing projects and the goal of reducing the number of unprocessed boxes. During the year, the number declined from 102 to 79, and a shelving system was installed in the Keston archive room B07 to facilitate storage of newspaper archival boxes. The project of cataloguing all books in the Keston Library was completed, and they are now accessible in Baylor's online catalogue BearCAT. Under appropriate supervision, the graduate assistant assigned a unique identification number to each photograph and updated the master list enabling the Riley Digitization Center to handle digitization of all the images.

A Czech researcher used a previously developed template to organise and describe each subject file within the Czechoslovakian materials, thus creating a finding aid. In concert, the processing archivist completed the finding aid for the Xenia Dennen Papers. Xenia Dennen officially opened her finding aid and papers in the Baylor Archival Repositories Database (BARD) during the Advisory Board meeting in April. The Czechoslovakia Subject Files were made available later that day. Placing descriptions and finding aids of these collections opens the materials to researchers across the globe.

Throughout the spring semester, Keston staff worked with the Libraries Marketing and Communications Department and the University's Electronic Communications Department to develop a sitemap and create a new Keston Center website. Target for launch was June 2016.


Xenia Dennen opens finding aid

The Keston Advisory Board and the Keston Council

The Keston Advisory Board, which assists and advises the Center, met in coordination with the visit of Keston Council Chair Xenia Dennen.

Advisory Board meeting

The majority of members attended. In addition to comments by Xenia Dennen and some brief reports, the meeting offered a hands-on experience with Baylor's Archival Repositories Database (BARD). During her time in Waco, Chair Dennen met with Baylor website developers, discussed Polish materials with Modern Languages and Cultures Lecturer Eva Hruska, attended a luncheon hosted by Dean Pattie Orr, moderated the Keston Lecture question and answer session, participated in the Baptist Center for Ethics dinner and preview of a forthcoming documentary, and met with select Baylor Business professors involved in international study programs.

Keston Council of Management

As a member of the Keston Institute Council of Management, Director Kathy Hillman attended the June 2015 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 joined the group in June 2016 for their summer meeting.

Research activities and visiting scholars

Dr Wallace Daniel working in the Keston Center

The Keston Center received more than 100 information requests during the year. Six independent researchers visited the collection.

Summer Teaching Fellows

A selection committee of the Director, the Chair of the Keston Council, and the Chair of the Keston Advisory Board reviewed applications for the Baylor Libraries Summer Teaching Fellows program. Fellows spend at least one week in the appropriate Libraries' collection planning specific ways to incorporate materials into a course. They are also expected to share their experiences with other facul-

ty and graduate students by presenting how they used collection materials in their classes in one of the Academy for Teaching and Learning's Seminars for Excellence in Teaching.

The Committee selected Associate Professor of History Julie deGraffenried and Senior Lecturer and Director of the International Studies Program Ivy Hamerly for the designation. Dr deGraffenried will prepare a two-class sequence for History 3342: Russia Since 1861 on 'Soviet Anti-Religion Policy & Dissidents in the Soviet Union.' Dr Hamerly will focus on Political Science

Alice Luňáková

3304: Comparative Politics. She will plan the third in a series of four lessons on Communism that explores the question of why the Communist ideology and nation-building efforts took root in some of the countries under Soviet control, but not in others.

Scholars and research topics

- Prague native Alice Luňáková spent four weeks in the Keston Archive and in Baylor's Texas Collection researching Czech heritage in Texas. She returned in August 2016 to present a joint Keston and Texas Collection Lecture.

April French gives a lecture

- John Pope II and his book *Faith According to Saint John of the Cross* (Baylor School of Music undergraduate)
- The Council of Sardica (Baylor Religion Department Lecturer)
- History of the Keston Institute (April French)
- Life and Work of Fr Gleb Yakunin (Wallace Daniel)
- Photographs for an upcoming book (Dominic Erdozain)
- Soviet Law on Religion and Fr Gleb Yakunin (Julie deGraffenried)

Purchases of a Zeutschel zeta Comfort book scanner and an Epson V850 Pro flatbed scanner greatly facilitated the efficiency of research for scholars and assisted the staff in answering reference questions and requests from around the world.

Keston virtual scholars

Virtual scholars apply for short-term access to the Keston Digital Collection

by submitting an application, CV, and brief research proposals. Keston issued credentials for five new virtual scholars and renewed access for three others. Currently 13 scholars access the collection from Russia, the UK and Germany as well as the United States.

Kathy Hillman & Dr Albert Wardin

Special visitors, presentations, and articles

The Center hosted scholars, students, library colleagues, and other researchers as well as those attending joint meetings

Left to right: *Kathy Hillman, Larisa Seago & Adrian Bourdeaux*

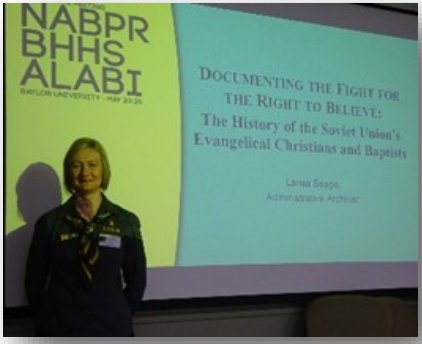
of the Association of Librarians and Archivists at Baptist Institutions, the Baptist History and Heritage Society, and the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion. Two exceptional guests provided special highlights: Dr Albert Wardin and Adrian Bourdeaux. A scholar with specific interest in Russian Baptists, Dr Wardin authored two titles housed in the collection, including *On the Edge: Baptists and Other Free Church Evangelicals in Tsarist Russia, 1855-1917; Evangelical Sectarianism in the Russian Empire and the USSR: A Bibliography*. Additionally, Adrian Bourdeaux, the son of Keston founder Michael Bourdeaux, visited the Center during a trip to Texas from the United Kingdom. He remarked that he discovered several photographs of his parents which he had never seen.

Students from Pepperdine University toured the facility, while Professor Kathy Hillman's University 1000 class and three Baylor library and staff groups heard presentations. A Baylor Lifelong Learning class 'Treats and Treasures: A Behind the Scenes Look

Students tour the Keston Center

at Baylor Libraries' spent a morning viewing the collection, participating in a box processing exercise and enjoying *clatite*, traditional Romanian pancakes similar to crepes.

Approximately 75 people took part in tours or presentations in the Michael



Larisa Seago giving her presentation

Bourdeaux Research Center. With the addition of those at the lecture, about 200 came to the Keston Center.

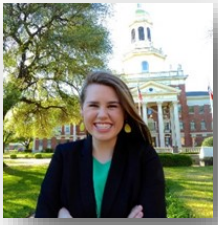
Both Kathy Hillman and Larisa Seago attended and made presentations at the 2016 joint meetings of the Association of Librarians and Archivists at Baptist Institutions (ALABI), the Baptist History and Heritage Society (BHHS) and the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion (NABPR) held on the Baylor campus. The Director lectured on 'With a Little Help from Our Friends: Engaging Advocates', which included a section about the Keston Advisory Board, as well as on 'Platforms and Politics: Baylor's Materials on Baptists and Politics.' Larisa Seago, the archivist, addressed 'Documenting the Fight for the Right to Believe: The History of the Soviet Union's Evangelical Christians and Baptists' heavily utilising materials from the Keston archive.

Left to right: *Janice Losak & Melvin Schuetz, Assistant to the Curators at the Armstrong Browning Library*

Staffing

Keston retained staff members Kathy Hillman, Director; Larisa Seago, Library Information Specialist serving as administrative and processing archivist; and Janice Losak, Library Information Specialist. In addition to normal training activities and seminars, Texas Collection processing archivist Paul Fisher provided sessions on Baylor's archival repository. Midway teacher and native Russian Tanya Clark continued part-time during the summer and one afternoon each week during the academic year.

Tanya Clark (standing) working in the Keston Center



Elizabeth Larson

Undergraduate student Elizabeth Larson spent her work-study time primarily with Chinese materials. For the second year,

the Center and Museum Studies partnered to employ a graduate assistant. Courtney Berge worked extensively processing boxes and assisting with the photograph collection. During 2016-2017, the graduate assistant will split her time between the Michael Bourdeaux Research Center and the Riley Digitization Center digitizing and providing metadata for Keston materials.

Keston Advisory Board member Michael Long assisted with German cuttings contained in the Czechoslovakia files. During the summer of 2016, Modern Languages and Cultures Lecturer Eva Hruska worked with the Polish collection within the Keston archive, funded by a grant from the Keston Council of Management.

Goals for 2016-2017 and beyond

Future goals focus on publicising the Center, strengthening partnerships, continually processing and preserving materials, hosting researchers, holding lectures in coordination with Advisory Board meetings as appropriate, and launching a successful Summer Teaching Fellows program and newly designed website. Specific details include:

- Prioritising Keston materials for processing and digitization based on a variety of internally and externally controlled criteria.
- Planning at least one lecture or program by a visiting Keston Scholar or other researcher.
- Conducting at least one meeting of the Keston Advisory Board and replacing and/or adding Advisory Board members following the initial three-year period.
- Launching a newly designed Keston Center website.
- Participating in one meeting of the Keston Institute's Council of Management in Oxford.
- Partnering with the Keston Council to increase the number of Keston Scholars.
- Adding at least three inventories in BARD (Baylor Archival Repositories Database).
- Reducing the number of Keston backlog boxes from 79 to 70.
- Extending collection outreach into Baylor classes through Summer Teaching Fellows.
- Expanding the contributions of Museum Studies graduate assistants.

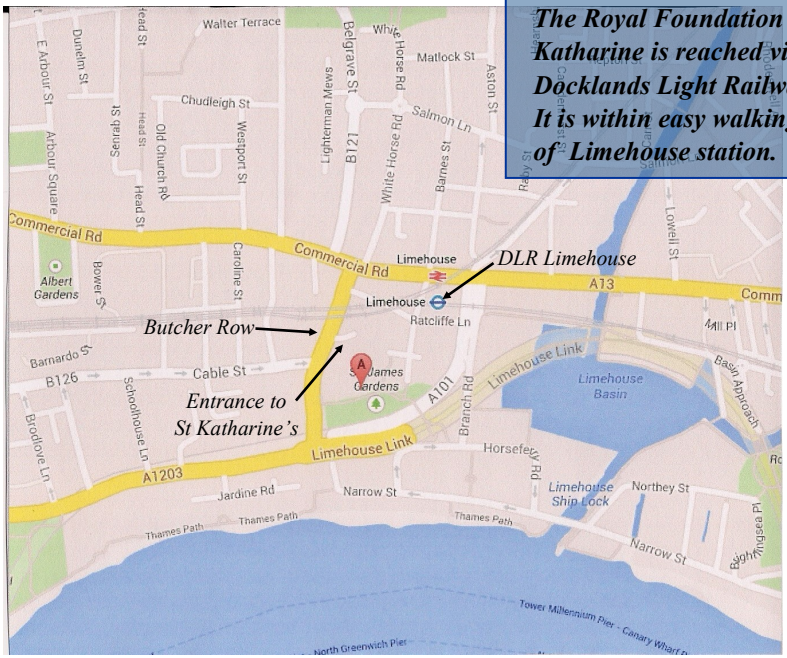
Larisa Seago (right) *working with Rickelle Henry*

Keston AGM

Saturday 5th November 2016
at 12 noon

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

12 noon	AGM
12.45pm	Lunch
2.00pm	Talk by Dr Elizabeth Robson: 'Metropolitan Anthony, head of the ROC in Britain and Europe, and his work for the BBC'
3.00pm	Talk by Dr Danut Manastireanu: 'Protestantism in Romania – Past and Present'
4.00pm	Talk by Dr John Eibner: 'The Moscow Patriarchate and the Persecuted Church in the Middle East: Update Syria'
5.00pm	Tea



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

Extracts from a Murmansk Diary

by Xenia Dennen

By a sacred lake of the Sami people near Lovozero (150km south-east of Murmansk)

On 23rd June 2016, the Encyclopaedia team, Sergei Filatov, Roman Lunkin and I, landed in Murmansk on the Kola Peninsula at 2.50am; it was bright daylight as we were now in the Arctic Circle. The sky was heavy with grey clouds, the ground covered in puddles and the air damp. All around stretched rich green rolling tundra. A chatty taxi driver delivered us to our hotel which was somewhat primitive, but at least it had password-protected wi-fi and hot water.

The indigenous people of the Kola Peninsula are a Finno-Ugrian nomadic group called the Sami. Only 1,598, we learned, are to be found in the Murmansk oblast while many thousands live in Norway, Sweden and Finland. In the 12th century Orthodox Russians from Novgorod and seafarers from the coast of Arkhangelsk came as far as the Kola Peninsula, but only in the 16th century did Orthodoxy begin to put down roots when the St Trifon Pechenga Monastery was founded and a military and trading base established on the Kola Bay. The area of the current Murmansk oblast was, however, mostly uninhabited until the beginning of the 20th century. In 1916 a port, which remained accessible even in winter thanks to the Gulf Stream, was founded on the banks of the Kola Bay: this was Romanovna-Murmane, renamed Murmansk by the Bolsheviks.

Orthodoxy began to be revived in the 1980s: in 1986 a stone church was built in Murmansk to replace a wooden one while in the 1990s churches began to be built throughout the oblast. Until 1995 Murmansk was part of the Arkhangelsk Diocese but in December of that year the Diocese of Murmansk and Monchegorsk was formed. Now it has become a Metropolia and has been divided into two dioceses.

We gathered at 11.15am after getting to sleep at around 5am. We did not dare eat breakfast at the hotel – the cuisine was likely to be dangerous for our stomachs – so set off to a smarter hotel down the road. Afterwards Sergei rang the Orthodox diocesan administration and was told by a secretary to submit a request for an audience with Metropolitan

Simon in writing. Sergei duly composed a letter, which he and I signed, and rushed off with it to the diocesan administration. Thereafter we awaited a telephone call.

The next day was not so grey with broken cloud and glimpses of blue sky; as we walked to get some breakfast in the nearby posh hotel the sun came out. So far no telephone call from Metropolitan Simon's secretary, so Sergei decided to contact the head of the other diocese, Bishop Mitrofan of Severomorsk and Umba. Sergei spoke to Fr Alexandr, the bishop's private secretary, who agreed to try to organise a meeting with the bishop, but it must be in an appropriate venue! – a restaurant would not do and our hotel was too downmarket we figured. Nor would the Murmansk diocesan administrative building suit as the two dioceses were not on good terms, according to the official Roman talked to in the local city administration.

The next phone call was to the Lutheran Church of Ingria: Deaconess Elvira Menchenok answered – their pastor Alexandr Volchek was away but she could see us now. So off we went in a taxi to a dismal-looking Soviet block of flats. Elvira opened the door into a six-room flat on the first floor which contained the church, a kitchen and Sunday school rooms. At the start of perestroika in 1992, she said, when the Lutheran congregation had been founded, they had gathered in a flat belonging to the Finnish Society. The pastors had at first come from Finland and Norway but in 1999 Pastor Alexandr Volchek, a Belorussian from Karelia, had arrived to care for them. The Norwegians bought them the current flat while the Finns continued to support them financially. When Elvira joined the church in 2005 it had 150 members, but now there were about half that number. In 2013 the Lutherans were given land on which to build a church, but so far nothing had been constructed thanks to local bureaucratic red tape.

Next to the worship space were two Sunday school rooms: one was full of stuffed sheep and ducks which members of the congregation had made to raise funds for the new church. There were 14 children in the senior Sunday school (from 7 upwards) and 10 in the group for younger children. 'We used to have a wonderful choir,' said Elvira, but the choir mistress had moved to Karelia, and now they did not even have someone who could play the electric organ. I saw shelves containing the congregation's library, 'but our parishioners don't read,' commented Elvira. In the summer, services were attended by fewer adults than children, and the many Finns who used to come to Murmansk no longer visited. Unlike the Norwegian church, which she called a state church, 'we are separate from the state'. I was interested to hear that the FSB did not bother them, whereas the neighbours thought they were a sect and had set light to their door and glued nasty messages to it.

During our conversation Fr Alexandr (Bishop Mitrofan's secretary) rang Sergei: he had found a suitable location for a meeting with the bishop – this was a room in a library – and he could see us at 2pm tomorrow.

Roman was meanwhile interviewing a Pentecostal pastor, Viktor Filyk, whose enormous church with a thousand members, founded in 1990, had been built with Norwegian money and by Norwegian architects. It maintained close relations with Pentecostal churches in Finland, Sweden and Norway: they organised joint summer camps for young people and worked together on mission and social work projects. An enormous amount of humanitarian aid had been channelled into the Murmansk oblast through various Protestant churches, and particularly via the Pentecostals, by Scandinavian churches which wanted to avoid using the local city administration, but after 2000 the regulations had changed closing off this route for aid. Pentecostals were also no longer allowed to work in prisons and labour camps. Pastor Filyk's church focused particularly on work with children, he said: it ran seminars about adoption, organised a scout troupe called 'The Royal Hunters', had a children's choir called 'Hurrah', a puppet theatre and a group of clowns. His congregation sang for shoppers at Christmas-time. The church ran a mission to the Sami people in Lovozero where it had established a congregation with a Komi pastor: they sang hymns in the Sami language and wore traditional Sami costume. However, Pastor Filyk admitted, the Sami's pagan beliefs were difficult to overcome and it was not easy to convince them that Christ was not just one god among many. His church had organised regular conferences in Finland near the Russian border for all Protestant churches: 'The church must live in an open space, it must love the homeland but not exist behind an iron curtain.' Relations with the Russian Orthodox he described as a hidden conflict: until 1995 they had been on friendly terms, but Metropolitan Simon had changed all that – all contact with Protestants had been outlawed and anti-sectarian campaigns, particularly aimed at Pentecostals, had been organised.

Roman & Viktor Filyk (right)

That evening, when Roman got back from this interview, the sun was shining brightly with a special gentle light; all was very still; the mountain ash trees outside my hotel window were motionless. Black smoke had badly stained the area around two windows in the block of flats opposite – I assumed there must have been a fire – and the flat was now open to the elements. How cold it must be in the adjacent flats in winter, I thought.

Saturday morning was grey and wet; seagulls were flying about. We still awaited a telephone call from Metropolitan Simon's secretary to my mobile, and debated what to do if he gave me an appointment which clashed with the one at 2pm with Bishop Mitrofan. By 1.40pm the Metropolitan's secretary had still not rung, so with Sergei's agreement I switched off my mobile and he ordered a taxi to take us to the library for our meeting with the bishop.

Bishop Mitrofan's diocese had been founded in November 2013, he said, and now had 23 parishes and 28 priests. He described his many years in Varzuga, an isolated village near the north coast to which a road had only been built five years before his arrival (priests were flown to villages without roads). He was interested, he said, in ancient seafarers' traditions: 'There is a link in their blood between the sea and God – they are always ready for death… The weather can change in a minute and they must be ready; they are dependent on the sea and are more aware of the end of life, of important things.' Along the Kola Peninsula coast the maximum population had been no more than 2000. 'Everything there lasts a short time – like summer – everything becomes green in a moment, buzzes with life. As someone from St Petersburg I found it very hard to adapt to such a patriarchal way of life – people there are in harmony with themselves and their environment.' He had got to know a grandmother who had led funerals and other church rituals for her community. She had written down the Orthodox prayers memorised by a nun, and had copied them out six times as each book became worn from use over the years. When he arrived in Varzuga she invited him to her home, opened her book of prayers and gave it to him, thus handing on the tradition, he said, and giving him authority in her community. She died in 2008.

In Varzuga today a priest monk served in his place as the parish was too poor to support a priest with a family. 'Four priests in the area were not able to cope and left the priesthood. It took me three years before I was accepted; I was tested on whether I really believed.' A village was like one family where everyone knew everything: 'You are completely transparent.'

Today Bishop Mitrofan looked after the navy in Severomorsk and found no opposition to the church, he said. Those training at naval college for five years never heard anything about God: 'We need chapels in bases – this is just beginning – and naval chaplains are being trained; we believe that the military can only be revived through spiritual growth.' The diocese worked in old people's homes and had built a chapel in one. An organisation against alcoholism had been set up and at church events in his diocese no alcohol was ever served. At midnight on New Years Eve he encouraged all his churches to start the liturgy just before midnight rather than opening champagne. The population of the Murmansk oblast was ever-changing, he commented, and he wanted to defeat the sense that a person's time here was only temporary: 'People need to feel that this is the main part of their life – they must live in the present.'

In the evening Roman interviewed a Baptist pastor, Grigori Berg, a Russian German from Karaganda who had served in the army in Murmansk and had stayed on. He had 150 in his congregation, which had been founded in 1928 by a missionary Baptist family who had fled from the Tambov oblast to escape the collectivisation. By 1937 the congregation consisted of 50 members but the Baptist missionary was shot and the congregation disintegrated. In 1953 after Stalin's death the congregation reappeared in the form of three sisters who held prayer meetings in their

flat; gradually others joined them and the prayer meetings moved to a wooden hut. In 1967 the congregation bought a Prayer House and were registered. Under Metropolitan Simon there had been many conflicts with the Orthodox; in the 1990s and as recently as the early 2000s diocesan clergy had been known to say that 'the Baptists are just the same as Satanists'. Gradually, however, he added, the diocese had learned to temper its language.

Outside the Catholic church

On Sunday it was cold and drizzling when Sergei and I took a taxi to the Catholic Church of the Archangel Michael. It was locked, but we managed to attract someone's attention from a side door. Fr Mariano Jose Sedano Sierra from Spain, who had been in Russia for 20 years and taught church history at the St Petersburg Catholic Seminary, opened the door: he was busy giving a Spanish lesson and went to find the parish priest, Fr Juan Emilio Sarmiento, a short and extremely warm Argentinian priest. The latter told us that the church had been built by a Russian architect and consecrated in 2007; funds had been received from Spain and Germany. Both he and Fr Mariano Jose belonged to the Claretians, a missionary order, and both were trained to teach in a seminary. He had arrived in Murmansk in 2000: 'I stayed in a cheap hotel – one for sailors,' he added with a smile, so I imagined it must have probably been even more down-market than our one. He put an advertisement in a local paper, on TV and the radio asking Catholics to contact him after which a few responded. He realised they needed a church if they were to form a congregation, but as a foreigner he got nowhere with the local authorities when he asked for land. There were many problems and of course requests for bribes. In the end he got a group of Murmansk Catholics to write to President Putin! They received a quick response from a senior bureaucrat in St Petersburg whose name, when mentioned to the Murmansk bureaucrats, worked like magic. The church was built on land overlooking Kola Bay and thus with a lovely view.

Monday was our first day of constant sunshine. What luck as all three of us planned to set off on a long drive to Sami territory. A taxi was ordered for 8.30am which drove us for two hours (150km) south-east of Murmansk to Lovozero, the main administrative centre for the Sami people. We interviewed the head of the Sami parliament, Valentina Sofkina, in the Sami Cultural Centre, a new building with a large central circular meeting room which on the outside looked like a wigwam. I could see a small wooden Orthodox Church through one of the windows.

Valentina could not speak the Sami language well, she said, as it had been officially banned in the 1960s and she was not allowed to speak it even at home. Christianity was introduced when the St Trifon Pechenga Monastery was built in the 16th century and in the 19th century an Orthodox missionary priest had learnt the Sami language and had used it when preaching, but, added Valentina, the Sami continued to be shamanists, worshipping the spirits of animals. 'We don't talk about shamans but they exist, they heal and use herbal medicine.' The Sami did not have sacred groves but sacred lakes where you were not allowed to swim: 'The lake must call you; it is a place of solitude and strength…You must take a boat over the lake rather than go by the mountain road in order to get its strength. The long hair of a girl should touch the water. If the spirit supports you then it will give you fish… We address our ancestors. We light a bonfire near water – this is a rite. Nature is the greatest force of all. A spirit enters into a rock and then helps you if you pour reindeer fat on it and lay a reindeer antler on it…The forest can take on the form of a woman… People can turn into a wolf or a bear… I was called a little bear—I slept a lot and had narrow eyes like a bear cub…' Her grandmother, however, had made sure she was baptised in 1997 by an Orthodox priest and kept an icon of St Nicholas, telling Valentina that he was watching her and would punish her if she was naughty. 'I got up onto the sideboard as a child and turned it round to face the wall… Our minds were split about Orthodoxy… The more you are forbidden to observe your traditional religion, the more the desire for it is awakened.'

When we came out of the Cultural Centre, Valentina's two huskies were waiting for her: they were a reindeer herder's best friend, she said. Nearby was a white effigy of a reindeer herder – I got Sergei to photograph Roman and me in front of him.

With Roman & a reindeer herder

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