Keston Newsletter

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Romania 1977: Baptists in Iasi petition for religious freedom

Protestants in Romania

by Danut Manastireanu

Romania is a true paradox – an island of westward looking Latin Eastern Orthodoxy, surrounded mostly by eastward looking Orthodox Slavs. From the first Christian century, its linguistic affinities inclined its inhabitants, both culturally and religiously, towards Europe in general, and Rome in particular, even if at certain times Christianity in their lands took Arian forms. However, since the 9th century, under Bulgarian influence, Romanians turned towards Orthodox Byzantium.

Ethnic Romanian Protestants today are almost exclusively members of evangelical denominations: Baptists, Pentecostals, Brethren and a number of other small religious groups.

Baptists were the first to take root on Romanian territory in the middle of the

Also in this issue:

From the Editor

In this issue of the *Keston Newsletter* we publish two talks given at the 2016 AGM, 'Protestants in Romania' by Danut Manastireanu and 'Metropolitan Anthony and the BBC' by Elisabeth Robson. Please note that this year's AGM will not be on the first Saturday of November as usual, but on **Saturday 28 October** at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine in Limehouse, London E14.

Also included in this issue is the text of a lecture which Michael Bourdeaux gave at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, Ukraine, last October (pp.38-44). His report on this to the Keston Council described some memorable moments:

> 'The room was of modest size, but packed. There were few students, but a wonderful turn-out of the "old guard" who had survived the suffering and lived to see better days. Before I began, I was introduced to Mariya Hel, widow of Ivan, who had been in the Gulag for many years and who led the campaign for the restoration of the Greek Catholic Church… Then there was Anna Moroz, who retains her striking good looks. She had organised the hunger strike on Moscow's Arbat in 1989, one of the key events leading to Gorbachev's legalisation of this church later that year. Finally, I met Fr Mykhailo Havryliv (now with the monastic name Matvei), who had been with Ivan Hel in 1988 when I met the "clandestine" group of bishops [see pp.43-44] in Moscow during the Millennium celebrations. After many years in prison, he had been conscripted into the army, aged 37, and was sent to Chernobyl to help clean up the mess. Miraculously, he had survived unscathed and at the conclusion of my lecture led a *moleben* in memory of the Ukrainian martyrs during the period of oppression. Such meetings are never forgotten.'

A piece of little-known Keston history – the founding in New Zealand of a Keston branch in the 1970s – is recounted by Rob Yule (pp.32-37) who was much involved in its work.

19th century. The first Baptist mission was established in 1863 by Karl Scharschmidt, a German carpenter; most of its members were foreigners. Its church still exists today and is used by a Romanian congregation. The second Baptist church was officially established in 1869 in Cataloi, Dobrogea, by German Baptists who were expelled from Ukraine by the Russian authorities. In 1875 a Baptist church composed of ethnic Hungarians, many of whom were Calvinists, was founded in Salonta, Transylvania, thanks to the missionary work of German Baptists.

Ethnic Romanian Baptist churches were formed first in Transylvania and Banat

(Chesa, Bihor, c.1885-1886, followed by other quite large churches in Curtici, Buteni, Taut, Talpos, Tulca, Batar) and only at the beginning of the 20th century in Romania proper – 1902 in Cernavoda, Constanta County, 1909 in Jegalia, Calarasi County, and 1912 in Bucharest – because the first Baptist churches were dominated by believers of other ethnicities who rarely carried out missionary work among Romanians. Also there was strong opposition from the Romanian Orthodox Church towards these new religious communities, viewed as a threat to national identity and unity. Owing to this opposition, Baptists and other evangelical denominations only had the legal status of religious associations, and thus limited rights, before the Second World War.

Brethren churches in Romania trace their origin to the work of a British Open Brethren leader, E.H. Broadbent, and a French Brethren Bible teacher, Francis Berney who came to Romania in 1899 in response to a call from Broadbent. Like the Baptists, Brethren missionaries first reached out to foreigners, in this case mostly those who spoke French which included some Romanians. Later as more Romanians were converted, Berney learned the local language and started preaching in Romanian. From Bucharest the Brethren movement spread north, to Ploiesti, and from there to Moldova where in 1926 a Brethren church was founded in Iasi (until today, this is the largest Brethren church in Romania with around a thousand members). German Brethren missionaries spread their faith to ethnic Germans in Transylvania where further Brethren churches were founded – in Brasov, Sibiu, Cisnadie and Medias.

The early success of the Brethren attracted the attention of the Orthodox hierarchy, who started to actively oppose the new faith. This persecution intensified and reached its peak in the fourth decade of the 20th century.

The Darbyst Brethren, also called the Tudorists (from the name of Fr Teodor Popescu, their founder who was an Orthodox priest) were a special case as they were the only evangelical group which did not originate from abroad, although they were certainly influenced by the Darbyst Brethren movement in Great Britain. In the mid-1920s, Fr Teodor Popescu, who was in charge of a parish in Bucharest called the 'Stork Nest', was influenced by Darbyst writings and incorporated certain aspects of Darbyst Brethren teaching into his sermons, although he had no intention of separating from Orthodoxy. As a result of his ministry there was an evangelical revival which affected thousands of people in Bucharest who experienced deep repentance and a genuine conversion. The movement quickly grew, attracting a number of intellectuals and aristocrats, although it was confined more or less to areas around Bucharest, with little impact elsewhere. Fr Popescu's success attracted the displeasure of certain Orthodox leaders, which led to him being defrocked and excommunicated in 1924. The most important contribution of this small denomination,[1] called today the Romanian Evangelical Church, was the creation of a new popular translation of the Bible

Liviu Olah, pastor in the 1970s of a Baptist church in Oradea where there was a religious revival

which is still used today by most evangelical churches, and is currently being revised with support from the British Bible Society. The author of this translation was Dumitru Cornilescu, an Orthodox deacon and disciple of Fr Popescu. It was funded by the Princesses Kalimachi, also Tudorist believers, and published in 1921; it had a number of revisions which were coordinated by the British Bible Society.

Pentecostals in Romania have an even more complicated history. The first Pentecostal church was founded in Paulis, Arad county, by Gheorghe Bradin who was converted to the Pentecostal faith when he was a migrant worker in the United States. Most new converts were former Baptists who like Bradin were attracted by the charismatic features of this new denomination. During its first decades this young religious community experienced much internal turmoil and disunity which, together with strong opposition from Orthodox leaders, made it very difficult for them to obtain official registration before the Second World War. Consequently, a number of Pentecostal churches were registered under the Baptist Union.

Other evangelical communities (for example the Stundists and Nazarenes) were very small and made little impact on the religious life of Romanians.

Evangelicals' traditional disregard for history, together with their apocalyptic beliefs, made them neglect the creation of solid historical records, especially during their early stages of development. Even today, under democracy, evangelical denominational archives are not open to the public because of the secrecy that dominates the mind-set of their leaders. As a result, most early data about these denominations can only be found in opposition literature (aptly described by the generic term 'sectology') produced by the Orthodox, which has to be taken *cum grano salis* because of its blatant subjectivism and adversarial spirit.

The fourth decade of the 20th century was a traumatic time of intense persecution for all evangelicals in Romania. The nationalist Iron Guard movement, of Orthodox extraction, for whom to be Romanian meant to be Orthodox, viewed them as dangerous. Its toxic combination of religious and ethnic identity, a dangerous form of *phyletism*, was supported by many Orthodox bishops and clergy, even though this princi-

ple was condemned by an Orthodox Synod held in Constantinople in 1872. For a certain period during the Iron Guard government and the Antonescu dictatorship, all 'religious associations' including those of evangelicals were banned, while some of their adherents were imprisoned or deported; and yet in spite of this, the number of evangelicals, especially Baptists, grew exponentially. Although Romanian evangelicals suffered intense persecution during the communist regime in the second half of the 20th century, they still consider this earlier period to be the darkest one in their history.

Romanian evangelicals under communism

The communist regime, established fully in Romania in 1948, after rigged elections under the protection of the Soviet occupation army, brought new challenges not only to evangelicals and other religious minorities, but also to mainline Protestant denominations (German and Hungarian Lutherans, and Hungarian Reformed). Even larger denominations such as Catholics and Orthodox suffered serious restrictions, constant control and severe persecution. The Greek Catholic Church and the Lord's Army (a pietistic Orthodox renewal movement initiated in 1926 by Fr Iosif Trifa in Sibiu) were outlawed and went underground, while many of their leaders died in prison.

Following Marx's conviction that 'religion is the opium of the people', communist leaders considered any religion, and particularly those religious groups that were active in Christian witness, as real 'enemies of the people' and therefore tried to control and restrict them at any cost. The secret police, particularly its religious arm, the Department of Religious Affairs, was the main instrument used by the communist regime to deal with the various religious denominations. Restrictive measures used by the communists included:

- the arrest and eventual imprisonment of most active church leaders, in an attempt to 'behead' their communities;
- infiltration by specially trained secret police officers in the leadership of various churches;
- recruitment of clergy and laity as informants via threats, blackmail, support for their leadership's ambitions, freedom to travel abroad, material gain etc.
- confining religious activities to official buildings, where the secret police could install microphones and could spy on members through their informers;
- limiting access to higher education and higher professional positions;
- restricting access to teaching positions in schools and universities.[2]

Religious denominations had different approaches in their relationship with the communist regime. Some, like the Orthodox and the Pentecostals, tried a more accommodating approach which sometimes led to closer cooperation, especially during what I call 'cosmetic' periods, when the communist authorities tried to project a more positive and democratic image in the West. Others, like some of

the Baptists, engaged in more overt opposition, exposing the oppressive measures of the secret police, and for this they paid a high price. All the other religious communities fell somewhere between these opposite poles. Nevertheless, both collaborators and oppositionists were to be found in almost all denominations.

Committee for the Defence of Religious Freedom and Freedom of Conscience

One of the most remarkable examples of principled opposition towards the communist regime in Romania was the formation in 1978 of an interdenominational group called the Romanian Committee for the Defence of Religious Freedom and Freedom of Conscience (ALRC), led by the Baptist pastor, Pavel Nicolescu. According to the Christian historian Dorin Dobrincu,[3] this was the most consistent ideological critique of Marxist ideology during the communist regime in Romania. It is not surprising that most of ALRC's members were forced to emigrate following intense interrogation and persecution by the regime.

Not all those religious leaders who chose to have a more compliant relationship with the communist regime were motivated by cowardice, let alone by a perverse intention to destroy the church. A minority probably did however – for example, after the fall of communism one Orthodox priest had the temerity to say that he had 'the courage of collaboration'! Nevertheless I am convinced that the majority of religious leaders who collaborated with the secret police did so in order to 'save the church', foolish as that might be for people who know Christ's promise that he is the one who will protect the church.

In a certain sense there was sometimes a tacit consensus and a sort of 'specialisation in ministry' between those inclined to a more 'diplomatic' approach towards the communist regime, and those who were more radical. This balance started changing in the early 1970s, when Pastor Iosif Ton returned to Romania after he had finished his theological studies at Regent's Park College, Oxford. His writings and public actions started challenging more overtly the anti-religious policies of the communist government and brought him into conflict with the 'collaborators' within religious denominations, particularly the evangelical ones, despite the fact that he actively tried to avoid any internal denominational conflict. Tension grew and became intense after ALRC was founded, since Pavel Nicolescu's more radical tendency put him on a collision course with the more lenient denominational leaders.

One of the official leaders, who was for many years the director of the Baptist Seminary in Bucharest, explained the situation with a metaphor: until the mid-70s there were two kinds of Baptist ministers, he said – 'dogs' barking at the enemy, in order to protect the flock – while others were 'donkeys' – carrying the heavy burden of their ministry, which included dealing with the inconvenience of a more lenient approach to

the communists. Yet, both 'dogs' and 'donkeys', each in their own way and according to their own gifts and calling, were working towards the same goal – the protection and growth of the people of God. This delicate balance was working well, until, explained this Baptist leader, the 'dogs' started barking at the 'donkeys', accusing them of treason and collaboration. I have to admit this metaphor makes sense, yet it perversely accuses the radicals and tries to excuse the collaborators.

Some of those who were less inclined to engage in overtly challenging the communist system, chose to emigrate to the West, mostly to the United States. It is also true that some of those who actively opposed the regime did so in the hope that they would have a better chance of getting a passport. Some also wanted to be seen as heroes in the US, rather than as people seeking a better life and more religious freedom.

After the fall of the communist regime, following years of official resistance, Romanian citizens from the year 2000[4] were able to legally access their secret police files. This was an incredible source of information about the methods used by the communist regime to control all religious communities, and its strategies for limiting their growth and impact in society.

Here are a few examples of what I learned from examining my own secret police files[5] as well as other files:

- in spite if their claim and their sophisticated surveillance mechanisms, the secret police did not know everything about religious communities and their leaders;
- most of those who were active in opposing the regime led a double life: they were open about things that could not be hidden, e.g. their relationships with foreigners for whom they interpreted in their churches; but they were extremely secretive about matters that absolutely had to be hidden from the secret police, e.g. the smuggling of bibles and religious literature, cooperation with western missionary organisations, and particularly about initiatives for informing the free world about the persecution of Christians in communist countries;
- typical of all secret services, when somebody came to their

Joachim Gauck, President of Germany, a former Lutheran pastor and East German civil rights activist, stands in the Stasi archives

attention, either as an enemy of the system or as a potential collaborator, they exploited all possible sources of information, with the express aim of finding a weakness or vulnerability that could be exploited to either secure their object's cooperation or, in the case of an oppositionist, to blackmail or discredit that person;

- one of the most surprising means used by the secret police in recruiting collaborators or, at least, in eliciting a more cooperative attitude in opponents of the regime, was patriotism; police officers used this natural commitment of Christian believers to their own country in order to obtain information about foreigners, usually described as 'foreign agents', and sometimes they even asked believers to sign a written commitment to inform them about any enemy they might encounter; this was later used to blackmail them into submission and collaboration – I have personal friends who succumbed to this perverse method;
- the secret police were especially diligent about infiltrating and disbanding small religious groups, which were considered a real danger to the regime because of their potential influence on believers, and particularly on young people;
- secret police surveillance of opponents and dissidents did not necessarily lead to prompt action about anything they considered dangerous; often, if they uncovered a link in a chain (unless an arrest was unavoidable which, for instance, was the case with a close friend of mine who was caught smuggling bibles) they followed it up patiently in order to uncover the entire network of the person under suspicion;[6]
- a most painful revelation for religious leaders was to find in their secret police files evidence that some of their closest friends, ministry team members or even family members, had been recruited to spy on them;[7]
- after facing the grim reality of their lives being an open book to the secret police, probably the most painful experience for church leaders after the fall of communism was to see so few of those who spied and reported on them daring to confess their treason in order to obtain forgiveness and restoration.

Heroes and visionaries

During communism the presence within Christian communities of a few heroes and visionaries, who gave hope to Romanian Protestants, was one of the most comforting of realities: such heroes were, for example, Richard Wurmbrand – probably the most important evangelical leader who ever lived in Romania; the Baptist Simion Cure – a disciple of Wurmbrand who was himself imprisoned for his faith, and had a major influence on Iosif Ton; Constantin Caraman – a visionary Pentecostal leader, whose incredible biography has yet to be written; Iosif Ton himself – clearly the most

important Romanian evangelical leader alive; Ferenc Visky (my mentor during my student days) – the Reformed pastor who led the Pietistic Bethany movement among Hungarians in Transylvania and beyond; the Baptist Liviu Olah – probably the most prominent evangelist in Romanian evangelicalism. All these paid a high price for their faithfulness to Christ, and were able to comfort and encourage their fellow believers during a dark period of church history.

The author (right) with Pastor Wurmbrand

In spite of the persecution, which varied in intensity during the communist era, most religious communities, except those which were outlawed, increased their membership, and continued to do so, at least for some time, after the end of the communist era.

Post-communist period

After the fall of Ceausescu in December 1989, Romania experienced a period of religious renewal. For a few years, many well-educated young people joined Orthodox monasteries in search

Ferenc Visky with his wife Julia

of meaning and spiritual renewal. The Orthodox Patriarch, who was a serious collaborator with the communist regime, withdrew for a few months from his post while a Group for Reflection on the Renewal of the Church was formed which included a number of leading Orthodox intellectuals. This ferment however did not last, and after Ion Iliescu, a '*perestroika* communist', was democratically elected as President of Romania, a rapid reversal took place in the country, with second rank communist and secret police leaders controlling the economic and political life of post-communist Romania. Many of these are still active today, more than a quarter of a century since the demise of communism as a political system in Romania.

Religious freedom was established: religious denominations were free to found theological colleges, to build new church buildings and to publish. Many books were translated and published (those who selected material often failed to discern what was relevant and adequate for today's Romania). Missionaries were able freely to come and witness in the country; they often neglected or

were completely ignorant of Romania's current religious and cultural realities. Leaders could travel abroad, either for theological study or in order to meet other religious leaders. It was a new dawn for believers in Romania. Yet, in spite of the initial impetus for change, the dynamic growth of religious congregations did not last – perhaps owing to their leaders' lack of vision and their inability to read the signs of the times.

Another possible reason for the relative decline of most religious congregations, with the notable exception of the Pentecostals, could be the general unwillingness of church institutions from all Christian traditions to face the haunting facts of collaboration with the communist regime, which led to so much suffering. It may be that 'the blood of innocent Abel cries out to God'; perhaps we are lacking divine blessing simply because there has been no atonement for that pain, no meaningful reconciliation between communist regime collaborators and their victims, nor have the perpetrators been restored to the Christian fellowship through compunction, confession and, where possible, restitution. And if such a process did not take place within the Christian communities, how could we expect it to happen within society at large?

Social scientists talk about restorative justice in post-authoritarian societies; the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa is the typical example. Why did not such a process take place virtually anywhere in the post-communist world? Here are some possible answers:

- Nowhere in the former communist world has there been a serious process of decommunisation similar to the denazification process in Germany after the Second World War, or to the process of 'social exorcism' that took place, with varying success, after the fall of the apartheid system in South Africa. How could such a process take place in Eastern Europe and other former communist countries, when many people in the West still think that communism was a good idea, despite the fact that it did not succeed anywhere, and had over 100 million victims.
- Nowhere in former communist countries did we have leaders of high moral and spiritual standards, comparable to Konrad Adenauer in Germany, or Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu in South Africa, possibly with the notable exception of Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia; as a result, there was no one to initiate and give credibility to such a process.
- In order to 'save face' and to preserve intact their influence in society, official denominational structures, and even more so non-religious entities, have been strongly resistant, and often overtly opposed to the examination of their complex and often ambiguous relationship with the communist regime.[8]
- Surprisingly, or maybe not, one of the most important obstacles in the way of social and ecclesial reconciliation after communism

> has been the inordinate passion for indiscriminate justice practiced by those I call the 'Taliban of denunciation'. Usually, these are younger people, who have very little experience of the complexities of living under an oppressive regime; all they want is blood – the merciless denunciation of collaborators.

The study of secret police files taught us many lessons. The correct interpretation of these delicate – if not dangerous – documents, created by what we may rightly call the 'Ministry of Lies', requires: a) a good general understanding of communist regimes and of the role played in them by the secret police; b) intricate and well tested research skills; c) corroboration of data from other sources, including the personal testimonies of victims and, where possible, of perpetrators; d) a serious degree of moral discernment and responsibility.

There were many degrees of collaboration, some quite harmless while others were seriously damaging and incriminating. If this complex reality is ignored even more injustice can be the outcome. Dealing adequately and constructively with religious collaboration during the communist period also requires a number of invaluable skills such as: *spiritual maturity* – as a person needs discernment to distinguish between reality and dissimulation; *a good knowledge of church history* – in order to draw lessons from the way the church dealt with similar problems at other times in history; *a solid theological and ethical sense* – to be able to handle the constant moral dilemmas facing believers living in authoritarian regimes. Such skills are not easy to find. As a result, the sins of the communist past continue to haunt religious communities in Romania, and to hamper their normal development.

The future

Probably the most disturbing feature of Romanian religious life is the progressive secularisation of the country which is being ignored by most religious leaders, who express a kind of triumphalism and feel nostalgia for a past Christendom. Many of the churches which have sprouted like mushrooms, including the grandiose Patriarchal Cathedral which is being built today in Bucharest, are going to be mostly empty in 25 years time. Nobody seems to see this.

Where are we going from here? In the light of the historical developments I have described, here are three possible priorities that Romanian Protestant communities could pursue.

1. *Re-imagining the meaning and the role of the Bible in Romanian evangelical communities*

Romanian evangelicals, like most of their brothers and sisters in other parts of the world are dominated, traditionally, by a literalist and often fundamentalist reading of scripture. If such an approach was understandable when believers had very little access to information and education, the perpetuation of this approach is unsustainable now that there is open access to knowledge. The younger generation is becoming progressively

disenchanted with the attitude of older leaders who are trying to preserve the *status quo* and are afraid of any deviation from what they consider to be the established ways of the faith. As a result, many are leaving classic evangelical churches and joining newer expressions of the church, which are more open to change and experimentation, even if their theology and ecclesiology are superficial.

Traditionalist leaders are obsessed with the outdated paradigm of the opposition between liberalism and fundamentalism and are constantly demonising any attempted change by using labels drawn from this approach. Such attitudes increase the rift between generations and might empty their churches in a decade or two. Younger evangelical leaders in Romania, who are better educated than the leaders of the older generation, have to engage quite urgently and seriously with questions such as:

- what is the Bible – a recipe book able to answer whatever questions people might have, or is it an invitation to a pilgrimage of faith?
- what are the implications of the fact that the Bible is not just a divine book – as bibliological Docetism suggests, implicitly or explicitly, but also a human book, written by actual human authors, not just transcribers of a message dictated from above?
- how is the Christian community to deal with (apparent) contradictions between what the Bible appears to teach and the claims of science?
- what does faithfulness to God's revelation and being a prophetic people of God really mean today?

2. Re-engaging theologically and practically with the surrounding culture

Most evangelical communities who lived under communism tend to engender a 'Christ against culture' attitude to the world and society. If such a strategy helped evangelicals to survive under oppression, it is hampering the impact of the gospel in democratic societies. Such dissonance between engendered attitudes and new realities poses serious problems of identity for evangelical communities in the former communist world.[9]

After many decades of living 'under bondage', it is not easy for evangelicals to understand the nature of freedom and democracy, and to negotiate their role in society. They came out of communism, but did communism really come out of them? Are they really prepared to 'enter the promised land' of democracy, or will they need to wander for 'forty years in the desert' of the post-communist transition? If this is true, then they may need to learn how to manage this long transition better, until their grandchildren are able to live in a normal society.

3. Renewal of Christian spirituality

Living in an Eastern Orthodox context, Romanian evangelicals cannot have a lasting impact, nor will they be taken

seriously by the other religious communities, if, besides biblical understanding, theology, ethics and social awareness, they do not also develop a specific kind of spirituality – not a copy of some western spirituality but a path towards intimacy with God which resonates with the depths of the Romanian soul. This should touch all areas of the life of faith: worship and music, liturgy, prayer, ascetics, celebration, community life.

Furthermore, the younger generation will not be attracted to the Christian faith, if believers are not able to reimagine community life in ways that go beyond church services and the narrow interests of their own religious 'club'. If this is to happen, concrete social and cultural involvement at grass roots level and at the highest level of society is essential. The time for hiding behind a high wall has gone for good. Evangelicals in Romania are called to embody as concretely as possible the imperatives of Christ's Gospel and the reality of the Kingdom of God, for which we pray every time we say the Lord's Prayer.

I do not pretend to be a prophet and I hate to speculate, but I think it is legitimate to think that, unless something radical happens, the present secularist trends in Romania will continue. If so, in the not too distant future, religious faith will become more marginalised, and the church will exist, in Christ's words, 'where two or three are gathered together'.

Lord, have mercy!

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1. The Romanian Evangelical Church numbered 15,514 members (0.077% of the entire population), according to the 2011 census. It's official website – http://www.ber.ro/ – lists 227 local churches.
2. For more information see D. Manastireanu, *After Liberation, Then What? Enabling and Protecting Communities in Post-Authoritarian Contexts*, Monrovia, Ca.: World Vision International, 2012. Digital version available from the author, danutm@gmail.com.
3. D. Dobrincu, 'Activity of the Romanian Christian Committee for the Defence of Religious Freedom and Freedom of Conscience (ALRC) (1978-1980s)', in *Strabon. Bulletin d'Information Historique*, Tome I, Numéro 2, Juillet-Décembre 2003, pp. 61–72.
4. The access of Romanian citizens to their secret police files was approved by law 293/1998. Through law 187/1999, the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives (CNSAS) was formed, and started receiving the files of the secret police. The process was long with many hitches. Even today, most of the files administered by CNSAS have not yet been catalogued, let alone studied. Actual access to the files was possible only from March 2000, when the Romanian Parliament approved the CNSAS Regulations.
5. It took me almost seven years, from my first official request, until I could examine and get copies of my four different secret police files (about 2000 pages of extremely interesting, and often heartbreaking, reading). I had to ask for the support of a prominent member of CNSAS in order to finally get a response to my request, which illustrates the obstacles put in the way of access to the grim realities of the previous regime by the Romanian post-communist authorities. Later, I progressively transcribed (in Romanian) and published on my blog, all four files – search for File I-1065 on www.danutm.wordpress.com.
6. When I obtained access to my own secret police file, one of my most pressing questions was why I was never imprisoned, although I was under constant secret police surveillance, from

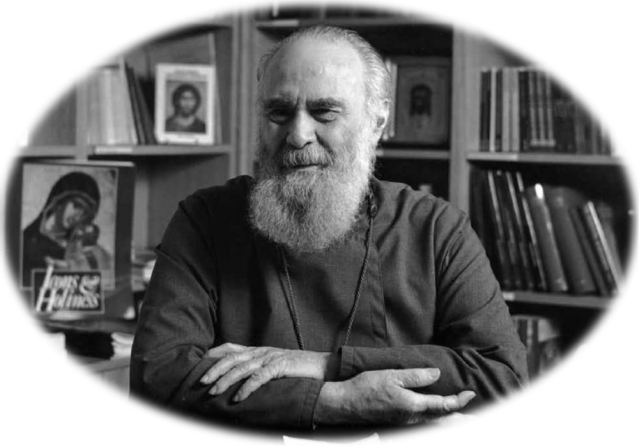
1973 to 1989 (and after!). One can only guess the answer, but I am convinced that my 'string' was quite long, and they could not reach the end of it until communism fell as a system.

7. The most painful surprise I had while exploring my secret police files was to read the regular information given by my pastor – a significant Securitate collaborator – about me, his youth leader. Here is his story: he was a sincere young pastor, turned secret police collaborator because of his envy of Iosif Ton; he had a reconversion experience during the Lausanne Congress for World Evangelism, where he was sent by the secret police, and then tried to escape collaboration by fleeing the country, and was finally assassinated by the secret police.
8. A significant example is the Catholic Church in Poland. Polish Catholics were some of the most courageous Christians in Eastern Europe in their confrontation of the communist regime, and yet they too had their collaborators. Surprisingly, in spite of its immense prestige and testimony of resistance, the Polish Catholic Church as an institution was extremely reserved about taking a firm official stance against collaborators, for fear of losing face. They were forced to act in 2006, when Stanislaw Wielgus, the new Archbishop of Warsaw, was exposed as a communist collaborator. As a result, the Polish Church has produced a document entitled 'Polish Episcopate Memorandum Concerning the Collaboration of Some Clergy with the Secret Service in Poland in 1944-1989', which, in our estimation, is one of the most consistent documents on collaboration during communism, from a theological and ethical point of view, although it still reflects the defensive attitude that prevented the church from acting more promptly. By comparison, other churches in Eastern Europe have simply buried their heads in the sand, waiting for people to forget.
9. I am currently in the final stages of editing, together with the historian Dorin Dobrincu, a collection of about 20 essays on Romanian evangelicalism, written by both evangelical and non-evangelical authors, entitled *The Evangelical – An Exploration of Romanian Protestant Communities*, which will be published by the most important secular publisher in Romania (Polirom, in Iasi). This academic initiative is targeting the general Romanian public, aiming to introduce it to the intricacies of a number of minority religious communities which are generally ignored by Romanian society at large. The public has already been prepared for the reception of this unique book thanks to an unusual event for Romania – the recent publication of three works of fiction which are set in evangelical contexts.

Danut Manastireanu *worked as an economist from 1978-87, but lost his job because of pressure from the secret police. As a result, from 1987-90 he worked as an unqualified stone mason. From 1990-92 he was a freelance translator working for Bible Education by Extension, and from 1992-94 founded and was the chief editor of Logos Publishers, Cluj. From 1994-98 he was a theology lecturer at Emanuel Bible Institute in Oradea, and from 1998-99 Professor of Religious Education at the Richard Wurmbrand College in Iasi. In the early 2000s he taught at Eastern University St David in Pennsylvania, and from 2007-14 was supervisor of a PhD programmes at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, as well as an Assistant Professor at the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Osijek, Croatia. Until recently he worked for World Vision International as Director of Faith and Development, with a focus on Eastern Europe and the Middle East.*

Metropolitan Anthony and the BBC

by Elisabeth Robson



This paper is not directly about Metropolitan Anthony's teaching, nor about his extraordinary achievements as a priest, bishop and Metropolitan in building the diocese in London and other parts of this country.

My paper does, however, relate to his mission to speak the Gospel to the whole world, to show how everyone can become 'a man fully alive' without losing any of his individual identity or loyalty to his church. It is about his use of broadcasting to spread his message. Broadcasting enabled Fr Anthony Bloom, as he was when he first came to Britain, to reach out beyond his parish so that he became known in Britain as a significant figure in inter-church discussions. Broadcasting also enabled him to reach out to the Orthodox Church in Russia and the USSR. This paper is about the delivery of Metropolitan Anthony's message and aims to give some of the background and the context of his broadcasting through an account of the materials in the BBC archives. Although we cannot hear his message through these papers, we can sense something of its power.

A few words about Metropolitan Anthony's biography.[1] He was born Andrei Bloom on 19 June 1914 in Switzerland, to a diplomat father, member of a large, cultured aristocratic family which included the composer Scriabin. Posted to Persia as consul, the embassy was not taken over by the new Soviet authorities until 1920. At that point the family emigrated, finally settling in Paris in 1923 where Andrei Bloom was educated and found his vocation.

During the Second World War, a qualified doctor in Occupied France, he

Elisabeth Robson presenting her paper at the Keston 2016 AGM

worked with the French Resistance and must have been very aware of the importance of allied broadcasting not just of messages to the Resistance but of information to the population in general. The BBC was listened to clandestinely all over the country.

After the war he became a priest and settled in London, where it was in part because of broadcasting that he became known and recognised as someone who was happy to debate fundamental issues of faith in public, and who made a tremendous impact whenever he appeared.

An article by Gerald Priestland, for many years the BBC's religious affairs correspondent, appeared in *The Listener,* the weekly magazine of broadcsting, 10 December 1981. It was based on one of a series of talks with a variety of church leaders; with Metropolitan Anthony the conversation had been about death. Answering the question 'What did Metropolitan Anthony expect after death?' he replied firmly:

> 'There are moments now when I feel that life wells up and then breaks down against the fact that I am limited by my body; and I feel a moment must come when it must burst or dance in triumph. That is what I expect from eternal life.'

The archives of the BBC

The source materials held by the BBC can best be described as dry. Metropolitan Anthony broadcast in English, French and Russian and we have the records kept by secretaries and finance officers of fees paid for broadcasts, of arrangements made to record him; there are occasionally notes on broadcasts that were in some way controversial. There are the daily lists of programmes broadcast – giving only titles and timings. The only information about the content of the broadcasts comes from the titles and any additional notes in the papers. There is a separate collection of microfilms which contains some programme scripts, but it is unlikely that there is anything by Metropolitan Anthony there. There are also the regular audience research reports which I shall discuss in more detail, but here too there is little about the actual content of the BBC's religious broadcasts. The records are held in the BBC's Written Archives Centre (WAC) in Caversham, near Reading.[2] Unfortunately the archives do not go beyond the early 1980s – the later papers are still waiting for clearance to be made available to the public. The Sound Archives are held

separately in the British Library, and TV is mostly elsewhere and difficult to track. While the materials do not capture the personality or charisma of Metropolitan Anthony, we do get a tantalising glimpse of his personality and what he was like to work with.

The BBC and the start of broadcasting in Russian

In January 1949 when Metropolitan Anthony came to London as a young priest to live and work, the BBC was the only company licensed to broadcast, and did so under a royal charter which set out its duties as a publicly funded body. The charter was – and is – renewed every ten years and covers overseas broadcasting as well as domestic. At its peak in 1943, wartime broadcasting was in over 45 languages excluding English and immediately after the war international broadcasting exceeded in size all the domestic broadcasting.[3] The goal was to build bridges with foreign audiences by broadcasting truthful news and information otherwise not available to them.

While the USSR was allied with Nazi Germany the idea of broadcasting to Russia was raised, but the lack of information about listening conditions, radio sets and the likely response of the Soviets meant nothing was done. With Hitler's invasion of the USSR in June 1941 came the first dramatic broadcast in Russian, of Churchill's speech to Parliament announcing the Nazi invasion. It was translated as he spoke and broadcast in translation the same day. I have never heard of anyone who heard it in Russia, but *The Manchester Guardian,* 28 June 1941, reported that the Moscow broadcasts of parts of the speech had been cheered by a large crowd.[4]

Churchill's speech did not lead to regular Russian broadcasting during the war, presumably because it was thought Stalin would not like it and it was necessary to keep this difficult ally on side.[5]

On 24 March 1946 when broadcasting in Russian to the USSR began, relations with the USSR were comparatively warm; the aim of the broadcasts was the same as in war-time: building bridges between peoples by being a friendly, uncritical voice reaching out to ordinary Soviet citizens. However, as the USSR tightened its grip on Central and Eastern Europe and Moscow Radio began its deeply hostile broadcasts to the West, BBC broadcasting to the occupied countries of Eastern Europe became increasingly critical of Soviet actions. The torrent of hostile propaganda emanating from the USSR towards Britain soon made it clear that 'friendly' broadcasting was over and the tone hardened considerably. The BBC in Russian tried to be at least neutral in response to these attacks.

Religious broadcasting in Russian

One of the first references to religious programmes for the USSR was in association with broadcasts to Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe and concerned religious services. It was recognised that one of the needs of listeners which the overseas broadcasts could help to satisfy was spiritual: churches were being closed and priests arrested while believers faced sanctions at work or arrest.

The approach taken at the end of the war is made clear from a note which the Director of Religious Broadcasting prepared, explaining the decision to discontinue the broadcast of Lutheran services in German:

> 'It is not part of our policy to broadcast religious services to other countries and in the languages of those countries, for we in this country seek to broadcast to listeners overseas *only what they cannot find in their own countries* [my emphasis].'[6]

Advice was sought from the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations about what would be appropriate religious broadcasting. There was concern about using priests – a note dated 23 September 1949 from the Revd Herbert Waddams of the Council noted 'they could be a little wild'.[7] It is not clear what he meant by this sweeping generalisation, although we might make a guess: neutrality about the situation in their home countries was not an option! More importantly, the Church of England was deeply concerned about the fate of believers and churches in territories newly occupied by the USSR and anxious to see help given through broadcasting.

The persecution of believers in the USSR itself was getting worse and there is a note from March 1949 responding to one from the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations supporting the idea of broadcasting Orthodox services. The BBC was not enthusiastic, alluding to the 'lamentable aesthetic standards to which Orthodox ceremonies had fallen' in Britain and in the West in general.[8] However, in July 1949 there was a plea from two Romanian Orthodox priests for services for Romania.[9] By September there is a note reporting that a monthly 15-minute religious programme which included liturgical instruction had been started outside the normal programmes.[10]

The advice from the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations to the BBC on suitable priests for the Russian and Romanian programmes listed the following: Revd Fr V[ladimir] Theokritoff; Revd Fr Vitaly Ustinov and added Prince Dmitry Obolensky from Trinity College Cambridge and Professor Grigori Nandris for advice on the Russian and Romanian situations respectively.[11] The Council wrote to the BBC more than once urging it to do more for persecuted Christians, for whom there was a special service of intercession in St Paul's Cathedral. A letter from the Council of 3 December 1949 commented:

> 'What the Communists fear most is revealed by the precautions they take, and there are over one hundred blocking [i.e. jamming] stations on their borders.'[12]

On 18 January 1950 there is a note about planning the broadcasts, including the problem of jamming. On 31 January 1950 an internal memo from Tangye Lean reports that broadcasts will start on 12 February 1950 for a three-month experiment. There is a copy of a note from the Information Officer at the British Embassy in Moscow dated 14 February 1950 reporting that religious broadcasts had been instituted and were being heard at least in Moscow. He continued:

> ‘There is little doubt large numbers of people in the USSR would appreciate a Russian Orthodox Service over the wireless, but they are not people who have any political influence. Church services are never broadcast over the Soviet radio.’[13]

At the same time engineers were confirming that the USSR was using some of the frequencies allocated by international agreement to western countries, and when more powerful transmitters were used the Soviet response was to step up jamming.

It seems that this first experiment in religious broadcasting was viewed as a failure: in May 1950 there is a note from Hugh Carleton Greene, then overseeing broadcasting to Europe, commenting that the reports from information officers ‘were not encouraging continuation of the broadcasts’.[14] On 14 June a message from Moscow said the transmissions were valueless because they were totally jammed. The information officer would listen to the end of the period, Sunday 9 July being the last. He added that if the transmissions were discontinued, the Soviet action of jamming music and prayers, without a sermon, should be widely publicised. On 22 June 1950 Carleton Greene wrote in a memo: ‘It is a sad ending to what I am sure was a good idea, but on this occasion the Russians have won; and I am sure that in the present circumstances there is no point in continuing with the broadcasts.’[15]

Jamming remained a problem for all broadcasters to the USSR until it was finally abandoned under Gorbachev in the late 1980s. From time to time, when relations were warmer, jamming might cease altogether, sometimes for long periods as during Khrushchev’s thaw, or at least not cover all programmes or all frequencies, but events such as the invasion of Hungary in 1956, the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 or the events associated with the Polish Solidarity movement produced blanket jamming, while lesser political spats would make jamming more or less intense. High-level political visits such as Khrushchev’s to London or Macmillan’s to Moscow saw jamming stopped for the relevant period.

The engineers’ response to jamming was to vary the broadcast frequencies slightly, to a position close by on the tuning dial so that by tuning carefully listeners could still find the programme. They quickly mastered the technique. There was another way to listen which was not immediately appreciated back in Britain: because jamming stations were always in or near towns and cities, country-lovers could listen in peace as they sat at their dachas (country cottages) or visited relations in rural areas. However, word eventually reached London and in time special programmes were put out to take advantage of the weekend exodus from the cities.

Going back to 1950, the BBC did not give up on religious broadcasting to the USSR. Although I have not found formal decisions or discussion of the question, it is clear that services were broadcast eastwards at Christmas and presumably also Easter, and were directed towards the USSR as well as the Orthodox countries of Eastern Europe, and it is

likely that religious programmes continued.

Records of radio broadcasts

The new priest in London, Fr Anthony Bloom, would have heard about the BBC's broadcasts from Fr Vladimir Theokritoff at the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, an Anglican-Orthodox Fellowship. It may have been through him and the Church of England that he was recommended to the BBC for religious programmes. Until then the Church of England usually had recourse to Greek priests for an Orthodox view.

The first direct mention of the Revd Anthony Bloom I have found in the archives is dated 3 January 1952 and concerns the recording of a sermon (in Russian) for Orthodox Christmas Eve. The sermon was broadcast on 6 January 1952 at 21.15 and repeated twice the next day. It was nine minutes long and he received a fee of eight guineas (£8.8s, in old money – about £8.40). This seems a ridiculous sum today, but was good in the 1950s when salaries were low and money was worth a great deal more than it is now. Two more recordings of talks are detailed in the file: 6 January 1957, a sermon of six minutes for a fee of six guineas and 21 June 1957, 15 minutes to be broadcast at a time yet to be arranged, for which a fee of 15 guineas was paid.[16]

Fr Anthony's sermons in Russian must have been aimed at the Soviet Union, although the contracts do not specify the service. By 1959, however, things have moved on considerably: there is a note to the Outside Broadcasts Division: '*As in previous years* [my emphasis] we should like to transmit live to countries in East Europe having Orthodox communities the midnight Russian Orthodox Easter Service.' Language feeds were to be in English, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Bulgarian and Romanian. Fr Rodzianko would be providing commentary[17] (he led the religious broadcasts of the Russian Service for many years).

Fr Anthony's parish work had already born great fruit and the Anglican Church had found the growing Orthodox community a new church in Ennismore Gardens, London, which was consecrated in December 1956. At this point the Moscow Patriarchate decided to elect him bishop. Fr Anthony was consecrated bishop in November 1957, and with this the BBC files take up his new title and refer to him as Bishop Anthony (Bloom).

The files now contain records of regular recordings and broadcasts, some two or three times a year and growing in number. He had mastered English and was in demand for a variety of programmes, as well as in Russian for the Russian Service. He used his knowledge of French to take part in broadcasts to France and the French-speaking world. His appearances were not always without controversy: shortly before he was consecrated bishop, in September 1957, he took part in a television programme in a series called 'Give and Take'. The individual programme was called 'Hell, Heaven and the Devil'. Around the microphones were ranged Bishop John Robinson, John Wain the writer, Roderick Filer, Peter Williams, Kenneth Allsop, writer and broadcaster, and Fr Anthony. A

memo, apparently from J.M. Church, dated 27 September 1957, after a transcript of the discussion had been circulated, criticised the lack of intellectual substance in the programme but defended it in the following terms:

> 'Still, we know that a sense of impact was conveyed to the viewer and I do not think this should be despised because it was, relatively speaking, superficial and, intellectually speaking, unsatisfying. We cannot often give viewers or listeners fully articulated, fully armoured thought and ideas. (Should we?) Usually we have succeeded if we stir the irrational roots of thought.'[18]

An undated memo from a certain H.H. Hoskins commented less charitably, citing the ignorance of non-Christians and the assumptions of Christians, concluding:

> 'The method [of discussion] is all right – everything depends on the choice of performers. So far we have been curiously successful in pitching the inept against the invincibly ignorant. The result is excruciating.'

More opinions were sought and came back much more positively: Dr J.R. Simons wrote: 'I found this read as a good discussion – rationalists were "unsophisticated" and did not follow through.' T.S. Gregory wrote: 'We could have an interesting discussion of this subject. But I should want more punch, more telling debating points in the priest.' Unfortunately he does not specify which priest.[19]

What is striking, however, is that Metropolitan Anthony, at this time still a modest priest, was in the programme on equal terms with everyone else, no mean feat in someone who arrived in Britain with no English.

Going back to the files, on 19 June 1958 he was asked to prepare a 20-minute talk for a four-part Schools Broadcast for 16-19-year olds on the principles of Christian worship. The series was to air in spring 1959. Bishop Anthony agreed and was asked to provide a script to be broadcast on 3 March 1959 for a fee of £25. Aside from the to us astonishing notion that 16-19-year olds could be induced to listen to anything from a single speaker for 20 minutes, it is hard to imagine such content in any school curriculum today.

Recording was scheduled for 24 February 1959. No script was forthcoming. The recording was rescheduled for 2 March – the day before transmission. Still no script. A note is attached to the recording notes, saying the recording was unscripted and would probably need editing. A note from Bishop Anthony contains his apologies for all the changes of recording times, but he never did write

a script, preferring, as became his immutable practice, to broadcast live.[20]

In May 1959 he prepared more broadcasts for schools: four programmes on the Eastern Orthodox Church, his chosen title: 'Outlook and Message' to be broadcast on 28 June 1960. The series was entitled 'The Christian Religion and its Philosophy'.[21] Also registered in the file is a sermon on the Feast of the Annunciation, in Russian, which was to be recorded at his home in Upper Addison Gardens. This was for 6 April 1959. Another Russian talk was titled 'Fathers of the Kiev-Pechersk Monastery', to be recorded on 8 October 1959. He recorded a short item in French on the Blessing of the Thames at Wallingford.[22]

1960 brought more commissions – at least four from the Russian Service, and in 1961 in English for the series 'Lift up your hearts'. This one was recorded off transmission on 18 January 1961, and should have been repeated. It was not and Bishop Anthony wrote to protest. He received a huffing-puffing bureaucratic answer about 'procedures' for last minute changes to schedules.[23] History does not record what the BBC really felt about his contribution, nor whether he was satisfied with the explanation, but he continued to collaborate with the BBC in his three languages.

Russian commissions continued, in 1961 for a Lenten sermon but then the news broke that the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) was to join the World Council of Churches (WCC). He spoke on a programme called 'Ten O'Clock' (news then was at 9pm) and did the same for the Russian Service. His Russian commissions included in September and October 1961 a youth camp in Bangor where there were religious discussions and a question and answer session between the young people and the Bishop, which he produced himself. The fee was duly paid – and we must assume he was able to produce broadcastable material as well as speak spontaneously on air.[25]

At the end of 1961 the Revd Paul Oestreicher was the Religious Broadcasting Assistant and commissioned a piece for the series 'Way of Life'. 'Christ the Light of the World' was broadcast on 10 December 1961 and the note gives the place of recording as New Delhi – where the WCC Assembly was held. Bishop Anthony recorded a piece about the WCC for the BBC French Service and an item for the Week of Prayer for Church Unity which Paul Oestreicher was preparing.[26]

1961 was also the year of Metropolitan Anthony's first visit to Russia since his departure as a small child. It was a memorable visit from many points of view, and he spoke about it often afterwards, including in a special talk for the Russian Service.[27]

1962 saw more contributions to the Russian Service – at least nine important pieces and 1963 has even more, including one on the death of President Kennedy. His Russian commissions included a discussion programme entitled 'Faith in Modern Times'. Significant English commissions included for the series 'Thinking Aloud'; and a Christmas An-

thology for broadcast on the Home Service of the BBC (now Radio 4) which he wrote and read himself.[28]

1964 opened on 19 January with an English commission for the General Overseas Service (now the World Service in English): 'Towards a United Church'. An undated letter from Bishop Anthony to Canon A.J. Fisher, who was Assistant to the Overseas Religious Broadcasting Organiser, which may relate to this programme, states:

> 'Here is my belated contribution. I am aware of the fact that it is below the mark, partly because a scripted talk is for me an almost insuperable problem, partly because I feel so ill that I cannot gather my thoughts properly. Don't you think I could depart from this text and enrich it in the process of recording?'[29]

This understanding of the power of spontaneous speech and his pronounced preference for it to reading a prepared text is part of the secret of his success as a broadcaster. It was a remarkable thing for him to have understood – back in the 1960s most broadcasting was carefully scripted and broadcasters rehearsed to make their reading sound as natural as possible. Metropolitan Anthony would have been quite at home today in a modern studio discussion. His experience of preaching will have played a part also: there are many accounts from his parishioners and others who heard him that he possessed tremendous personal magnetism which came into play both in conversation and when he was preaching or speaking in public.

The same year, 1964, saw many more commissions. I counted 22 for the Russian Service and four substantial commissions for the Home service including an interview with the programme 'Way of Life' on the subject 'Priest or Psychiatrist?' (28 June 1964). It was approximately seven minutes long. The talks have titles like 'The Meaning of the Holy Spirit', or 'Agnostics and Seekers Question Christians'.[30] Remarkably, he was invited regularly once or twice a year, to appear on a programme intended for women listeners: Woman's Hour. In 1964 he is recorded as speaking on 'Time in Mystical Experience', and the next time he was Woman's Hour's 'Guest of the Week'. This carried on for years.[31]

Among later listings of note, in March 1978 Metropolitan Anthony composed ten eight-minute talks for the Russian Service, 'On Prayer'. On 18 March 1979 he took part in a discussion on Radio 3 under the 'Religion and Politics' rubric in which he discussed the Reith Lectures (with Dr Edward Norman – lecturer that year).[32] In 1980 Radio 4 did a profile of him. In 1981 he was interviewed by Gerald Priestland who was the BBC's religious correspondent and made many religious programmes for English services; the interview was summarised in the BBC's weekly publication, *The Listener*. Metropolitan Anthony also figured in Priestland's later book: *Priestland's Progress.*[33]

Shorter items seem to have suited him well, such as 'Prayer for the Day' (3 consecutive days, four minutes each in 1979), and in 1980 he provided three

programmes for the World Service series 'Reflections' under the title 'Into the Words of Christ'.[34]

The great faith debates

Metropolitan Anthony's extensive broadcasting career included some extraordinary moments, of which one has become legendary: his television debate on atheism versus belief in God with Marghanita Laski.

Marghanita Laski was a scion of a well-known intellectual family who became a successful writer, journalist and broadcaster. Her name and voice were familiar from both television and radio – where among many other programmes she took part in the popular weekly current affairs discussion programme 'Any Questions' (still running on Radio 4), and other discussion programmes, political, philosophical and literary. She spoke at literature festivals and was active with the PEN Club which worked to support writers suffering persecution for their ideas.

At the same time she was an omnivorous reader and prolific contributor of quotations to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (around 250,000 quotations); she wrote novels and reviewed new books.[35] Laski's listings in the sound archive in the British Library are far from complete, but it is interesting to see that it includes a number of items on specifically religious themes, including discussions with the then Dean of Westminster and the Rector of St Mary-le-Bow gathered under the heading 'The Bow Dialogues' which spread over a number of years.

Laski herself was an avowed atheist but had an interest in and fascination with religion and religious beliefs. A hint of what her approach might be comes from a book she wrote ten years before her encounter with Metropolitan Anthony: *Ecstasy: A Study of Some Secular and Religious Experiences* (1961) a quasi-scientific work in which she investigated intense, mystical ('ecstatic') experiences which would be interpreted as 'revelations' by a believer.

Laski and Archbishop Bloom, as he then was, recorded two programmes under the title 'The Atheist and the Archbishop' in which she put to good use her considerable knowledge and scientific mind to debate his strong Christianity. The tone is friendly throughout, and it seems to me, from watching the film and reading the transcript, that although she did not admit to a change of heart, something of Metropolitan Anthony's power of belief moved her deeply.[36]

Metropolitan Anthony's other historic encounter with an unbeliever came with the BBC Russian Service's long-standing commentator, Anatol Goldberg (Anatoli Maksimych to his many listeners in the USSR). This debate was in Russian and in six parts and we have a full transcript. I have not found a recording listed in the BBC's archives, but given that Anatoli Maksimych had an instantly recognisable voice and way of speaking, and also great credibility with his audience, who had been listening to him from the early 1950s, there are probably quite a few unofficial recordings in Russia which are kept by the Metropolitan Anthony Foundation. There is a small puzzle here: an

audience research report of discussions with listeners at the 1961 Trade Fair in Moscow includes the comment that the discussions between an unnamed believer and an unbeliever were of interest to atheists. One listener reportedly commented: 'Everything was so clearly explained that I even recorded it on tape and played it back to my friends.'[37]

The puzzle concerns the date of the programmes: the transcript dates them ten years later, 1972. Was there an earlier discussion? Listeners did send in questions to the religious programme, usually to demonstrate that atheism was the only rational creed, and they were answered in the programmes. Perhaps this discussion was part of Metropolitan Anthony's regular contributions to the Russian Service.

Reaching Russian audiences

That Metropolitan Anthony, through radio and television, was a significant public figure to the British public, is clear. He was also on good terms with the Church of England through his commitment to ecumenism and his work with the British Council of Churches and the WCC. At the same time he dedicated much time and effort to his Russian audiences through his sermons and talks in Russian, which eventually were broadcast every week in the Russian religious programme. What was their impact? There is not a straightforward answer, because right through the Soviet period programmes were jammed and westerners had no access to any kind of opinion poll or sample, if indeed such things existed. We must remember that in 1952 when we have the first record of Metropolitan Anthony broadcasting, the Soviet Union was in the throes of the latest purge (the so-called Doctors' Plot) which was ended only by the death of Stalin in 1953. Thousands were being sent off, some to execution, others to years in the Gulag as Stalin sought out his personal enemies and demanded of his secret police that it deliver thousands more 'enemies' to fill his labour camps. Only an extremely limited church life was permitted and clergy and believers were hounded as much if not more than ordinary citizens. Listening to foreign radio was not something that anyone would talk about or confess to.

In order to make even a guess at possible audiences the BBC had to rely on impressions gained from individual listeners and on Soviet publications, which expressed ever greater hostility to the BBC and other foreign broadcasters, thereby suggesting that audiences were substantial. There were frequent cartoons in newspapers and journals like *Krokodil*, the most popular satirical paper in the USSR, and poster campaigns, aimed at discouraging listening. The BBC used Soviet journals which gave details of how many radio sets were being produced each year, whether electricity supplies were reliable in the lean post-war years, whether there were any batteries to be had, where were the main population centres and how large they were to make an estimate of potential listeners – not at all the same as actual listeners – and from the reports of individuals' opinions tried to estimate what proportion would actually be listening, how they would be listening when there was jamming, and what sort of content would

appeal to them. Soviet broadcasters used short wave for internal transmissions; foreign broadcasters did the same. There were attempts to block listening by producing radios without the bands usually used by foreign broadcasters, but it proved easy to adapt sets to receive those as well as the Soviet standard frequencies. The BBC also monitored the jamming of broadcasts to develop ways of countering it. After that first experiment with the religious programme, which the BBC abandoned because it believed no one could hear it, thereafter the assumption was that some people somewhere were able to listen.

During the Cold War the most sophisticated audience research was done by the US-funded station initially known as Radio Liberation – subsequently Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. A number of techniques were used to try to make at least an educated guess at the size of audiences on the basis of comments from visitors to and from the USSR, who were questioned closely for their impressions of who listened and to what. Clever weighting systems were invented to set individual reports into some kind of national context.

The audience research reports prepared by the BBC initially appeared annually and usually had a separate paragraph for religious programmes, but it is not always clear whether the same individual provided information on lots of programmes or it is different individuals for each comment. Judging from what we were told in the late '80s and early '90s when travelling round different parts of the USSR, people who listened to foreign radio stations tended to listen to them all, depending on reception conditions. They were able to distinguish the different styles of broadcasting and had their preferences, but if they wanted specific information they would listen to as many as they could. Because the BBC's religious programme had its own separate transmission times, listeners had to take the trouble to find it. These early reports make it clear that they did. There is a report from 1955 that a Leningrad theologian sent a personal letter to the BBC reporting that his friend the Bishop of Lutsk heard the BBC's religious programmes perfectly (Lutsk is a city in north west Ukraine near the Polish border, with good reception from transmitters on Cyprus), while in Leningrad it was usually possible to hear one frequency through the jamming, the exception being Sunday when none were clear.[38]

1956 brought news from a western delegation of Orthodox churchmen: their fellow churchmen in Russia had been listening to religious programmes regularly. Jamming ceased from 18 April to 28 October that year after a period of jamming fewer frequencies. German prisoners of war were finally released and allowed to return to Germany. Many were interviewed and spoke of news from the BBC being passed around each day. The Russian Service's Anatol Goldberg, it was learned, was a well-known radio personality in the USSR. The brief period without jamming ceased with the invasion of Hungary and the trial and execution of Imre Nagy for leading the Hungarians' call for democracy and independence.[39]

Through into 1957 the BBC was one of the main sources for news of developments in Hungary, while a listener in Yugoslavia wrote of the impact of Patriarch Alexi's visit to Belgrade, thanks to reports by the BBC. In 1958 a large number of Spanish exiles from the Civil War who had taken refuge in the USSR were finally repatriated to Spain where they were asked about foreign broadcasts, and a 1959 audience report described the responses to questions of repatratriates to Greece and Germany. All these reports added to a sense of knowing the audience, even though no proper numbers could be calculated.[40]

In 1958 Fr Vladimir Rodzianko, who edited and presented the BBC's religious programmes for Russia for many years, met Russian Orthodox churchmen in Utrecht. He reported that they were regular listeners to his programmes and they had many friendly, frank conversations. When Fr Rodzianko criticised the Patriarchate for its propagandist statements, Metropolitan Nikolai of Krutitsky and Kolomna explained that they spoke out of ignorance because they had no information from the West. He himself was a regular listener and knew many details of programmes, despite jamming. He was sure that listening was widespread and he wanted programmes to continue. He also agreed to record a sermon, which was transmitted several times, on the themes of 'Holy Russia' and teaching faith to children. He and other priests expressed joy at the BBC's work:

> 'The objective and never hostile attitude of the BBC to the Russian Church coupled with the clear Christian message and true information is of the greatest value for millions of listeners, both believers and unbelievers.'[41]

In 1959, among the letters to the BBC, was one from a Soviet listener who praised the broadcast of the Easter Service, and another from an engineer who reported that his mother liked the religious programmes.[42] In 1960 it seems that the vast attendance at the poet Boris Pasternak's funeral was in part because of the BBC broadcasting the details, while a visiting clergyman reported that the religious programmes were valued.[43]

Respondents in 1961 gave the impression that broadcasts of church services were the only ones many people heard because they did not dare to go to church. Russian Orthodox clergy said that religious programmes were much listened to in Moscow and elsewhere. Meanwhile, a Soviet monitor of foreign broadcasts declared that religious broadcasts were much more dangerous than news and should be jammed instead![44]

In 1962 a member of the BBC Religious Broadcasting Department who met a large number of Russian delegates at various church conferences held in Western Europe reported that 'he was surprised at the number who said they listened to the BBC Russian broadcasts. They said they were mainly interested in church life in the West.' Other comments indicated widespread audiences for services inside the USSR, including one from a priest in Armenia who spoke of regular listening. An interesting

'proof' of listening was quoted in the same year's report (1962):

> '… according to a report from a journalist the Soviet Secret Police have been asked to supply audience figures for foreign broadcasts. For obvious reasons figures from such a source cannot possibly be reliable, but if they do in fact exist they are an indication of the authorities concern about the number of people who tune in to foreign stations.'[45]

In 1963 it was reported that, judging from the places mentioned in listeners' letters, listening was widespread; one correspondent spoke of listening for nine years, another twelve. They also reported listening to several foreign broadcasters, a pattern which would continue throughout the Soviet period. On religious programmes, a Russian priest from Moscow reported that the controversy created by the Bishop of Woolwich (author of *Honest to God*) in Britain had sparked a real debate in the Russian church, the first genuine theological discussion between Soviet believers and unbelievers he could remember.[46]

In 1964 in addition to reports from visitors and travelers, there were 227 letters to the BBC Russian Service, including many reports of students listening, and that 'everyone' listened, not just the intelligentsia, workers too. Political crises also led to increased listening: Khrushchev banging his shoe on the desk at the UN, then his dismissal as Secretary General, both heard about first from the BBC, reported one listener. The Sino-Soviet quarrel was reported only on western stations. Listening may have been officially frowned on, but the political climate now allowed wide listening. Some Russian clergy wrote enthusiastically, reporting that (former Prime Minister) Harold Wilson's piece 'Why I Believe in God' aroused great interest.[47]

The report for 1965 mentions a listener competition, in which one of the questions was which personality the contestant wished to meet. Many sporting and cultural figures were mentioned, but from Russian Service staff the head of the service, Mary Seton-Watson, and Fr Rodzianko came top (ten mentions), closely followed by Anatol Goldberg, the regular political commentator, and a little further down, Bishop Anthony (as he then was). If he had been concerned about having an audience, Metropolitan Anthony could rest assured that he had one out there. The popularity of Fr Rodzianko was also a good indication of an extensive audience in Russia for the religious programmes.[48]

The annual reports continue with much valuable detail. In all of them there are references to the religious programmes. It is interesting that the Foreign Office, which oversaw the grant-in-aid which funded the BBC, decided in 1970 to ask why 'it' (the taxpayer via grant-in-aid) was paying for religious programmes. This was the carefully worded reply:

> 'As far as broadcasting in Russian is concerned… the basic justification is that the Russians are a highly religious people and that religious broadcasts have proved their value in attracting regular listeners, who then

stay tuned in to other broadcasts from London.'[49]

This position was essentially unchanged until well into the post-Soviet period.

Personal testimonies

I should like to conclude by mentioning a few individual accounts of the impact of Metropolitan Anthony's broadcasts. These are of course no indication of global numbers, but they make it clear that Metropolitan Anthony's voice was coming through loud and clear over the years, regardless of jamming, and helped by his visits to the USSR. We should pay tribute here to the work of the Maidanovich sisters and many others who assisted selflessly in the work of capturing and making available recordings and transcriptions of his broadcasts. Word of mouth, in a curious echo of Metropolitan Anthony's own preference for the spontaneous spoken word, was an amazing vehicle for his message. There must be thousands if not millions of listeners who would endorse this.

I met many people on different trips to Russia who talked happily about their early experiences of listening to the BBC in Russian. One man, now a retired university professor, told me that he had been converted to belief as a child by listening to the BBC's broadcasts when he and his parents went to the country outside Moscow. He said a whole world opened up to him, and he remembered listening to both Fr Rodzianko and Metropolitan Anthony. He said that Metropolitan Anthony expressed himself wholly in his preaching, which was quite unlike any other Russian preaching; because he did not live in Russia, his life experience was quite different. Later, he heard Metropolitan Anthony preach during his visits to Russia, and he still remembered vividly these sermons, very accessible to simple people but reaching the educated also. His spirituality (*dukhovnost'*) was what came through. The broadcasts of services and of the sermons he heard built his faith which remains to this day.

An indication that Metropolitan Anthony's broadcast style was exactly like that of face-to-face encounters is evident from two personal accounts: the first from Moscow where I met the daughter of a family which Metropolitan Anthony used to visit. She spoke movingly about how he spoke about faith, the Christian life, and how his eyes seemed to burn with divine light. Many others have remarked on how his gaze would hold you and make you feel that he could reach into your soul. A Russian who attended his weekly lectures in the London Cathedral at Ennismore Gardens spoke of the power of the stories he told, often from his own life. Before the evening ended he would speak to each person there. She felt he could tell she was troubled, and assured her of his support. She said he was always firm, never soft, but always knew what people needed and was able to give it to them.[50]

At the first international conference on the legacy of Metropolitan Anthony in Moscow in September 2007, Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk stressed the influence of Metropolitan Anthony's teaching in Russia, spread by the work of the Met-

ropolitan Anthony Foundation. He recalled his 'significant contribution to the spiritual awakening and renaissance in those years when our Church [in Russia] existed in extremely restricted external conditions.'[51]

Finally, to sum up this account of Metropolitan Anthony's broadcasting to the Soviet Union and to Russia in particular, some words of Fr Alexander Borisov, who was one of those who told me about the way Metropolitan Anthony's message was transcribed, copied and circulated in *samizdat* in the Soviet period. In a letter to me after our meeting he wrote:

'The main thing, which is present in everything he [Metropolitan Anthony] said and wrote, is the meeting with Christ. Personal relationships with Him. This is something which is sadly lacking in the Christian message in Russia at this time. There is much talk of Orthodoxy, of tradition, the glorious past, patriotism etc., etc. Our Lord Jesus Christ remains, as it were, in brackets, you could say, the unspoken necessary condition for our salvation, about which everything is quite clear and so does not need to be mentioned. For this reason Vladyka's message is exceptionally important, because it is based on his personal experience which is essential to the church and to every member of the church, to every person.'[52]

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1. Details of Metropolitan Anthony's biography are taken from Gillian Crowe, *This Holy Man: Impressions of Metropolitan Anthony,* Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 2005.
2. BBC copyright material reproduced courtesy of the BBC. All rights reserved. References will be to WAC followed by file number, name and date.
3. Alban Webb*, London Calling: Britain, the BBC World Service and the Cold War,* Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2014, hereafter referred to as Webb, *London Calling,* p.2.
4. Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* (hereafter Briggs, *History*), Vol.3: *War of Words,* p.396.
5. Webb, *London Calling,* p.57, n.24, citing Julian Hale, *Radio Power*, p.52.
6. WAC, 1B R 34/777/2, 25 July 1945, European Service Policy Religion File 1944-46.
7. WAC, R34/777/3 Policy/Religion/ European Service II 1947-54.
8. Tangye Lean to the Revd Herbert Waddams, 3 March 1949: WAC, R34/777/3 Policy/ Religion/European Service II 1947-54.
9. ibid. 22 July 1949.
10. ibid. Hugh Carleton Greene, Head of European Service, 16 September 1949.
11. From the same letter as warned that the priests could be 'a little wild': ibid. 23 September 1949.
12. ibid. Waddams (?) 3 December 1949. Jamming sought to interfere with listening by broadcasting loud, unpleasant noises on the same frequencies. From 25 April 1949 all the BBC's frequencies were jammed, although various techniques of delivery enabled some of the broadcasts to be heard.
13. ibid. J. Dobbs, Information Officer, British Embassy, Moscow, 14 February 1950.
14. ibid. 25 May 1950.
15. ibid. Hugh Carleton Greene, 22 June 1950.
16. WAC, R Cont 1, Sourozh Archbishop of, TAL 1, 1952-62.

17. WAC, E29/237/1 Religious Broadcasts File 3, June 1956-67.
18. WAC, R Cont 1, Sourozh Archbishop of, 1952-62 Talks File 1. J.M. Church(?) 27 September 1957.
19. ibid.
20. ibid.
21. ibid.
22. ibid.
23. ibid.
24. ibid. 18 February 1961.
25. ibid. September - October 1961.
26. ibid.
27. ibid. For details of Metropolitan Anthony's life see Gillian Crowe, *This Holy Man: Impressions of Metropolitan Anthony,* Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 2005.
28. WAC, R Cont 1, Sourozh Archbishop of, 1963-67, Talks File 2, various dates.
29. ibid. 19 January 1964.
30. ibid. various dates.
31. WAC: R Cont 1, Sourozh Archbishop of, File IV, 1973-81.
32. ibid.
33. *The Listener*, 10 December 1981; *Priestland's Progress: One Man's Search for Christianity Now,* BBC Publications, London, 1981.
34. ibid. 28 April, 5 May, 12 May 1980.
35. Wikipedia, 'Marghanita Laski'.
36. The transcript of the programmes has been published by the Metropolitan Anthony Foundation with acknowledgement to the BBC, and the recording is preserved in the BBC's television archives.
37. WAC, External Broadcasting Audience Research E3/159/1, 1961.
38. WAC, E3/159/1 Russian Service Reports 1955-1974: Audience Research, survey for 1955.
39. ibid. survey for 1956.
40. ibid. survey for 1957.
41. WAC E1/2 455/1 USSR Russian Service (CB 26-28) 1955-58, 15 October 1958.
42. WAC E3/159/1 Russian Service Reports 1955-74, survey for 1959.
43. ibid. survey for 1960.
44. ibid. survey for 1961.
45. ibid. survey for 1962.
46. ibid. survey for 1963.
47. ibid. survey for 1964.
48. ibid. survey for 1965.
49. WAC, E40/721/1 BO45/XBO41-001, Russian Service Policy, Part 1.
50. Personal conversations in Moscow and London, 2008.
51. I. von Schlippe, Report on the First International Conference on the Legacy of Metropolitan Anthony, Moscow, 28-30 September 2007, pp.1-2.
52. Letter to me from Fr A. Borisov, 5 March 2008.

Dr Elisabeth Robson *worked for the BBC World Service as a journalist and programme-maker and as manager, founding and developing new departments and ending her career as head of the Russian Service. Her experience of broadcasting covers the Cold War, Gorbachev's period of glasnost and the collapse of the USSR.*

Defending Freedom

The Story of Keston College in New Zealand

by Rob Yule

Following the death from cancer of its chairman, the Revd Raymond Oppenheim, the decision was made, on 2 May 2001, to wind-up the New Zealand branch of Keston College. It had documented the religious conditions and defended the religious liberty of Jews and Christians in communist societies since its establishment in New Zealand in the early 1970s. Rob Yule, active in its inception and present at its close, was asked to tell its story. This lightly-revised version of his account at the time is a chapter from his forthcoming book, Restoring the Fortunes of Zion: Essays on Israel, Jerusalem, and Jewish-Christian Relations *(Bloomington, Indiana: WestBow Press). It is published here with his permission.*

In 1964, a young English clergyman named Michael Bourdeaux received an appeal letter written by two Christian Ukrainian women, couriered to the West by a French intermediary. Visiting Moscow later that year, he went to see for himself a Russian church recently demolished by the authorities. From a distance he saw two women, peeking at the ruin through a surrounding fence. He followed them and, well away from the site, discreetly introduced himself as a foreigner. They asked him to follow them. He did so, by trolley bus and tram, right to the edge of the city, without a word being spoken. There, in an apartment, he introduced himself as an English student of Russian, interested in what was happening to the church in Russia.

It transpired that the two women were not from Moscow but from Ukraine. They were the authors of the appeal! They had travelled more than 1,000 kilometres, he more than 3,000 kilometres, and here in Moscow, out of seven million people, they had met. 'Would he serve the persecuted church?' they asked, 'be our voice?'[1]

Through such an amazing coincidence Michael Bourdeaux, an Anglican clergyman and Wimbledon umpire, received a call of God to establish the Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism. My first involvement with it was arranging Michael's Wellington itinerary, during his first visit to New Zealand in 1974. At that time I was Ecumenical Chaplain at Victoria University, and Bourdeaux's shoestring operation was based at Chislehurst in Kent. Later the Centre moved to a disused Anglican school in the nearby village of Keston, from which it took its name. Keston's first chairman (1969-83), the distinguished Anglican layman, Sir John Law-

rence, while British press attaché in Moscow, had had the distinction of editing *Britansky Soyuznik* (*British Ally*), the only uncensored official publication to be produced in the entire history of the Soviet Union. Through its commitment to objectivity and impartiality, Keston became the world's foremost recipient of smuggled *samizdat* from Soviet dissidents and the source of reliable information on religious conditions in communist countries.

As a result of Michael Bourdeaux's first visit, we decided to set up an official New Zealand branch of the work. We built on initial work done by Archdeacon Kenneth Prebble,[2] vicar of St Paul's Anglican Church, Symonds Street, Auckland, and Gerald Seaman, Professor of Music at Auckland University. We worked hard to make it an incorporated society – the New Zealand Society for the Study of Religion and Communism – and contacted distinguished patrons like Sir John Marshall, the Very Revd Ian Fraser and Dr Barry Gustafson to give it official respectability. Ian Breward, Professor of Church History at the Theological Hall, Knox College, Dunedin, was chairman and I was secretary. Ian was then on the Board of Radio New Zealand and would often stay overnight with us in the chaplaincy house in Kelburn. We would plan committee meetings to coincide with his visits.

In those days there was a strong bias in liberal circles against scrutinising the injustices of left-wing regimes. The 1970s were the high point of communist influence in New Zealand. The Soviet Information Office at the bottom of Kelburn Parade, Wellington – in the building, ironically, which is now the Catholic University Chaplaincy Centre – pumped propaganda material into sympathetic publications like *Salient*, Victoria University's student paper.

I'm not sure how effective that was, for at the time the Victoria University Students' Association was not just Marxist, but Maoist, in ideological alignment. The Maoists used to persecute the Trotskyites – the Moscow-aligned Socialist Unity Party. The 'Trots' in turn were such zealous protagonists for their cause that they would travel once a week to Palmerston North to evangelise the masses at Massey University. In this context, our work, defending religious freedom and representing suffering believers in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, and later Southeast Asia, was a minority cause, but a just one.

One visit that caused a lot of controversy was that of George Patterson in 1975. Patterson had been an intrepid Brethren missionary in Western China and Tibet. He had escaped across the terrifying gorges of remote southwest China into India after the Chinese takeover of Tibet – a tale told in his gripping book *Tibetan Journey*. Then he lived among Tibetan refugees in Kalimpong, North India – which had the reputation, in the '50s and '60s, of being a 'nest of spies'. Patterson was a brilliant radio and television journalist and defender of the cause of Tibetan independence long before the Dalai Lama became the darling of New Age Westerners. I was attacked for hosting him by Professor Keith Buchanan, the Maoist Professor of Geography at Victo-

ria University, who refused to debate or even to meet with Patterson. 'I wouldn't sup with the devil on the end of a long spoon,' was his reply to my invitation.

Patterson was a loose cannon, whom I later discovered Keston found a bit of an embarrassment. During his New Zealand tour, he extolled Chinese Chairman Mao Tse-tung as 'the left hand of God!' But he was quite a hit with the student radicals, particularly when we discovered that guitarist Eric Clapton of the rock group 'Cream' was actually living in the Patterson household. He was being assisted off drugs in an innovative new micro-electric therapy developed by George's doctor wife Meg. The visit gave Keston some good publicity and I do not think it damaged their reputation as much as they feared.

Peter Reddaway's visit in 1977 was an outstanding success. The Soviet Embassy was then in Messines Road, Karori. Its high walls had been twice raised, with each successive crisis in Soviet relations with the West: the suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 and the clampdown on the Prague Spring in 1968. In those days the staff of the embassy numbered between 50 and 60 – far more than required by the Soviet Union's legitimate interests in New Zealand. I suspected that the Wellington embassy was the centre of their South Pacific operations. I remember taking Reddaway to visit the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I never knew what was the purpose of his mission, but realised that he was giving briefings of first importance for our security and international relations.

Reddaway was a political scientist from the London School of Economics, where he reckoned at the time there were more Marxists than in the whole of Moscow.[3] His mentor and colleague was the Jewish scholar, Professor Leonard Schapiro, a man deeply troubled by the West's illusions about the Soviet Union, and a world authority on Lenin and on the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Reddaway himself was an expert on Soviet dissent. He was the leading western scholar of the Human Rights Movement in the Soviet Union, and an academic activist instrumental in getting Amnesty International to take up the cause of political prisoners in the Soviet Union. He regarded the Russian *samizdat* publication, *The Chronicle of Current Events*, as the most sustained and heroic feat of journalism in the 20th century. He considered its record of accuracy and regular publishing schedule remarkable in view of the hostile closed society within which its collators worked. Together with Australian psychiatrist Sidney Bloch, Reddaway authored a major book on the abuse of psychiatry to punish dissenters in the Soviet Union. It finally persuaded the World Psychiatric Association to abandon its fence-sitting attitude and in 1977 to condemn Soviet psychiatry.

My Chaplaincy Board gave me a study leave at the end of my university chaplaincy, which I used to compile the book *Religion in Communist Countries: a Bibliography of Books in English*. This was published by our society in 1979, the year of my move to Christchurch. John Roxborogh, the new minister of

Kelburn Presbyterian Church, replaced me as secretary. After Ian Breward's move to Ormond College, Melbourne in 1981, Watson Roseveare became chairman.

Parish work prevented my previous level of involvement in the work of Keston, though I did lobby in the 1980s for Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union.

Rob Yule with his wife Christene

During those years my wife, Christene, distributed Keston's prisoner lists to prayer groups and churches. She wrote to quite a number of Christian prisoners in Soviet camps, including youth activist Alexander Ogorodnikov, poet Irina Ratushinskaya, and Baptist pastor Nikolai Baturin. Most were returned by the cynical Soviet authorities '*retour parti*', but from Baturin she received a rare reply of appreciation.

In June 1986, around the time of Gorbachev's rise in the Soviet Union, Ray Oppenheim took over the chairmanship of Keston New Zealand. He brought his wide knowledge and formidable energy to the role. Ray had met and become a lifelong friend of Michael Bourdeaux during his time as Chaplain to the American Embassy in Moscow in the early '70s. Ray had also lost his first wife, Winifred, in a car accident near Novgorod that had all the hallmarks of a KGB assassination; an army lorry ran into their car. He immigrated to New Zealand in 1975 and became vicar of St Mary's, Timaru. I got to know him during his years at Avonside in Christchurch, in the course of which Michael Bourdeaux made a return visit to New Zealand, with his second wife Lorna.

I will never forget a memorable evening in 1981 at Ray's vicarage at Holy Trinity, Avonside. He and Professor Dmitry Grigorieff, Professor of Russian at Georgetown University, Washington DC, were discussing a unique KGB report to the Soviet Union's Council for Religious Affairs, which had just been smuggled to Keston College. It classified the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church according to their usefulness to the regime. Both knew many of the bishops and archbishops personally. They could assess the appropriateness or otherwise of the Soviet secret police's assessment of the ecclesiastics' character, integrity, or pliability. Here was hard evidence – often denied by western church leaders at the time – of the Russian church's active co-option by the Soviet state.

No account of Soviet affairs during those difficult years would be complete without a Russian joke. This one was told to me by Bishop Andrei Bolckei, of the

Reformed Church in Debrecen, Hungary, whom I met in England in 1999. A western reporter was interviewing an elderly Ruthenian man:

'How many countries have you lived in during your life?' he asked.
'Eight,' was the reply.
'You must be well-travelled,' said the reporter.
'No,' the man replied. 'I've never moved in my entire life.'
'How come?' said the journalist.
'I was born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire before the First World War,' said the man.
'I lived in Czechoslovakia between the wars. During the Second World War I was overrun by Hitler's Germany and then by Stalin's Soviet Union. After the War, I lived in Hungary, till I was absorbed into the Soviet Union again. When communism collapsed I was for a short time in Russia. Now I am a citizen of Ukraine.'

In peaceful New Zealand, we have little inkling about what it must have been like to live in a region where the conflicting armies of the 20th century's worst totalitarian regimes swept back and forth.[4]

The fall of communism, with hardly a shot being fired, was an event of biblical proportions. Bishop Bolckei spoke of it as a 'miracle'. In its sheer unexpectedness, he compared it to Peter's release from prison, described in Acts 12:1-19. 'We prayed for it, we hoped for it, but no one expected it to happen. Suspect those,' he added, 'who with the benefit of hindsight now say that they did predict or expect it.' Even the churches of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union themselves were unprepared for such an eventuality. That is why they responded so hesitantly, despite the fact that there was, to begin with, an almost 'mystical' expectation of what the church could contribute in the post-communist environment.[5]

While working for believers under communism it never entered my mind that I might someday meet some of them myself. This happened, through a circumstance as remarkable as Michael Bourdeaux's. In 1991 I attended a consultation in Budapest of the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelisation, on the evangelisation of the post-Marxist countries. Afterwards, I arranged to meet a friend from my time of postgraduate study in Edinburgh in 1970, Pavel Smetana, who had become Moderator of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren after the fall of communism.

But when I got off the plane at Ruzyně Airport in Prague, my friend was not there to meet me. After several hours, sending up arrow prayers, I noticed two young men who looked like foreigners. I sidled over to eavesdrop and heard American accents. Introducing myself, I found they were itinerant evangelists. Converts of the Jesus Movement on the west coast of the United States, they were seeing the same remarkable conversions on the town squares of Central Europe as they had 20 years earlier on the beaches of California! They took me in for the weekend and later invited me back in 1992 and 1996 to teach in their new Bible School in the Czech Republic.

I became very fond of those Czech students, first fruits of the post-communist era.

At our wind-up meeting, our Argentinian secretary Domingo Barón, who worked with an international computer company in Moscow in the early '70s, summed up Keston's importance with a quote from the Polish Jewess Rosa Luxemburg. Dissenting from Lenin's authoritarianism, she said: *Freiheit ist immer Freiheit der Andersdenkenden*, 'Freedom is always freedom for those who think differently.'

It has been a privilege to defend religious freedom, and the freedom of people who thought differently, for freedom is indivisible.

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1. Jenny Robertson, *Be Our Voice: The Story of Michael Bourdeaux and Keston College* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984), pp.23-28.
2. See extracts from Kenneth Prebble's memoirs, *My Brush with Communism,* in *Keston Newsletter* No 6, 2008, pp.12-16.
3. From 1989 till his retirement in 2004 Reddaway was Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at George Washington University, Washington DC. When still in the UK before moving to the US he was a member of Keston's Council of Management.
4. Timothy Snyder calls this region 'the Bloodlands', the area between Poland and Western Russia and between the Baltic and Black Seas, where 14 million people were murdered through policies unrelated to combat in the 12 years between 1933 and 1945, while Hitler and Stalin were in power (*Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, New York: Basic Books, 2010). After the War, the Bloodlands fell behind the Iron Curtain. It is only since the fall of communism that their dark history can be investigated and told.
5. Just how unbelievable the situation was in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of communism can be seen in award-winning journalist Philip Yancey's book, *Praying with the KGB: A Startling Report from a Shattered Empire* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1992). Yancey was part of an improbable delegation of broadcasters, educators, Russian specialists and mission executives which met with Gorbachev, the Supreme Soviet, *Pravda*, the KGB, and the Soviet Academy of Social Sciences in late-October 1991, a month-and-a-half after my own extraordinary meeting in Budapest.

Rob Yule *is a retired New Zealand Presbyterian minister who was Chaplain at Victoria University of Wellington in the 1970s, a leader in charismatic renewal, and pastored churches in Hornby, Christchurch, St Albans, Palmerston North, and Greyfriars, Mt Eden, Auckland. In 2000-2002 he was Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. He lectured in the former Manawatu Branch of the Bible College of New Zealand and on mission trips to the Czech Republic.*

Religious Freedom for Ukraine
Lecture at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv

by Michael Bourdeaux

Michael Bourdeaux in Lviv, October 2016

My experience in Ukraine was a central motivation in the establishment of Keston College. At the conclusion of my year as an *aspirant* at Moscow University, the Soviet authorities arranged a propaganda trip for us students to show us the best of their country. Kyiv, in June 1960, was the first stop on our itinerary where we visited the Pecherskaya Lavra. This was a devastating experience – not because of the physical so much as the spiritual devastation. I had found out, through living for a year in Moscow, that Nikita Khrushchev had begun a new campaign against religion and I read about it in the Soviet journal *Nauka i religia* (Science and Religion). Now, though, it was in the Lavra that this became a reality. The monk who showed us round could not directly inform us of the plans of the atheists, but his look said it all. I have never seen greater sadness etched on the face of a man, as he recounted the supposedly joyful news that this was where the Christianisation of Rus' began nearly a thousand years earlier. We did not know it then, of course, but I later discovered that we were probably the last foreign visitors to the Lavra before its imminent enforced closure and the dispersal of the monks.

Exactly 28 years later, June 1988, my wife and I stood on the same spot. This time we were told the joyful news: the Lavra had re-opened and the years of atheism were over. We were visiting Moscow – and then Kyiv – for the Millennium celebrations of the Baptism of Rus'. But that is the end of my story. This lecture recounts what happened in between.

It wasn't easy, the start of our work, but eventually my first book, *Opium of the People*, appeared in London in 1965 from the fine publishing house of Faber

and Faber. I mention this because this helped to attract some favourable reviews, as a result of which I was slowly able to assemble a small team and we began our collective research in a modest way – but soon the BBC, the British press and eventually the world began to take notice, based on the reliability of the facts we presented.

Along the way, Ukraine exerted its influence on us. An early example, a story which became well known around the world, was my encounter with two *babushki* from Pochaev in Ukraine, where the monastery was under imminent threat of closure. The atheist authorities were brutally dispersing the monks and throwing some of them into psychiatric hospitals. The mother of one of them, with a friend, wrote an account of the persecution, brought it to Moscow, met a French schoolteacher on holiday there and so the document reached Paris – and eventually me in London. A few weeks later I was able to return to Moscow, went to the site of a church which had just been demolished two weeks earlier – and – amazingly – I encountered these same two women, also come to see the latest devastation. 'Come with us,' they said. Amid a scene of unbelievable tension, they told me that they had brought an updated account of the Pochaev persecution – would I take it back to England? With trepidation I agreed – and later was not searched on leaving the airport. 'Beyond this, what can I do?' I asked them. 'Be our voice and speak for us,' they replied.

Already before this, in 1962, while I was serving as a young priest in an Anglican parish in North London, I began to be more aware of the general Khrushchev persecution of religion, especially of the Baptists and Evangelicals, on whose behalf we would, in few years time, spearhead an international campaign. I began to receive documents from the *Initsiativniki* Baptists. Again Ukraine was centrally involved. Pastor Georgi Vins was born and raised in Kyiv and it was in Ukraine that the strongest group of Protestants lived, worked – and unsuccessfully tried to worship without state interference. Pastor Vins, an electrician by profession, became their most vocal spokesman. He put his case for freedom from state interference with great vigour and claimed he was following Leninist principles of the separation of church and state. For his outstanding bravery and capacity for setting up a Soviet-Union-wide organisation, he was imprisoned.

In November 1966 Pastor Vins' trial began in Moscow. The two accused, Vins and another Baptist pastor Kryuchkov, had been denied proper access to defence lawyers and had been held incommunicado in prison until the opening of the trial. Only KGB collaborators were allowed access to the courtroom (though there were a few Baptist infiltrators, one of whom made the transcript notes). The trial lasted two days, on the first of which Pastor Vins was held in the dock giving his testimony until midnight. Then the accused were sent back to prison, deprived of sleep, and at 5am they were returned absurdly early to the courtroom. The two exhausted prisoners received their sentences at 1am – the conclusion of the second day, during which they had been mentally

tortured for some 15 hours, virtually without a break. The 'guilty' verdict resulted in the sentence of the two prisoners to three years in 'special regime' camps.

Meanwhile Keston College was developing its work and, as well as books, was publishing a stream of reports from all over the communist world in its journal, *Religion in Communist Lands* and in the *Keston News Service*. This, in its turn, stimulated the persecuted to assemble more information and send it, by whatever means, to Keston. The friends and family of Pastor Vins established contact with us. Somehow he secreted a memoir, clandestinely written, from prison to his wife, Nadezhda, in Kyiv and eventually we received it in London. Jane Ellis, a senior member of our staff, translated this and published it under the title, *Three Generations of Suffering.* Sir John Lawrence, our wise and influential chairman, decided that we should not ourselves profit from the moving literary work of Pastor Vins, however fragmentary it was. We took the decision – astonishing though it seems in retrospect – to go to Kyiv to consult with Nadezhda to discuss establishing a financial fund for her husband, which would be available to the family when it became possible.

We had no realistic prospect, I thought, of realising our aim. Somehow, my Soviet visa, long denied because of the publication of *Opium of the People*, was restored in 1975 for a short trip to Moscow with Gillian, my first wife. So Sir John Lawrence and I applied for a visa for a similar short trip two years later to visit Moscow and continue to Kyiv. To our astonishment, on 6 March 1977, with the address of Nadezhda Vins concealed in a private place, we set off with little prospect, as we thought, of achieving our goal. In Kyiv we expected obstruction from the KGB. None came as we drove off in a taxi and found Nadezhda Vins at home. Georgi was by this time serving his second term of imprisonment. To the astonishment of his wife, we told her about her husband's manuscript, our translation and publication of it and the proposal for a financial fund from the royalties. She agreed to this – mission rapidly accomplished. What would we like to do next, she asked. There was a meeting at the Baptist church which her husband had founded. Would we like to go there? Of course we said yes, were soon in another taxi with Nadezhda, and then in a sort of nondescript office building. So this was the so-called 'underground' church, openly meeting for prayer. The welcome was something neither of us would ever forget. We stayed and talked for a long time. 'Would you like to see the real underground church?' one of them asked. Of course we said yes and to our astonishment we were led through a kind of trapdoor into a room below ground. There an astonishing sight met our eyes: a circle of teenage children, intensely gathered round a single Bible, being instructed by a teacher. The welcome was even more overwhelming than what we had experienced in the room above and we were invited to talk of our faith to the young people. As we left, we asked whether we should stay silent about what we had just experienced. 'Tell the world, we are not afraid,' came back the response. So we did.

The culmination of this story came on 28 April 1979. I was deep asleep at home when the phone rang in the middle of the night. 'This is the State Department, Washington DC, calling. We require you to come to New York immediately to help us debrief Pastor Georgi Vins. The Soviet authorities have just released him, with a group of other prisoners, following our negotiations and he's now in mid-Atlantic on his way to us.' Having done a double take and demanded some sort of verification that this was not a hoax, I got up and presented myself at the airport for an immediate flight to New York, where at the UN Plaza Hotel I first set my eyes on a disorientated Pastor Vins. I tried to help calm him – he had not wanted to leave the Soviet Union, nor had he been consulted – but here he was, bereft, for the time being, of his family and fellow-believers. The next day I accompanied him to Washington DC and prepared him to meet President Jimmy Carter. From Soviet gaol to the President's office in 48 hours! President Carter remembered the episode when I met him in Oxford about three years ago. Keston had presented the documentation on the case to the State Department, but had no prior knowledge of the group exchange (seven activists for four Soviet spies!) and would have advised that Pastor Vins should have been returned to his family, had we been consulted. They later joined him in America.

As well as collecting information about the Baptists, Keston also followed the fate of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church which owed its allegiance to the Vatican, but followed the Eastern Rite and carried the banner of Ukrainian nationalism in the 20th century. After the war Stalin had forcibly amalgamated this church with the Moscow Patriarchate: on 10 March 1946 the so-called Synod of Lviv was forced at gunpoint to 'vote' to abolish its church and hand over all property to the Moscow Patriarchate.

I was first made aware of the full extent of Stalin's annihilation of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church by a Ukrainian scholar, Professor Bohdan Bociurkiw, of Carleton University, Ottawa, when he came to the London School of Economics for a sabbatical year in the early 1970s. He was the fount of all knowledge about this church, the world's most respected scholar at liberty to tell the story. Thus Keston learned that the Ukrainian Greek Catholics were experiencing a strong underground revival which would shortly become 'above ground', as news of street demonstrations and liturgies celebrated in the open air began to reach us.

Thanks to Professor Bociurkiw I was invited to give some lectures in Canada. My basic message was simple. By now I had enough information to speak not only about the persecution of religion in Ukraine, but also its revival, under the harshest conditions, among Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants. By this time, too, I had been to Rome and met Cardinal Josyf Slipyj (he had become head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in November 1944). In 1945 he had been arrested and had remained imprisoned in the USSR until Khrushchev released him to the Vatican in January 1963. Here was an old man with sainthood and suffering in equal measure marked on every

line of his face. I was deeply moved by his humility and forbearance – and willingness to give time to a young man from England whom he did not know. Pope John Paul II would echo his words of encouragement a decade later when he told me to 'continue your verk' in his inimitable Polish accent.

Robert Conquest's great book *Harvest of Sorrow* about the Ukrainian famine (1932-33), was published in 1986, the year after Gorbachev's accession, and made a great impression in the West. Gradually the public was becoming aware that Moscow's oppression of Ukraine was leading to calls for independence. But it was not the events of a distant famine in the 1930s which made the greatest impression. It was something immediate and actual: the consequences of the wrong Stalin imposed on Ukraine with the suppression of the Greek Catholic Church. Amidst the chaos in Europe at the end of the war, news of the so-called Synod of Lviv in 1946 barely rated a news paragraph in the West. The Moscow Patriarchate, as it developed its contacts in the West, firmly claimed – as it does to this day – that this was a legitimate return by Ukrainian schismatics to their mother church of Russian Orthodoxy. Not a single Greek Catholic church building nor any of its institutions remained open. Those who resisted were all imprisoned; many did not survive.

In 1974, at a time when even the Vatican was silent about the rights of the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine, we received information about Fr Pavlo Vasylyk. In prison he had been secretly ordained by a bishop with whom he shared a cell; then later he was consecrated as bishop there and was now ordaining new clergy, forming a whole incarcerated unit of the underground church.

Already, before this, the Ukrainian nationalist movement was beginning to raise its head publicly above the parapet. In 1968 human rights movements began to emerge in various parts of the Soviet Union. The first sign that Ukrainians would be increasingly involved came in the same year, when 139 intellectuals signed a letter addressed to the Kremlin stating that their rights to freedom of speech were being systematically violated. The response was clear: the Ukrainian Communist Party leader, Petro Shelest, who was showing some inclination towards moderation, was removed in 1972 and replaced by the formidable Volodymir Shcherbitsky, who significantly retained power until September 1989 and introduced a new round of repression. Then emerged the heroic figure of Iosyp Terelya, a layman who openly proclaimed his allegiance to the Greek Catholic Church.

In 1969 Terelya was sentenced to seven years in prison for 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda', but after three years was transferred to the Serbsky Institute of Forensic Psychiatry in Moscow and spent the rest of his term in a psychiatric hospital. After a further arrest he co-founded (with Fr Hryhori Budzinsky and three others) the Action Group for the Defence of Believers' Rights, the aim of which was to secure the re-legalisation of the church. In February 1985 he was arrested yet again and sentenced to 12 years, but received an amnesty two years later, as a

result of Gorbachev's new policies. After this he emigrated to Canada where he died, having spent 20 years of his 65 years in labour camps and psychiatric hospitals.

After Terelya's emigration, Ivan Hel, a layman who had spent 17 years of his life in prison, took over the leadership of the Action Group. I had the privilege of meeting him in 1988 and, when he died in 2011, *The Guardian* invited me to write his obituary. He lived to see the restoration of legality to the Greek Catholic Church, but at the time he assumed leadership of the campaign there was still a long way to go.

Rukh (meaning simply 'movement', and exactly parallel to the Catholic movement for freedom in Lithuanian, *Sajudis*) played out most of its drama on the streets, not least in this great city of Lviv. *Solidarnost* was also fully active in neighbouring Poland. The Catholic Church, both Latin and Eastern Rite, was beginning to undermine the very legitimacy of communist domination – and at last the world was beginning to take notice. Such leadership of Ukrainian religious institutions as there was resided firmly in the hands of the Russian Orthodox Church, which, through the events of 1946, had acquired a huge number of churches and their associated properties.

It was time for the suppressed Ukrainian hierarchy to emerge from the underground. In August 1987 Bishops Ivan Semedi of Transcarpathia and Pavlo Vasylyk (now at last free from prison) announced their emergence from the underground and stated that they would from now on act openly as bishops of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. A month later a Synod of Ukrainian Catholic bishops (in exile) convened in Rome and announced that the head of the Church was now Bishop (later Metropolitan) Volodymyr Sterniuk, 80 years old and living modestly in Lviv, having been secretly consecrated 11 years earlier. Seven more bishops, it was further stated, were now living in secret. These two dramatic events, following so swiftly one after the other, changed the face of the struggle, but there was still a long way to go before the re-establishment of legality. Public processions and open-air masses now became weekly events in many places, still accompanied by police harassment, fines and short-term detention for the ringleaders, at a time when most other believers in the USSR were beginning for the first time to experience freedom.

Soon after this, in June 1988, I became personally involved in a way that was totally unexpected. Arriving in Moscow as leader of a group coming to celebrate the Millennium of the Russian Orthodox Church, I met up with my Moscow contacts. One of them, the doughty campaigner for religious liberty, Aleksandr Ogorodnikov, invited me to accompany him to a secret meeting. I quote what happened next from the opening paragraph of my obituary of Iven Hel:

> 'The door of the drab Moscow apartment opened suddenly to reveal a blaze of colour inside. The room was full of bishops of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, crammed into a small space, and every one dressed in full regalia. It

would have been an amazing sight under any circumstances, but here in 1988 every cleric was "illegal", representing a church which had been suppressed by Stalin 40 years earlier. The only layman in the room was Ivan Hel.'

This was a moment I shall never forget – I can picture these wonderful people in my mind's eye even today. But there was more. After being introduced, Bishop Sterniuk asked me whether I was in touch with the official Vatican delegation. I said no, but that I might be able to contact them. They gave me a verbal mission. Go to the head of the delegation and tell him what you have seen in this room. Say that we warmly invite him to come and meet us. We want to discuss our situation with him. I was able to pass on the message and the two delegations did meet. This was a significant stage when the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church proved to the Vatican that it was now openly operative.

The stage was set for the dénouement. According to one report, 200,000 demonstrators and worshippers turned out on the streets of Lviv on a cold Sunday in November 1989. A western observer reported to Keston College the scenes in Lviv as follows:

'Every evening there is an open-air Greek Catholic service in Lviv, usually outside the closed Carmelite church… The esplanade down Lenin Prospect has become a permanent centre of unofficial political gatherings and discussions, where the (theoretically illegal) Ukrainian national flags are always flying.'

Mikhail Gorbachev travelled to Rome to meet Pope John Paul II on 26 November 1989 and his 'gift' was the re-legalisation of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Over 40 years of one of the gravest injustices in the history of the church had been rectified. In fact, this reversal had already taken place, because two days earlier Ukrainian TV had already announced that Greek Catholic parishes were now free to register. This was the fulfilment of something long-expected.

I wish to end by simply stating that, to observe – and even occasionally to participate in – the winning of religious liberty for Ukraine has been an inspiration in my life and I am grateful that Keston College was able to record it.

Keston Institute
PO Box 712, York YO1 0GX
administrator@keston.org.uk www.keston.org.uk
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