Keston Newsletter

No. 34, 2021

Michael Bourdeaux

In Memoriam

Michael Bourdeaux, the founder and President of Keston Institute, died on 29th March 2021 at the age of 87. He was born on 19th March 1934 in Praze, Cornwall, the son of Lilian (née Blair), a primary school teacher, and Richard Bourdeaux, a baker, who, Michael claimed, produced the best Cornish pasties in the county. He attended Truro school, and after National Service studied modern languages at St Edmund Hall, Oxford, followed by two years at Wycliffe Hall where he studied theology. He was ordained an Anglican priest in 1961. His first wife Gillian (née Davies), whom he married in 1960, died in 1978. He is survived by his second wife, Lorna (née Waterton), whom he married in 1979, his four children and four grandsons.

During his National Service he was sent on a Russian interpreters' course in Coulsdon, Surrey, which triggered in him a life-long interest in Russian culture and history. In 1959 he spent a year at Moscow University as part of the first student exchange programme, organised by the British Council. That year saw the start of an intense anti-religious campaign, promoted by Nikita Khrushchev. Michael thus witnessed first-hand the closing of churches and the oppressive discrimination against religious believers. On his return to England, he decided to make the study of religion in the USSR the focus of his life. In 1964, on a brief visit to Moscow, he met some Russian Orthodox Christians, who asked him to help believers who were being persecuted. He was determined to help them, and so eventually in 1969, with the help of Sir John Lawrence, a former British press attaché in the USSR during WWII, and two academics at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Professor Leonard Schapiro and Professor Peter Reddaway, he founded Keston.

A Tribute

by Dr Wallace Daniel

The legacy of Canon Michael Bourdeaux is enormous. The study of religious faith and practice in the former Soviet Union, and in Russia today, has witnessed a large number of outstanding specialists, and Canon Bourdeaux was among the most influential. Since the late 1950s to the present, he was a "voice for the voiceless," a spokesperson for the dispossessed, the persecuted, and a champion of freedom of conscience in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. His recently published *One Word of Truth: The Cold War Memoir of Michael Bourdeaux and Keston College* chronicles his long journey through some of the most difficult years of the last century, a deeply moving, personal account of his efforts to tell the stories of individuals who sought to live lives of integrity in the most challenging circumstances. Written with passion, Michael Bourdeaux's account tells of his interest in Russian history and culture. But it is also much more than a personal narrative; it takes readers behind the scenes of debates over policy and the interpretation of the former Soviet Union.

Michael Bourdeaux was the creator of the Keston archive, formerly housed in Oxford and now located at Baylor University. An unparalleled resource for the study of religion, state, and society, the archive holds the memories of courageous individuals and groups who, at great cost to themselves and their families, fought for religious freedom and human rights. Their voices remain an essential part of the mosaic of Russia's national story, voices that without the work of Michael Bourdeaux would be lost to view and, with them, a large element of the history of the past century. A sizeable number of scholars have built on the foundation he constructed. As the history of religion and politics in Russia and Eastern Europe is rewritten, the archive will continue to provide an invaluable source of primary materials. To his lifelong effort to collect and preserve these materials, we owe a large debt of gratitude.

Michael Bourdeaux was a wonderful colleague and mentor. He gave generously of his time, serving as a willing reader of manuscripts, a strong critic of style and content, and a trustworthy appraiser of the works of other scholars. He was also a family man, devoted to his wife Lorna, their children, and grandchildren. He delighted in each of them and considered each to be a treasure, a special gift from God. He was a humble person, a lover of song, as well as the natural world, and a faithful man of the church. A son of England, his contributions to humankind were universal.

Dr Wallace Daniel *is currently a Distinguished University Professor at Mercer University, Georgia, USA. From 1971-2008 he was History Professor and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Baylor University.*

From the Editor

The 2021 Keston AGM will be held on Saturday 6th November at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine in Limehouse, London E14. For those members who are unable to travel, we plan to enable on-line participation, and in due course will send you the required link. Our speaker will be Dr Wallace Daniel, whose tribute to Michael Bourdeaux is printed opposite this page. His subject at the AGM will be the legacy of Fr Gleb Yakunin, about whom he is writing a book. After this talk, at 3.30pm, there will be a short service in the chapel in memory of Michael Bourdeaux.

In addition to Dr Daniel's tribute, I have included in this issue two articles which acknowledge the importance of Michael Bourdeaux's life and work: one is by Professor Mark Elliott (p.4), former editor of *East West Church Report,* and the other by the Anglican priest, Fr Hugh Wybrew (p.9).

One positive aspect of the situation created by the Covid-19 pandemic has been that the Director of the Keston Center at Baylor, Professor Kathy Hillman, has been able to attend all Keston Council of Management meetings, which have been held virtually. The report which she presented to the July Council meeting can be found on p.14.

The Encyclopaedia project has continued, despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The field trips planned for 2020 had to be cancelled, but in March this year my colleagues on the team were able to complete one final field trip to St Petersburg, the subject of the latest volume of the project. This volume will soon be published. As a result of this research, Sergei Filatov, the leader of the Encyclopaedia team, has written an article about Buddhism in St Petersburg, which is printed on pp.23-37.

Two people, who are a source of inspiration for us today because of the extraordinary courage they showed during the Soviet period, are the subject of the two final articles in this issue (see p.38 and p.42). Sandr Riga, whom I met when I was working as Keston's Moscow representative in the early 1990s, was imprisoned in a Soviet mental hospital in 1984 after founding an ecumenical fellowship in 1971. He survived forcible drug treatment which caused him great suffering. The Russian Orthodox priest Fr Pavel Adelheim is the subject of the final article: he was imprisoned in 1969-1973, and was described by Michael Bourdeaux as "one of the most remarkable Russian Orthodox priests of his generation". He was tragically murdered in 2013.

Xenia Dennen

Also in this issue:

A North American Tribute to Michael Bourdeaux

by Mark R. Elliott

Early in April I submitted for publication "In Lieu of a Review: Reminiscences on Reading *One Word of Truth: The Cold War Memoir of Michael Bourdeaux and Keston College*." The next day I was saddened to learn that Michael had passed from this earth on 29th March. I deeply regretted that I had not finished my article in time for Michael to read it, because I had defended in the strongest terms his career championing hard-pressed believers in the East. I wanted him to know how much I valued his efforts, and those of his Keston College colleagues. Alas, it was not to be, but at least I could and did share with his dear wife and co-labourer, Lorna, my esteem for their common efforts. My following tribute to the memory of Michael Bourdeaux is drawn, with permission, from "In Lieu of a Review," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 41 (No. 3, 2021, pp. 49-70).

Michael Bourdeaux speaking at Keston's 2009 AGM

I first met Michael Bourdeaux in October 1983, at the beginning of one month of research at Keston College. The back story to what gave occasion for our first meeting dates back a decade, to 1974, the year I completed my PhD at the University of Kentucky, and the year my wife, Darlene, and I made our first trip to the Soviet Union.

As people of faith, Darlene and I took advantage of our two weekends in the Soviet Union to worship with fellow believers in Moscow and Kyiv. In sharp contrast to our worship in two living churches was our visit to Leningrad's Kazan Cathedral, converted for use as the Soviet Union's premier anti-religious temple: the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism. As a student of history and as a practicing believer, I was curious to observe first-hand the Soviet take on the subject. The hostility to religious belief was on full display, with exhibitions focused exclusively on negative chapters in church history. In *One Word of Truth* (*OWT*), Michael Bourdeaux relates a similar reaction when he observed firsthand the desecration of this same house of worship

(*OWT,* pp.64-65; p.273). In time, I would write an article on this museum for Keston's journal, *Religion in Communist Lands*.[1]

Professionally, I came back from the Soviet Union a different person. I vowed, given time, to change course from a research focus on Soviet military and diplomatic history to one devoted to Russian church history, and current conditions facing people of faith in the USSR.

When a sabbatical was forthcoming from my employer, Asbury College, for fall 1983, I was off to England and Keston College to study the scope of Western missions that were rendering aid to Soviet-bloc believers.

Keston's resources for my project were abundant, not least of which was entrée to an unmatched coterie of specialists. That month at Keston gave me occasion to rub shoulders with perhaps the greatest concentration anywhere of scholars and activists keen to publicise the trials and "to be the voice" of Soviet-bloc believers.[2] In addition to Michael Bourdeaux, I made my first acquaintance with Russian Orthodox specialist Philip Walters, editor of Keston's *Religion in Communist Lands* (later, *Religion, State and Society*); Jane Ellis, later author of two outstanding monographs, *The Russian Orthodox Church, A Contemporary History* and *The Russian Orthodox Church: Triumphalism and Defensiveness*; Walter Sawatsky, already author of *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*; Michael Rowe, later author of *Russian Resurrection*; Marite Sapiets, later author of *True Witness: The Story of Seventh-Day Adventists in the Soviet Union*; John Anderson, later author of *Religion, State, and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States*; Ginte Damusis, later an ambassador in the service of an independent Lithuania – an eventuality unimaginable in 1983; Sandy Oestreich, later a missionary for decades in Russia and Armenia; and Malcolm Walker, Keston's indefatigable librarian, at once self-effacing and highly efficient. All of these individuals enriched my understanding and broadened my horizons, for which I am eternally grateful.

Reading *One Word of Truth* brought back a flood of memories of many of the same people, places, and policy debates that have figured prominently in my professional life, parallel to those of Michael Bourdeaux. I do not presume, however, to elevate my own academic and ministry career to the rarefied heights of the recipient of the 1984 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion (*OWT*, pp.163-70). Rather, Michael Bourdeaux and I have shared a common, longstanding, fixed focus upon the struggles of believers in Communist lands. We both have been blessed by the examples of brave souls defending their faith against hostile states. And both of us have had to contend with their detractors, in the West as well as in the East, who have chosen to ignore, minimise, and even malign the stalwart stance of these same brave souls.

Michael Bourdeaux and his researchers-in-residence were, above all else, advocates for unfettered freedom of conscience in Communist states. This positive defense of the right to believe was persistently under assault from a

surprisingly diverse array of forces making light of, or ignoring violations of, religious liberty in the Soviet orbit. Over time the ecumenical movement came to view socialism more favourably than capitalism. This political and economic stance contributed to the employment of what I for years have called selective compassion, which Michael Bourdeaux similarly labeled "selectivity of conscience" (*OWT*, 158). It may be defined as a coupling of a justifiable condemnation of human rights' abuses on the right (in non-Communist, authoritarian regimes) with a shameful downplaying or ignoring of human rights' abuses on the left (in Communist states).[3] Still, Bourdeaux and company have done their best – with limited resources – to be the voice of the voiceless by defending the powerless against Kremlin-inspired falsehoods and half-truths. Keston's sole instrument has been the pen, with which it has documented and publicised violations of freedom of conscience.

One can sympathise to some extent with Soviet church spokesmen under pressure to sing the song of their captors (Psalm 137). After all, those of us in the West should make allowances in light of the fact that we must contemplate how courageous or cowed we might have been under the same circumstances. It is altogether another matter, however, to absolve church folk in the West who knew better when they alleged greater religious liberty in the East than was the case, and when they lauded the superiority of socialism. A member of the British Council of Churches' East-West Relations Advisory Committee, for example, touted "the enormous achievement of socialism" and complained, "There is no real Christian socialist on the [Keston] staff with a genuine appreciation of the problems of Communism and the creative Christian witness in a socialist society." (*OWT*, p.165 & p.104)

Michael Bourdeaux's memoir, just completed before his death, devotes a whole chapter (XIII) to a detailed, penetrating, and sobering critique of the World Council of Churches' ignoble temporising and manoeuvring to put the Soviet-bloc record on freedom of conscience in the best light (*OWT*, pp.171-95). Perhaps no example of WCC malpractice better illustrates its political partiality than its Programme to Combat Racism, established in 1963. Bourdeaux noted how this initiative turned a blind eye to the "continuing colonialism of the Soviet Union in its subjugation of the conquered nations of the Soviet bloc… at a time when colonial rule in Africa had mainly ended." (*OWT*, pp.182-83)

Special mention should be made of Michael Bourdeaux's contribution to the highly regarded 1974 study, *Discretion and Valour: Religious Conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe*. He was intimately involved in both the initiation of this British Council of Churches project, and in the preparation of its chapter on the Soviet Union, which amounted to more than a third of the volume's 348 pages.

In committee work it was suggested that the title read, "Discretion *or* Valour," but in the end the consensus favoured "Discretion *and* Valour." This title summed up the volume's succinct, three-word thesis, referring to the survival of

Christians under Soviet siege by means of discretion (finesse in negotiations) *and* valour (the courage to take a public stance against oppression), not one or the other alone. This critical point is also arguably a key to understanding Michael Bourdeaux's long career championing freedom of conscience for those living in Communist states. As Michael put it:

> "The title [*Discretion and Valour*] for my way of thinking exactly expressed the bi-polar path which the churches of Eastern Europe could follow: some moving forward in a process of tortuous negotiation with an atheist regime (Catholics in Poland), others treading the path of suffering (unregistered Baptists in the Soviet Union)." (*OWT,* p.186)

The trouble was that most Western ecumenists were to the left of Keston in favouring discretion exclusively (quiet diplomacy), while others to the right of Keston, such as two particularly problematic East European missions, Joe Bass's "Underground Evangelism" and Richard Wurmbrand's "Jesus to the Communist World", practiced combative, public protest that too often conflated the cause of religious liberty and politically charged anti-Communism (*OWT,* pp.103-04). Michael Bourdeaux has frequently been accused of being in the latter camp, which I would argue is a misreading of his motives and actions. Keston's founder deserves to be heard directly on this critical issue:

> "[My] policy, which I would practice for all my working life [was that] quiet diplomacy in relations with the Russian Church or the Government could never replace responsible publicity as an effective tool for highlighting cruelty, deception and oppression, though the two approaches should go forward hand in hand." (*OWT*, p.88)

Perhaps no case of the persecution of believers better illustrates the efficacy of public protest than the Soviet assault on the Pochaev Monastery in Western Ukraine. Employing *samizdat* and his own firsthand, providential interviews with eyewitnesses, Bourdeaux publicised myriad state measures against defenseless Orthodox monks and pilgrims to good effect:

> "There were consequences. Perhaps the most important was that the Soviets never did succeed in closing down the Pochaev Monastery. World opinion had been alerted, and it seemed that now the Soviets wanted to hold back from such a scandalous act against one of the most influential monasteries of the Russian Orthodox Church ." (*OWT,* p.88)

In conclusion, I would like to share an account of my call to service in defense of Soviet bloc believers, a call in which Michael Bourdeaux unknowingly played a part. (I do not believe I ever shared this account with Michael, not even on occasions when we stayed in each other's homes.) In 1985, in connection with my research on East European missions, Peter and Anita Deyneka generously gave me overnight accommodation and access to the wonderful library then housed in their Slavic Gospel Association (SGA)

headquarters in Wheaton, Illinois. One volume I found there, which I had missed in 1983 during my sabbatical at Keston, was Michael Bourdeaux's *Risen Indeed; Lessons in Faith from the USSR*. In this brief volume I read of the author's wrestling with a decision to move from the security of Anglican parish appointments to some as-yet-undefined career championing the cause of religious liberty behind the Iron Curtain:

> "I had been happy in my first three years as a curate and by now had a wife and infant daughter for whom I had to plan also. In the fourth year the horizons of the parish seemed to become constricting. Those cherished words of Milton came insistently into my mind: 'And that one talent which is death to hide, Lodged with me useless'."[4]

These words, read at night in a SGA apartment above its headquarters, struck me like a bolt of lightning. Similarly, I was in a secure, tenured position at Asbury College, an academic institution with which I held – and still hold – close and valued spiritual, family, and professional ties. Yet I too, like Bourdeaux before me, felt an ill-defined yearning to find some way to employ more directly my academic preparations in Russian studies in service to much-abused believers in the East. The providential consequence for me was that the Deynekas suggested my name to Dr James Kraakevik, director of Wheaton College's Billy Graham Center (BGC), who was searching for an academic to head a new BGC programme focused on Christianity in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. I was offered and accepted the position in July 1986. As a result, for what I believe was a God-given opportunity, I owe thanks to Michael Bourdeaux's *Risen Indeed* and his reflection on John Milton's Sonnet 19.

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1. "Leningrad's Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism," *Religion in Communist Lands,* Vol.11, No. 2 (Summer 1993), pp.125-29.
2. See Jenny Robertson, *Be Our Voice: The Story of Michael Bourdeaux and Keston College* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984).
3. See William Fletcher, *Religion and Soviet Foreign Policy, 1945-1970* (London: OUP, 1973); Hans Hebly, *The Russians and the World Council of Churches* (Belfast: Christian Journals, 1928) and *Eastbound Ecumenism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986); and Kent R. Hill, *The Soviet Union on the Brink; An Inside Look at Christianity and Glasnost* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1991), especially pp.129-65.
4. Michael Bourdeaux, *Risen Indeed*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), p.4; John Milton, Sonnet 19, "When I Consider How My Light Is Spent".

***Mark R. Elliott**, a retired professor of history, is the author of* Pawns of Yalta; Soviet Refugees and America's Role in Their Repatriation (1982); Greenhouse Gardening for the Purpose of Self-Sustaining Ministry in the Former Soviet Union (2018); *and* The Arduous Path of Post-Soviet Protestant Theological Education (2020). *He also served as editor of the* East-West Church and Ministry Report, *1993-2017, www.eastwestreport.org*.

Prophets and Diplomats

by Hugh Wybrew

Reading *One Word of Truth* made me reflect on the very different paths Michael Bourdeaux and I followed from our common starting point: we both learnt Russian in the Joint Services School for Linguists (JSSL) during National Service. In the year I spent at Cambridge on H Course I had my first experience of Russian Orthodox worship. Our émigré teachers hired a coach to take a group to London for the Orthodox Easter Vigil. There were a few spare seats, and they invited any students who wished to join them. I was one of three *kursanty* who stood for some five hours in a blaze of candlelight and clouds of incense.

Born in the same year, 1934, Michael was seven months older than me, and so was on an earlier course. We never met during National Service. Nor did we meet in Oxford, although we were immediate neighbours, he at St Edmund Hall, I at The Queen's College. We were however both influenced by the same Russians in Oxford, among them Nicholas Zernov and Dimitri Obolensky. I recall meeting the former when he came to give a talk to the chapel discussion group at Queen's. When he discovered that I knew Russian, he took from a small attaché case a copy of his book *Vselenskaya Tserkov i Russkoe Pravoslavie*. "For you", he said, "special price – full price".

Though running parallel for a while at Oxford, our paths soon diverged. After graduating Michael went to Wycliffe Hall to train for ordination. He then spent a year in Moscow on an exchange programme organised by the British Council. After my graduation, in theology, my tutor suggested I apply for a World Council of Churches scholarship, to spend an academic year at the Russian Orthodox Theological Institute of St Sergius in Paris. Michael met Russians in Russia, I met them in France. He was disappointed by his contacts with the Russian Orthodox Church and the Moscow Patriarchate, but delighted by the warmth with which he was greeted by the Evangelical Christians-Baptists. At St Sergius I was soaked in Slav Orthodoxy, and met some of the distinguished émigré professors as well as two of the younger generation, John Meyendorff and Boris Bobrinkskoy. At their suggestion I made my first visit to the Monastery of the Protecting Veil at Bussy-en-Othe and met its remarkable abbess, Mother Eudoxia, and her community of largely émigré Russian nuns. It was after this experience that I went to the Bishop's Hostel, Lincoln, for my final training for ordination.

Michael and I were ordained deacon in 1960 and priest in 1961, and both of us spent four years in our first curacy, he in Enfield, I in East Dulwich. We were both members of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, founded in 1928 by a small group of Anglican and Orthodox theologians, among whom were Nicholas and Militsa Zernov. Michael and I perhaps first met in that context. He was not

enthusiastic about the Fellowship: he thought too many of its members were converts to Orthodoxy. Nor was he happy with the official ecumenical movement. He felt called to let the world know of the persecution that all Christians suffered under Communist regimes; the World Council of Churches and other official ecumenical bodies were more concerned to develop good relations with the Orthodox Churches behind the Iron Curtain, allowed by their respective governments to join the WCC in 1961. Michael felt he did not belong to the club of ecumenical diplomats, and they felt that his mission was not helpful to theirs. By the end of his first curacy he was convinced that his future did not lie in priestly pastoral ministry.

By contrast, I was being drawn all unknowingly towards ecumenical diplomacy. In 1961 Alexi I, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, paid an official visit to Archbishop Michael Ramsey. I was invited to take part in the various events as an interpreter. At the special Choral Evensong in Westminster Abbey I was next to the Patriarch in the sanctuary to translate his response to the Archbishop's speech of welcome. Thanks to the JSSL I was able to do so without benefit of the English text, which a secretary had in his pocket in the nave. He had assumed he would be near enough to be able to pass it to me. Back in Lambeth Palace the Patriarch presented me with the Order of St Vladimir Third Class; I was clearly now among the diplomats. Two years later the Patriarchate was permitted to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Alexi I's episcopal ordination in 1913, and the Bishop of Winchester, representing the Archbishop, asked me to go with him as his chaplain. With hundreds of other guests we spent a week in Moscow, taking part in a non-stop programme of services, talks and visits. It was my first visit to Moscow, where I met no Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

From then on Michael and I were firmly set on our different paths. Michael began writing about the religious situation in the USSR, and gathering written material which had found its way to the West. He gave up parish ministry and concentrated on what he was sure was his prophetic vocation. That led to the foundation of the Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism, soon to be housed in the former Church of England school in Keston and the transformation of the Centre into Keston College, of which early on I became a member.

By the time Michael's *Opium of the People* was published in 1965, I had finished my curacy and spent the academic year 1964-1965 as the Anglican Priest-Student at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. It was a Western interlude in my Eastward journey. Then for six years I taught at St Stephen's House in Oxford, at the other end of Norham Gardens and the Anglican spectrum from Wycliffe Hall. For 18 months one of the students at the House was a certain Romanian, Remus Rus. By then there was a small Russian Orthodox parish in Oxford, and I sang in its mostly Anglican choir on Sundays and feast days. In my sixth year and out of the blue came the possibility of becoming Chaplain at the Church of the Resurrection in Bucharest, and I jumped at the chance.

The chaplaincy went with the post of Apocrisiarius of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the three Patriarchs of Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia, there being no chaplaincies then in Sofia or Belgrade. Now I was an official ecclesiastical diplomat; and the British ambassador in Bucharest once introduced me to a newly-arrived diplomat with the words "This is our other ambassador."

I spent quite a lot of time working for the External Church Relations Department of the Romanian Patriarchate, where I found Remus Rus on the staff. I also attended lectures in the Bucharest Theological Institute, including those of Fr Dumitru Stăniloae. I was able to travel freely, though naturally always under surveillance. I must have commended myself to the Securitate, because against my name in some of the files I acquired after the fall of Communism is the phrase in brackets (*prieteni ţării noastre*) – (friend of our country). The Patriarch's secretary, an elderly priest of whom I saw quite a lot, had beside his name (*ostil ţării noastre*) – (hostile to our country). He was of course "hostile" only to his country's Communist government. On pastoral visits to Sofia and Belgrade, I always paid a visit to the ecumenical department of the respective Patriarchates; and I took part in Michael Ramsey's official visit to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in 1972.

The Romanian Orthodox Church was the only Orthodox Church under Communism not to be separated from the State. The Patriarch remained a member of the Grand National Assembly, and the state continued to pay the salaries of the bishops and part of the salaries of the parish clergy. The bishops continued to live in their spacious residences and maintained a staff that would have been the envy of any Church of England bishop. Their staff naturally included an informer or two. The Romanian Orthodox Church was closely controlled by the state, and all appointments needed state approval. Justinian I had become Patriarch in 1948. Before the Second World War he had been a married parish priest, sympathetic to socialism, and knew Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the secretary of the Romanian Communist Party. He was commonly assumed in the West to be a Party stooge. But he used his contacts with the regime to defend the Romanian Orthodox Church to the best of his ability. He was unable to prevent the expulsion in 1959 of monks and nuns from their monasteries, and the closure of smaller monasteries. But no churches were closed in his time; and I heard the story of how, when one of his priests in the archdiocese of Bucharest was arrested and taken to a notorious police station, he immediately went to the police station and announced he would stay there until his priest was released.

There were some 300,000 Baptists in Romania at that time. I had very little contact with them, though I came to know Josef Ţon, who had been a student at Regent's Park College in Oxford. He had had to leave behind a box of books, which I took with me back to Romania after my mid-term leave in England. That caused me a small difficulty when I re-entered the country. The customs man declared them religious propaganda and therefore forbidden. I insisted they were theological books, and that I was a student at the

Theological Institute in Bucharest. Eventually he let me drive on, complete with the "religious propaganda", which I duly handed over to Josef, who no doubt had to repay in some way the permission he had received to study abroad.

On my return to England, the year before the name "Keston College" first appeared, I became Vicar of Pinner in Middlesex. In the course of my ten years ministry there I took five parish groups to Romania, and paid a number of personal and official visits to the country. They were of course all known to the Securitate and I was subject to surveillance, as suspected of working for British intelligence. Subsequently I paid a good many return visits, of which the last under Communism was in 1986, when I arranged a programme for Canon Sam van Culin, the Secretary-General of the Anglican Consultative Council. Because it was organised by the Patriarchate, all details were known to the Securitate. There are remarkably few files about those visits. In 1973 the Anglican-Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Discussions (A/OJDD) began. The following year Michael Ramsey appointed me a member, another "diplomatic" role. My Russian came in useful when the Moscow Patriarchate appointed as their representative for a short time an archbishop with poor English.

In 1984 I left Pinner to become Secretary of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, based in Notting Hill. I was able to go to the Russian Orthodox cathedral in Kensington, where the then Bishop Anthony Bloom was the parish priest and head of the Moscow Diocese of Sourozh in the United Kingdom. Then, out of the blue, came an invitation to be Dean of St George's Cathedral, Jerusalem. It was an opportunity not to be missed, not least because part of my job would be to maintain good relations with the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, all of which, together with their Catholic equivalents, are present in the Holy City. I had contacts too with the Russian and Romanian Orthodox Churches, each of which had a church outside the Old City.

In 1989, a year after Michael and his family settled in Iffley, I became Vicar of St Mary Magdalen's, in the centre of Oxford. A year later Michael's penultimate book, *Gorbachev, Glasnost and the Gospel,* was published. Michael's and my paths had met again in Oxford, and this time we met in person as members of the Committee of the Oxford Theological Exchange Programme (OTEP). Set up in 1990 by the Faculty of Theology, its aim was to bring four students a year from countries formerly behind the Iron Curtain to Oxford for one academic year, to pursue their chosen subject under the guidance of a member of the Faculty. I resumed contact with the Russian and Greek Orthodox parishes, and with the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, by then based in Oxford. By 1991 Keston too had moved to Oxford, now no longer a College but an Institute.

Michael continued to be involved in the Institute and in planning for the long-term future of Keston's unique archive. In 2007 it was moved to Baylor University in what is now the Keston Centre for Religion, Politics and Society, a lasting tribute to Michael's persistence and

courage in fulfilling his prophetic vocation, together with his memoir, *One Word of Truth,* and earlier books. That same year saw the publication of *The Church of the Triune God*, the third agreed statement of the International Commission for the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue, as A/OJDD had become. The statement's title was my last contribution to the work of the dialogue, of which my 34-year membership then came to an end. The only tangible trace of my "diplomatic" relations with the Orthodox Church is my book *The Orthodox Liturgy: the Development of the Eucharist in the Byzantine Rite*, and three small books of Orthodox liturgical texts. Several OTEP students came across *The Orthodox Liturgy* during their year in Oxford, and three of them caused translations to be made. There exist versions in Bulgarian and Georgian, in modest numbers, while there are 15,000 copies of the Russian translation in circulation.

2015 Keston AGM

(Front row left to right): Xenia Dennen, Asta Skaisgiryte (Lithuanian Ambassador & AGM speaker), Michael Bourdeaux & Alyona Kojevnikov. Fr Hugh Wybrew stands between Michael & Alyona.

Neither Michael nor I could have foreseen the paths our respective lives would follow when we learnt Russian during National Service. Mine led to a lifetime of pastoral ministry in widely-different places and forms, through which has run the connecting thread of ecumenical and diplomatic involvement with Orthodoxy in its various forms. The words of diplomacy are necessarily smooth words, rarely causing trouble; and Michael recognised the need for diplomacy as well as prophecy. His path was by far the more difficult way, on which he encountered and overcame difficulties of many kinds, including criticism from those involved in ecumenical relations with the Orthodox Churches under Communist rule. As the history of ancient Israel shows, prophets are rarely popular. Michael shared their conviction that they had to speak the word of truth, given to them by the Word, who is not only Truth, but also the Way and the Life.

Hugh Wybrew *is an Anglican priest living in active retirement in Oxford, where he has contacts with the Russian, Greek and Romanian parishes. In between preparing sermons he is working on his memoirs with the provisional title* Go East, Young Man. *They tell the story, whose outline can be discerned in this article, of his lifelong involvement with Orthodoxy. They are not intended for publication*.

Keston Center Report

2020-2021 Highlights

***Professor Kathy Hillman**, Director of the Keston Center for Religion, Politics and Society at Baylor University, has been able to attend all the on-line meetings held by Keston's Council of Management, since the start of the Covid-19 lockdown. She presented the following report about the Keston Center, during the 2020-2021 academic year, to the Council meeting held in July 2021.*

Michael Bourdeaux & Kathy Hillman

The Keston Center has been blessed and inspired by a warm and supportive relationship with Keston's founder, Canon Michael Bourdeaux. Sadly, Michael died on 29th March, 2021, fittingly during Holy Week. In a tribute on the Center's website, the Director wrote: "We thank the Heavenly Father for the life, work, and friendship of Revd Canon Bourdeaux and consider the stewardship of Keston's archives and library a divine calling. As instructed in the book of Matthew, Michael let his light shine, and through his good works helped dispel the darkness so others could join him. His voice will forever echo, and his light long illuminate the path forward. May we, too, be found faithful."

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

Overview of 2020-2021 on the Baylor University campus

The 2020-2021 academic year was unlike any other. Baylor's pandemic shutdown began in March 2020 when University President Linda Livingstone announced an extended spring break to prepare for pivoting classes online for "a short-term interruption." The spring 2020 Keston Advisory Board meeting and lecture/panel, "The Once and Future Russia: Religion, Politics, and Society", were abruptly cancelled. The campus closed except for essential services.

Staff, including those in the Keston Center, began working remotely. Because some library faculty were needed in the main libraries, Keston Director Kathy Hillman operated from her office in the massive four-story Moody Memorial Library building with only a handful of individuals on-site. Zoom, email, texting, and phone calls replaced in-person contact. Sheltering-in-place, masks, disinfecting, social distancing, contactless pick-up, and a host of other accommodations attempted to mitigate the spread of Covid-19.

The Baylor campus and Keston remained closed to visitors throughout the summer of 2020, although staff periodically returned masked and distanced. Fall 2020 and spring 2021 classes opened with a mix of online, hybrid, and in-person courses with limited capacity, masked students, lecture capture, and a shortened academic calendar that included on-line classes after Thanksgiving. Dorm residents followed strict protocols. The University required mandatory weekly testing and by mid-spring provided vaccinations for those who qualified. In early March 2021, the State of Texas loosened mask requirements, but Baylor's procedures remained in place for unvaccinated individuals until July, with the fall 2021 semester scheduled to return to pre-pandemic conditions, while accommodating international students and others who might not be able to resume in-person attendance.

Throughout the year, the Keston Center pivoted, adapted, re-prioritised, modified, and managed to accomplish more than anyone could have originally imagined through flexibility, creativity, and diligence.

Partners and donors

Generous partners from inside and outside of the University continue to supplement the budget by providing for expenditures that would not be otherwise possible, as well as by making in-kind donations. Keston Institute (UK) granted the Center £10,000 to begin digitising fragile audio-visual materials in the Keston archives. Baylor Libraries Board of Advisors members Bob and Kim Henderson of Hollinger Metal Edge, Inc. provided significant archival quality processing supplies.

In September 2020, Michael and Lorna Bourdeaux donated a large of collection of Michael's personal papers, covering years from 1958 onwards. In addition, Dr David Clark gave his papers, containing correspondence and other details of his work with Bible translation projects in various countries of the former Soviet Union and in Bulgaria starting in 1992. Dr Alexandru Popescu made available a recording of the 2019 AGM lecture, "Why Religious Liberty Matters" given by former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams. The Center also received gift materials and donations from several individuals.

Presentations and events

The Keston Center partnered with Baylor's Armstrong Browning Library, the Institute for Oral History, Texas Collection, and the W.R. Poage Legislative Library to present "Pictures, Portraits &

Snapshots" with a panel who answered live Q&A via Zoom technology, while a small group of the Libraries Board of Advisors participated in person. Keston was represented by Advisory Board member Dr Wallace Daniel, who spoke on "Fr Gleb Yakunin", and Czech researcher Alice Luňáková, who discussed "Prague Spring and Jan Palach".

Women's World Day of Prayer co-sponsor

The Keston Center co-sponsored the Women's World Day of Prayer observance in February 2021 with the Waco Regional Baptist Association WMU/Women's Ministries, in coordination with the George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University. Featured speakers included Patty Lane, retired Director of Intercultural Ministries for Texas Baptists; Dr Elise Edwards, Baylor Religion Professor, community leader, and architect; and Dr Rebecca Poe Hays, Truett Seminary Professor, writer, speaker, and minister's wife. In addition to the keynotes, women from across the globe prayed for the people of each continent. Fortunately, the Zoom event managed to be presented before an ice storm created massive multi-day power outages across Texas and shut down much of the state, including the Baylor campus. A recording is available on the Baylor website and on YouTube.

Spring lecture/panel: "Where in the World? Keston researchers report"

The Keston Center hosted the spring lecture/panel using Zoom technology. To accommodate international participants, the event was held on two different dates and at different times. Scholars pre-recorded their presentations. However, introductions by Kathy Hillman, comments about Keston's history by Keston Council Chair Xenia Dennen, and the Q&A discussion, moderated by Dr Wallace Daniel, were live. Researchers reported on the current state of religion, politics, and society in their parts of the world. A recording of the event is available on the Keston Center website.

Keston Advisory Board meeting

Zoom permitted the Keston Advisory Board to gather for a combined 2020 and 2021 meeting. The format enabled participants to join for part of the gathering; others to attend virtually from outside of Waco; and a summer intern to provide a heartfelt video about her work on a collection that involved the place in Russia where she grew up. After the business meeting, the Board members enjoyed the Keston lecture/panel.

Keston Institute's Council and AGM

Because of worldwide travel restrictions, Keston Center Director Kathy Hillman could not make her annual summer visit to the UK for a Council of Management meeting. However, with the Council shifting meetings to Zoom, including the AGM, she participated in every session, which fostered cooperation, communication, and consultation.

Research activities and visiting scholars

Keston received approximately 100 reference requests with about 40% in-person. Staff participated in almost 200 consultations, roughly 75% of those virtually, and continued to provide research support to Baylor students and faculty, as well as to national and international scholars electronically. In addition to those who attended Zoom presentations sponsored, or co-sponsored, by Keston, or visited the Center, seven researchers utilised the collection. About 140 students, staff, and faculty physically entered the archives. The Center reached almost 400 individuals through presentations involving Keston, or in partnership with Baylor's Special Libraries and other University or religious groups.

Jim and Lou James 2021 Summer Teaching Fellows: Julie deGraffenried and Luke Sayers

For 2021, one professor and one PhD candidate teacher of record (Julie deGraffenried and Luke Sayers respectively) applied for Keston's Summer Teaching Fellowships. A selection committee, comprised of the Director along with Keston Council Chair Xenia Dennen, and Keston Advisory Board

Luke Sayers

Julie deGraffenried

members Steve Gardner and Michael Long, felt both were outstanding candidates for support by the Jim and Lou James Endowed Fund, provided by Nancy James Jackson in honour of her parents. Having previously served as summer interns or teaching fellows, both of them regularly engage their students with Keston, as do 2016 Teaching Fellow Ivy Hamerly, and 2019 Teaching Fellows Adrienne Harris and Charley Ramsey.

2021 summer intern and summer student assistant: Anna Williams and Amanda Sutton

Although the 2020 summer internship programme had to be cancelled, interest in the Keston internships blossomed for summer 2021. Nancy Newman Logan

Intern Anna Williams began in late May, focusing on the Keston archives as well as Soviet Union and Russia subject files. A heritage Russian speaker, Anna has special interest in the area because of her Ukrainian heritage, and has attended the National Student Leadership Conference at American University in Washington. She has also agreed to work as a student assistant in Keston in the fall.

Anna Williams

Named a Boren Scholar, Amanda Sutton also applied for a 2021 internship. However, since she was accepted into an intensive Russian language institute, Keston instead offered Amanda the opportunity to work as a student assistant during the summer on the Michael Bourdeaux Papers. In the fall, she will study in Kyiv, Ukraine, on the Boren scholarship, and volunteer at the National Military Clinical Hospital as she pursues her dream of becoming a physician for the US military in Eastern Europe.

Research: scholars and PhD candidate researchers

- Fr Gleb Yakunin (Wallace Daniel, Mercer University)
- Missions (Richard Lewis, Arizona pastor and Baylor parent)
- Exploratory Trip, Christian Ethics (Tal Howard, Christ College, Valparaiso University)
- Hungary (Patrick Leech, History PhD Candidate, Baylor University)
- Soviet Union and the Cold War (Julie deGraffenried, Baylor University)
- World Religions (Charles Ramsey, BSM Director, Adjunct Professor, Baylor University)
- Artifacts and Religions (Luke Sayers, English PhD Candidate, Baylor University)

Amanda Sutton

The Keston Center was closed to the public throughout most of the academic year, and Baylor required faculty, staff, and students to maintain Covid-19 protocols when on campus.

Staff

Keston retained Director Kathy Hillman, and Library Information Specialists, Larisa Seago and Janice Losak, on staff. With the pandemic, Baylor ended contracts for part-time and temporary employees, including Tanya Clark, editorial assistant for Baylor's *Journal of*

(Left to right): Larisa Seago, Tanya Clark, Kathy Hillman & Janice Losak

Church and State, who had continued processing Russian materials part-time. However, she remains vitally interested in Keston's mission, and involved in various Keston Center activities and events.

Graduate assistant

For the seventh year, the Center and Museum Studies partnered to employ a graduate assistant. A smaller cohort of first-year students created the opportunity for Keston to share the position held by Rachel Jacob with the Armstrong Browning Library. Rachel grew up in a military family and earned a BA in History with minors in Museum Studies and Intercultural Studies from John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. As an undergraduate, she completed summer internships at Abila Archaeological Dig in Abila, Jordan, and at the Rock Island Arsenal Museum in Illinois. During the year, she worked on the Bulgaria and unregistered Baptists (*Initsiativniki*) finding aids and prepared eight Women's Collections entries. Tesia Juraschek has been selected as the 2021-2022 graduate assistant. A Taylor University graduate, Tesia grew up in Woodbridge, Virginia

Rachel Jacob

Student assistants

Junior Julia Kovarovic joined the Keston team in August 2019 as a student assistant, and worked through September 2020. This Russian and International Relations major from Bryant, Arkansas,

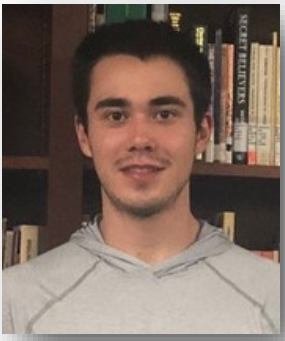
Julia Kovarovic

participates in Baylor's Interdisciplinary Core. She primarily focused on Keston Institute records.

Gabby Kennedy became interested in working as a Keston student assistant when she took Tanya Clark's Modern Languages and Cultures Russian class. From Branson, Missouri, Gabby spent September 2020 through February 2021 processing Soviet *Initsiativniki* archives.

Gabby Kennedy

Mason Wyatt, junior history major from Tyler, Texas, found his place as a student assistant working on the Michael Bourdeaux Papers from February through April 2021. The Eagle Scout participates in the Unicycling Club and Baptist Student Ministries. He plans to earn a PhD and become a university professor.



Mason Wyatt

Processing, preservation, and access

Processing continued in the Center with ongoing projects and new processing, including the recently received Michael Bourdeaux Papers and David Clark materials. Nolan Morwood, a student assistant in the Dean of Libraries' office, scanned Keston College's inactive card file. Staff created metadata for the Alexander Nezhnyi and Anita Deyneka collections, as well as AGM and Keston College records. Adding metadata to Keston materials has proven challenging because minutes folders often include committee reports and assorted miscellaneous items. In addition, some minutes are identified only by meeting number, while others are listed by the date of the meeting.

The Keston Center shared approximately 35 images and electronic files with four researchers and one periodical editor. Topics included photographs, Keston records, and copies of various articles. In some cases, these items will have metadata added so that they can be made available in the Keston Digital Archive.

The Libraries purchased a new Integrated Library System (ILS) in 2018-2019. For a variety of reasons, including Baylor University's new integrated financial accounting and personnel system, implementation continued through 2019-2020 and 2020-21 with reduced capacity for purchasing and processing. A moratorium remained on all binding. However, 132 books, 107 periodicals, and about 520 periodical issues were added to the Keston Library and Archives.

Finding aids opened in the Baylor Archival Repositories Database (BARD) included Soviet Union and Russia Pentecostal subject files; Soviet Union and Russia Seventh Day Adventist subject files; Marite Sapiets Papers; Soviet Union and Russia Roman Catholic subject files; Soviet Union and Russia Unregistered Baptists (*Initsiativniki*) subject files; Soviet Union and Russia Jewish subject files; Katharine Murray Papers; and the David Clark Papers. Additional boxes were added to the Bulgaria Denominational subject files, the Soviet Union Registered Baptist subject files Samizdat Series, and the Radio Free Europe finding aid. Materials will be added to the Michael Bourdeaux Papers finding aid as the recently received boxes are processed.

Currently, BARD contains 32 finding aids covering 15 countries. A listing and link to Keston materials continues to be active as part of the Prague Spring Archive portal. Keston staff and students added entries for Club Maria, Gillian Davies Bourdeaux, Lidia Vashchenko, Marite Sapiets, Natalia Gorbanevskaya, Nijole Sadunaite, Tatiana Goricheva, and the Vashchenko Pentecostal Women to the Women's Collections at Baylor website.

Audio-visual digitisation project

Thanks to a grant from Keston UK, digitisation has begun of Keston Center's rapidly deteriorating audio-visual holdings. The following were completed during the 2020-2021 academic year:

Film digitisation completed June-December 2020:

- *The Right to Believe* (available online)
- *The Bitter Cup* (available online)
- *One Word of Truth* (available online)
- *Closing Doors*
- *Evangel'skie Khristiane Baptisty v SSSR* (*Евангельские христиане баптисты в СССР*)
- *Seeing is Believing*

Magnetic video digitisation completed January-May 2021:

- Irina Ratushinskaya *"When I Get to Heaven"*
- *The Plight of the Persecuted; Falcon Mission Home; The Chuguyevka Pentecostals*
- Zoya Krakhmal'nikova *"Slaviansky Detektiv"* & *"Navecherie"*
- *Жизнь Старообрядцев на Украине*
- Interview with Jane Ellis
- "*Behold We Live*" Georgi Vins & others
- *The Trumpet Call* – Valery Barinov
- *Songs of Praise* – Barinov arrival
- *Yakunin Mos(T)* Film Reels #1, #2, and #3
- "Religion in the USSR" – NBC News Panel Discussion
- Michael Bourdeaux Speech, *The Nuclear Gulag*, Sharansky Interview
- *The Trumpet Call Rock Band* – Valery Barinov

- "*A Candle in the Wind*" Religious Freedom in Russia
- László Tőkés on Hungarian TV
- "Religion in the USSR" – NBC News Panel Discussion
- Czechoslovakia Pentecostals – unedited
- Kent Video "Chuguyevka"
- Lutheran Pastors in Riga
- Leningrad TV Programme (Barinov & Yefrenov)
- *Candle in the Wind* – International Films
- Plight of the Persecuted: The Chuguyevka Pentecostals
- "Human Rights: Irina Ratushinskaya" CBS Morning News

Goals for 2021-2022 and beyond

Future goals focus on overcoming residual challenges from the pandemic; strengthening partnerships; providing resources; hosting researchers; presenting lectures; exploring funding sources; and extending Keston's reach. A long-term goal is to obtain supplementary space for collections and staff. Specific details include:

- Supporting the publication of a *Festschrift* honouring Canon Michael Bourdeaux
- Working with Baylor digitisation staff to expand digitisation with metadata, including access to downloadable pdf pages, as well as to return to pre-Ex Libris ILS periodical and book collection processing
- Completing digitisation and metadata for 50 of the remaining 203 VHS videotapes
- Making available on-line all video/ film files digitised during 2020-21
- Reducing the number of Keston unprocessed boxes
- Planning a spring 2022 lecture, panel and possibly a separate event in fall 2021
- Conducting a meeting of the Keston Advisory Board in person
- Participating in a meeting of the Keston Institute's Council of Management in the UK, and other sessions via Zoom technology
- Attending Keston Institute's AGM virtually
- Partnering with the Keston Council to increase the number of Keston scholars
- Adding at least three inventories in BARD and three entries to Women's Collections
- Extending campus outreach with Teaching Fellows, Summer Interns, class presentations, and other opportunities as available
- Identifying and enlisting additional Keston partners to assist in sponsoring events, and promoting the Center in a variety of ways
- Preparing funding proposals for conducting oral history interviews with individuals involved in the early years of Keston College.

Buddhism - St Petersburg Style

by Sergei Filatov

This article, published in Russian on Keston's website in Russian Review*, No 77, June 2019, is an amended and expanded version of "St Petersburg – the capital of Russian Buddhism", which was published in* Vestnik Instituta vostokovedeniya*,* [Messenger of the Oriental Institute], *Russian Academy of Sciences, 2019, No 1, pp. 127-139.*

Russia's policy towards the East engendered an interest in Buddhism as the country expanded eastwards. Initially, the upper echelons of the aristocracy and officialdom, linked in one way or another with the Far East, became interested, while the state encouraged academic study of the cultures of the Far East, including the study of Buddhism. Russian society first encountered these cultures during the reign of Peter the Great, who gave instructions that Eastern languages be studied by Russians and documents from the Far East collected. The incorporation of Buryatia into Russia gave an added impulse to the interest in Buddhism among the St Petersburg élite. The year 1721 saw the first step towards the official recognition of Buddhism in Russia when an oath of allegiance was taken by 150 lamas (Buddhist spiritual teachers) in the Trans-Baikal region, and the Empress Elizaveta Petrovna both recognised the practice of the "lamaist faith" in Russia and acknowledged lamas as an official religious group. Catherine the Great was also interested in Buddhism, and while compiling new religious legislation in 1767-1768, received Bandido Hambo Lama Zayaev, who told her about Tibet. Zayaev was more than just welcomed: he received a certificate with a white seal, confirming his grand title of Bandido Hambo Lama, was given the Order of St Andrew and an annual grant of 50 roubles. The lamas of Buryatia declared Catherine to be the earthly incarnation of the Merciful Saviour – White Tara – and from then on the Buddhist peoples of the Empire called the Russian monarchs Tsagan Bator Khans – Great White Tsars.

Since the late 18th century the Academy of Sciences has produced studies of the culture and religions of the Far East, and in the 19th century an outstanding school of oriental specialists was formed in St Petersburg in which academics (e.g. Sergei Ol'denburg, Ivan Minaev and Fyodor Shcherbatsky), following in the footsteps of their predecessors Jacob Schmidt and Vasili Vasil'ev, studied scholarly research on Buddhism. Most of these experts were not narrow specialists but public figures involved in cultural life, who helped spread an interest in Buddhism into government circles and among the St Petersburg intelligentsia.

Towards the end of the 19th century, Buddhist Buryat and Kalmyk community

associations were formed, and some of their representatives established links with the civil service, the aristocracy and the intelligentsia. During the reign of Alexander III, the court physician P.A. Badmaev, a Tibetan, promoted a plan at court for the incorporation of Tibet into Russia. Furthermore, an enthusiastic advocate of Tibetan pro-Russian policies, Agvan Lobsan Dorzhiev (1853-1938), the Buryat mentor of the Dalai Lama, came to St Petersburg in 1898 as the latter's unofficial ambassador and was presented to Nicholas II. In 1905 the Dalai Lama even declared that he wished to move to Russia, to which Nicholas II replied via Dorzhiev that "Buddhists in Russia can feel themselves to be under the protection of the mighty wings of the eagle."[1]

Dorzhiev spent many years in Russia and although his mission yielded no tangible political results, he achieved much in strengthening the position of Buddhism in Russia: he established good relations with the élites of Petersburg government circles, with the intelligentsia, with many prominent cultural figures and within influential aristocratic circles. At the beginning of the 20th century two prominent Buddhist *noyons* [secular leaders. *Ed.*], the Kalmyk princes Tyumen and Tundutov, organised a salon in St Petersburg which was frequented by aristocrats and army officers; Baron Lev von Fölkersahm and Prince Esper Ukhtomsky were among the first followers of Buddhism and played a particularly important role in establishing this religion in St Petersburg.[2] In 1891 Prince Ukhtomsky accompanied Nicholas II on a visit to the East, supported and protected the Kalmyk community in St Petersburg, and was one of the first to sponsor the building of the St Petersburg *datsan* (Buddhist temple).

Agvan Lobsan Dorzhiev (left) leaving Peterhof after an audience with Nicholas II in 1901

In the early 20th century the artistic intelligentsia became interested in Buddhism: for example, Nikolai and Elena Roerich included many Buddhist themes in their creative work, although they never actually became Buddhists; Nikolai was a central figure in the artistic world of St Petersburg, at one time headed the "World of Art" association, and introduced Buddhism to many famous artists and writers. He studied Eastern philosophy, published essays about Japan and India[3] and painted pictures on Indian themes.[4] From 1906 he worked with the Buddhist and Hindu scholar Viktor Golubev on a plan to create a museum of Indian culture in St Petersburg, and was closely associated with Dorzhiev and other Russian Buddhists. A number of poets of the Silver Age[5] were influenced by Buddhism; Andrei Belyi emphasised the link between symbolism and Buddhism in his theoretical works, while

Konstantin Bal'mont translated the dramas of Kalidasa; the poetry of Bryusov and Gumilyov are full of Eastern and Buddhist themes. On the eve of the Russian Revolution about 200 Buddhists, including Russians and other Europeans (e.g. the Latvian Lama Tennison) lived in Petrograd.

On the initiative of Dorzhiev and scholars of Buddhism, and with the approval of the imperial court, the first Buddhist *datsan* in Europe was opened in Petrograd in 1915. It was named "Source of the Holy Teaching of the Lord Hermit, compassionate to all living things". It took several years to build and faced strong opposition from the Russian Orthodox Church.

The St Petersburg datsan *in the 21st century with Buddhist monks in the foreground*

By 1917 a Buddhist movement had developed in St Petersburg (there was nothing similar in Moscow) which involved a small number of Buryats, Kalmyks and Mongols, as well as members of the Russian intelligentsia and aristocracy; this then spawned a circle of people who had a purely intellectual interest in Buddhism and were attracted by Buddhist philosophy and meditation. It is difficult to say whether those who belonged to this movement were actually Buddhists, or simply students of Buddhism.

The attitude of the Soviet authorities to Buddhism during the first 20 years after the Revolution was more complex than their attitude towards Christianity; they swung between defence of Buddhism and its persecution. This volatility is clearly reflected in the history of the St Petersburg *datsan*. In 1917 it was closed, turned into a military barracks and the Buddhists driven out. In 1922 it was restored, and in 1926 handed over to the official bodies representing Tibet and Mongolia. From 1926-1937 it was used by the cultural and educational institutions of Tibet, Mongolia, Kalmykia and Buryatia. In the winter of 1927 the All-Union Council of Buddhists announced that it would be used as its headquarters. With the escalation of anti-religious repression, the *datsan* became the final refuge for Buddhist lamas from the Trans-Baikal region. In 1935 lamas

were arrested all over the country; by 1938 none remained at liberty. As well as practising Buddhists, most scholars of Buddhism were also arrested.[6] By the beginning of the WWII, Buddhism in Leningrad had been destroyed, with the *datsan* turned into a physical fitness centre. After the war, the building housed equipment for jamming foreign radio broadcasts, and in 1960-1987 it served as the laboratory of the Zoological Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

Bidya Dandaron

This appeared to be the end of St Petersburg Buddhism, but in the mid-1960s a small but energetic group of educated young people, who were all interested in "spiritual exploration", came into being. Its most active members were students from the Oriental Faculty of the Leningrad State University (LSU), and academic orientalists who circulated literature about the esoteric teachings of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shamanism. In 1965 two young men – Alexandr Zheleznov (1940-1996) and Yuri Alexeev (1940-1983), both graduates of the LSU's Biology Faculty – travelled to the Pamir Mountain area in Tadjikistan, aiming to cross into India and to study yoga. This attempt failed, and Zheleznov, hearing that there were Buddhist monasteries in Russia, set off for Ulan-Ude (capital of Buryatia) where he met Bidya Dandaron (1914-1974), who proved to be the ideal teacher for these keen young Leningraders. Zheleznov was initiated into the Buddhist faith a year later. This marked the beginning of a Buddhist religious movement among Europeans in a non-Buddhist cultural region, with Dandaron as its leader.

Bidya Dandaron's father was a lama, a close colleague of Sandan Tsydenov. The latter was a reformer of Buddhist religious life and leader of the Balagat movement, who declared Dandaron to be the reincarnation of an eminent abbot of a Tibetan monastery. Bidya Dandaron was taught the fundamentals of Buddhism by lamas, completed the Buddhist school in Kyakhta (220km south of Buryatia's capital Ulan-Ude), but due to his great authority in Buryatia and related problems with the authorities, he was forced to leave Buryatia and then enrolled in the Leningrad Institute of Aircraft Engineering. He was arrested for the first time in 1937: in the camps he met many remarkable people, including lamas, and was able to continue his Buddhist education as well as to learn about European philosophy. In 1946 he was arrested for a second time; in total he spent 20 years in prison, and during these years formulated his concept of Buddhism which he called Neo-Buddhism. This was a synthesis of Buddhist teaching of the Tibetan Gelug school, reformed by Tsydenov (with the inclusion of ideas and practices from other schools of Tibetan Buddhism), and

contemporary European philosophy and science: in other words, his goal was to present Buddhist teaching in a form comprehensible to Europeans.

After he was rehabilitated in 1956, Dandaron worked as a research assistant in the Buryat Institute of Social Sciences, where he deciphered and wrote descriptions of Buddhist manuscripts. At this point, he met Yuri Roerich, one of his supporters, and gradually around Dandaron a community formed with several dozen members, mainly from Leningrad as well as Tartu and Vilnius. This was a dangerous development for someone who had served two prison terms and was a well-known personality in Buryatia. Some of Dandaron's pupils worked in the Oriental Department of the Institute of Religion and Atheism (in the Kazan Cathedral, Leningrad) which held an extensive collection of Buddhist antiquities. Eventually, in 1972, Dandaron was arrested in Ulan-Ude on trumped up charges under article 227-1 of the RSFSR Criminal Code (infringement of the person and rights of citizens under the guise of performing religious rituals) and article 147-3 (fraud). Alexandr Zheleznov and Yuri Lavrov in Ulan-Ude and Vladimir Montlevich in Leningrad were also arrested. All four were imprisoned in a psychiatric hospital for several months, while Dandaron was sentenced to five years in a labour camp where he died in 1974 at the age of 60. Most of the people involved in the Dandaron case in one way or another were graduates of Leningrad higher education institutes.

Andrei Terent'ev

From the late 1970s a prominent (if not leading) role in the Buddhist movement was played by Andrei Terent'ev, who enrolled in the Faculty of Philosophy at LSU in 1970. In his second year, he founded a student group for the study of Eastern philosophy (mostly Indian and Chinese philosophy), and invited Valeri Rudugo from the Leningrad section of the Institute of Oriental Studies (Soviet Academy of Sciences) to lead the group's seminar, which went on meeting for a couple of years and produced several leading orientalists such as Evgeni Torchinov. Terent'ev studied Eastern philosophy for several years and on graduating managed to get a job in the Oriental Department of the Institute of Religion and Atheism. He first learned of the existence of Buddhists in Russia during an expedition to Buryatia in 1978 when, after persistent searching, he managed to meet Lama Zhimba Zhamtso at the Darasun resort in the Agin-Buryat Autonomous District, who, after putting Terent'ev through some tests, agreed to take him on as a pupil. Buryat lamas at that time, Terent'ev observed, had practically no native Buryat pupils – young Buryats were not interested in Buddhism.

The first two to three years of *perestroika* not only increased the opportunities for Leningrad Buddhists, but also created

conditions which allowed the dissemination of Buddhism. The 14th Dalai Lama's personal interpreter, an American called Alexander Berzin, visited Leningrad in 1987 where he met other Buddhists and did some teaching – secretly at first, then openly in 1988 and 1989 in Leningrad, Buryatia, Kalmykia and Tuva. Contacts with teachers abroad were soon established. In 1991 the Dalai Lama visited Russia, whereupon links were established with Tibetan émigrés in India, Europe and the USA, while Russian Buddhists began to travel to India, to the Dalai Lama's residence in exile in Dharamsala, to Nepal and to other countries in search of teachers. Tibetans visited Russia regularly, too, to preach and instruct, while the Dalai Lama had a representative in Moscow called Geshe (professor) Jampa Thinley.

The 14th Dalai Lama

The Leningrad Buddhist Society was founded in 1988 with the aim of getting back the Leningrad *datsan*. Its members included Russians who belonged to various schools of Buddhism as well as St Petersburg Buryats and Kalmyks, who later came into conflict with the Russians. After several battles the Buryats came out as victors and managed to keep hold of the *datson*, so in 1993 the Russian Buddhists proceeded to found the St Petersburg Union of Buddhists, which today unites ten communities of differing schools; Andrei Terent'ev was elected Executive Secretary of the Union. Recently, relations between the ethnic Buddhists under Buryat leadership at the *datsan* and the Russian Buddhists have improved: both parties now organise meditation sessions and lectures at the *datsan*, which is gradually becoming something akin to an All-Russia Dharma Centre,[7] while remaining the traditional *datsan* for Petersburg Buryats.

An important part in the spread of Buddhism in Petersburg was played by the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), established in 1975 by Lamas Thubten Eshe and Zopa Rinpoche, who started teaching Buddhism to Western students in Nepal. The FPMT currently incorporates more than 160 centres in 37 countries. Tibetan Buddhist teachers are

sponsored by this Foundation to give lectures and to run classes. The head, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, is a Nepalese who travels the world teaching and conducting initiations. The FPTM mainly teaches Gelug and to a lesser degree all the other Tibetan schools, and its centres offer a two-year system of study called "Revelation of Buddhism".

The intellectual leader of Petersburg Buddhism, Andrei Terent'ev, is a member of a community called "Aryadeva Buddhist Centre", which grew out of the Society of Friends of Tibet and then became a separate entity. It is a member of the FPMT, frequently hosts visiting teachers from the West, and offers a number of courses, lectures and joint meditations. Several members are authorised to give lectures, including Andrei Terent'ev's wife, Margarita Kozhevnikova.

Two other stable Petersburg Tibetan Buddhist communities, established soon after the demise of the USSR, acquired great authority during the 1990s and early 2000s: these were "The Honourable Lama Tsongkhapa" and the "Elo-Centre". The former organisation grew up around the Tibetan teacher Dzhamyan Kyentse (1926-2006), who had the title of "Geshe Pharamba" (the highest Tibetan academic title) and came to Petersburg in 1993, where he settled in the *datsan* and taught novices from Buryatia. In 1996 he thought of returning to India, but was persuaded by some of his pupils to remain in Petersburg and to teach from a private apartment. With the help of an interpreter, Raisa Krapivina, an outstanding specialist on Tibet (he spoke only Tibetan), he taught there until his death.

Eshe Lodoi Rinpoche

The "Elo-Centre" brought together secular Buddhists practising Gelug traditions under the spiritual guidance of Eshe Lodoi Rinpoche, who was invited to St Petersburg in the summer of 1997 by the lama in charge of the Petersburg *datsan*. Acknowledged to be the fourth reincarnation of the Buddhist yogini Elo Tulku, Eshe Lodoi Rinpoche holds the title of Geshe Pharamba, and in 1993 was sent by the Dalai Lama to teach in Buryatia. On a visit to St Petersburg he presented the monks, novices and secular Buddhists at the *datsan* with commentaries on the canonical text of the Bodhicharyavatara, dedicated the Anattara-yogi level and Chogyal dedication. After this, the secular Buddhist group set up the "St Petersburg Community of Eshe Lodoi Rinpoche's Pupils", which a year later, in July 1998, with the blessing of its teacher, was reorganised and named the St Petersburg "Elo-Centre". Andrei Zotov

(d. 2015) was elected chairman of the Centre. In 2009 on the initiative of Eshe Lodoi Rinpoche, a symbolic event took place: the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala launched the "Teaching for Russian-speaking Followers". The "Elo-Centre" maintains constant contact with a teacher in Ulan-Ude, where a large *datsan* has

Datsan *on Bald Mountain above Ulan-Ude*

been built on Bald Mountain. The Centre's Buddhist practice combines study of the sutras and tantras in accordance with the principles of the Venerable Lama Tsongkala, reformer of Tibetan Buddhism. Combined tantric rituals are performed according to the Tibetan and Mongolian calendars, and those participating in these rituals must have had the appropriate initiation. On important Buddhist feast days the community conducts *khurals* (services) attended by up to 100 people.[8]

Today some active groups called "Four Noble Truths" observe the Tibetan tradition of the Gelug school, under the spiritual guidance of the Tibetan teacher, Geshe Ngawang Thukje. These are mostly based in Moscow, as their teacher lives there, while the St Petersburg organisation is a subsidiary. Some other weaker Buddhist communities in St Peterburg continue to observe the pre-revolutionary Buddhist traditions of the imperial capital and remain focused on Tibet and Buryatia, which for them represent the Tibetan tradition and the Gelug school. At the same time, something quite new has begun to emerge in St Petersburg: a number of small communities have been formed which follow the Tibetan tradition, but not the Gelug school, which has been replaced by the Nyingma, Rime and Sakya schools.

The appearance of the Karma Kagyu school in the 1990s was a particularly interesting development. Almost all the communities of this school were founded by the Dane Ole Nydahl, who was a hippy in the 1960s, smuggled marihuana from India and Nepal and had problems with the police (he planned to drop drugs on Copenhagen from a helicopter). In 1969, while in Nepal on his honeymoon with his wife Hannah Nydahl, he met the 16th Karmala (head of the Karma Kagyu school), became his pupil, went through initiation, and was encouraged by him to preach in the West and to the whole world. Of the world's 1,500 Karma Kagyu centres, 273 were founded by Ole Nydahl; 80 such centres are in Russia; and within the Russian Federation the Karma Kagyu school has the most followers.[9] The Karma Kagyu teaching – Vajrayana ("the diamond chariot") – includes written texts and oral forms of exchange between teacher and pupil, as well as wordless forms, i.e. which are communicated from consciousness to

consciousness, when the consciousness of the pupil identifies with the consciousness of the teacher; this is the "fast track" school, with an emphasis on direct experience.

Ole Nydahl has been criticised for his excessively harsh style of leadership: initially he banned pupils from even visiting other teachers, whereas now he only bans them from practicing within the framework of the teaching of other schools. He favours simplifying Buddhist teaching, and introducing as many people as possible to Buddhist rituals in which normally only well-prepared pupils are supposed to take part. There is a rare degree of friendship and camaraderie within Nydahl's communities, and often their members are able to give up drugs and alcohol. Many people are attracted to them: a striking example occurred in the 1990s when an entire subdivision of the OMON (special police force) in St Petersburg became Nydahl's pupils, despite the disapproval of their commanding officers.[10] Nydahl's first visit to Russia was organised by the professional photographer Vladimir Henzel, a member of Petersburg's bohemian circles, who had attended some of Nydhal's lectures in Berlin in 1989. At a number of private meetings Henzel introduced Nydahl to groups of Buddhist specialists who were followers of Dandaron, and to members of a music ensemble led by Vitali Fed'ko. Andrei Terent'ev described the birth of Russian Karma Kagyu thus:

> "It was around 1990. On returning from India, where I had spent six months, I heard that a centre of Tibetan Buddhism had appeared in Petersburg. It transpired that one of my friends, Vitali Fed'ko, had invited [he provided the official invitation. *Ed.*] Ole Nydahl to Petersburg. Fed'ko at the time was head of an ethnic music ensemble. Either all the members of this ensemble, or all Fed'ko's friends, came to meet Nydahl, and there and then they all accepted Tibetan Buddhism. Furthermore, they not only became Tibetan Buddhists, but also disciples within the Karma Kagyu school. I was astounded by the spiritual strength of these people who, in an instant, decided issues which I had taken more than 20 years to resolve. For me, this was as puzzling as if the whole country were converted to Russian Orthodoxy, as if one day people went to sleep as pagans and the next morning woke up as Orthodox believers. To accept a whole new way of thinking is such a long and complex process, to my mind. How do people do such a thing?"[11]

Vitali Fed'ko managed to follow Nydahl's teaching for only two years, after which he left Karma Kagyu. The leadership of Karma Kagyu for Petersburg and all-Russia then passed to Alexandr Koibagarov, a talented religious leader and organiser, who currently spends most of his time in Moscow while continuing to head the 600-strong Petersburg community. Nydahl's disciples are exceptionally active; they participate in the academic and cultural life of both the city and the country as a whole, and organise regular excursions as well as various kinds of meetings for Russia's

Buddhists. This version of Tibetan Buddhism, however, was long distrusted by many Buddhists, and by the leadership of the legally recognised Buddhist organisations in Buryatia and Kalmykia (it had had a great influence on American youth culture) and was not accepted by them until the late 2000s. Gradually the ice thawed, and today Karma Kagyu has been recognised and cooperates with all the other Buddhist groups in Russia.[12]

Alexandr Koibagarov (left) with Sergei Filatov

A movement which is not part of the Gelug school headed by the Dalai Lama surprisingly started to develop in St Petersburg and some other Russian cities in the early 2000s: this was the Dzogchen movement which has existed in Russia since the early 1990s but was little-known. Gennadi Karpov, head of the Dzogchen community in Petersburg, told me that the Gelug community does not welcome Dzogchen. According to the Nyingma school, Dzogchen is the apex of spiritual development and until recently was considered to be the most esoteric teaching of Tibetan Buddhism. Thanks to the work of the Tibetan teacher Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche (1938–2018), Dzogchen spread all over the world, and five *gars* (teaching centres), one of which is in Russia, were established by him between 1979 and 1999. He was born in Tibet, but fled the country after the Chinese invasion, travelling through Nepal, India and Bhutan. In 1960 he met an Italian professor, Guiseppe Tucci, was invited to Italy and spent several years in Rome. From 1964 until his death, he was a professor at the Oriental Institute of the University of Naples, where he taught the Tibetan and Mongolian languages as well as the history and culture of Tibet. In 1992 he was invited to St Petersburg by Vladimir Montlevich and conducted a series of week-long retreats for a large number of people, some of whom, after Namkhai Norbu left, founded the St Petersburg Dzogchen community which they named "Sang'eling".

Dzogchen teaches an individual to find him or herself through self-liberation. The role of a teacher is to show how this state can be achieved by using meditation, discussions with one's teacher, ritual movements (dances), singing and the impact of various sounds. One of the basic practices is called "Shinei", and involves removing all stress in one's own consciousness and in one's relationships. Andrei Terent'ev explained this to me:

"Dzogchen (in the Namkhai Norbu tradition) is more popular than even Karma Kagyu in Petersburg at the

moment. It also exists within the old Tibetan Bon religion and in Buddhism, and theoretically it can be practised by a Christian, or anyone. It is subtle, it cannot be tied to any religion. In Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's interpretation, Dzogchen is almost a separate religion and its communities function as 'cultural centres'. Dzogchen is considered to be a teaching for the most intellectually developed and refined minds, and is therefore very popular – everyone wants to be a genius."[13]

Buddhist influence is even more noticeable within the youth and pop-culture of St Petersburg than in intellectual circles. At the end of the Soviet period Yuri Morozov[14] (1948-2006), the pioneer of Russian rock-Buddhism, was immersed in Buddhist spiritual practices, and during *perestroika* almost all the popular rock musicians[15] had dipped into the life of Petersburg Buddhist communities to a greater or lesser extent; among those interested in Buddhism the most famous was the rock musician and poet Boris Grebenshchikov, who at the end of the 1980s joined Karma Kagyu and met the Dalai Lama. Ole Nydahl insisted that Grebenshchikov either only follow the practices of Karma Kagyu, or leave, to which Grebenshchikov responded: "this is not Buddhism, this is KGB-speak" and left.[16] Leaders and activists in Petersburg Buddhist communities maintain that many other musicians, actors and artists had at times participated in Buddhist life, or continue to do so today, and Anatoli Alexeev-Apraxin claims: "A more or less accurate list of events and persons connected with Buddhism and the cultural life of St Petersburg over the past 15 years would fill hundreds of pages."[17] The more balanced Terent'ev observed: "I frequently notice Buddhist themes in the contemporary pop and art culture of St Petersburg."[18]

The spiritual searching of people in the creative professions did not focus only on Tibetan Buddhism, which took root in the city as early as the 18th century. In the 1980s the Buddhist intelligentsia and those close to Buddhist circles in Leningrad also became interested in Zen Buddhism, although attempts to create religious Zen communities failed. For long the Religious Zen Buddhist group following the South Korean traditions of the Choge Order of the Kwan Um school was the only stable group. The Choge Order was established in Korea in 1935 after the merging of two formerly conflicting Buddhist schools, and became the coordinator and administrator of the traditional Korean monastic Sangha. In 1972 a leader of Korean Zen, Seung San, and his disciples visited the USA and organised the first Kwan Um Zen centre in Providence (Rhode Island state) with the aim of adapting Korean Zen to the Western mind. He established about 50 centres worldwide, and in 1989 came to Moscow to attend the World Conference of Religious Activists organised by Mikhail Gorbachev. Here he met Alexandr Nemkov, gave him his centre's address in Providence, where in 1991 Nemkov spent eight months, undergoing an intensive course in Zen practices. On returning to Russia, Nemkov spent time with his friend Vasili Maximov[19], who, as a result of this meeting, translated a number of Seung San's books which set

out the teachings of the Zen Kwan Um school. In 1993, Seung San's closest follower, Su Bong, came to St Petersburg from the USA and conducted a three-day retreat at the Tsoi martial arts centre in Shvedsky Lane attended by about 50 people, while at the same time Seung San gave a lecture in the Leningrad House of Youth to an audience of about 100.[20]

Sergei Filatov with Buda Bal'zhievich Badmaev (right), lama in charge of the St Petersburg datsan

The retreat at the Tsoi martial arts centre was attended by Yuri Inyutin, a boxer and oriental martial arts practitioner, who owned a travel agency on the Nevsky Prospect. Inspired by the retreat, he travelled to South Korea in 1994, and, on his return to Russia, organised a Kwan Um group in the spring of 1995, serving as its leader until 1997. He was a prominent Buddhist in St Petersburg, very energetic, ambitious, efficient and sociable. "The Russian mind," he would say, "is demanding, mystical, extreme and militantly aggressive. The karma of Russians is close to the Korean karma. To the Russian mind Kwan Um means castration, and to Americans pacification [sic!]." A conflict broke out in the group in 1997 provoked by Inyutin's authoritarian style of leadership, whereupon he was replaced by the calmer and more collegial Boris Fedorov. Today the Petersburg Zen Centre Dae Hwap Son is headed by a Slovak dharma master, Oleg Shuk, while Poland has become the regional centre of Kwan Um for Russia. Russian members of the movement travel regularly to Poland for retreats, and Polish Zen teachers come to Russia. They are joined by teachers from South Africa, Hong Kong, Hungary and the USA. Kwan Um meditation in St Petersburg takes place in the *datsan*, and it is also here that visiting teachers offer instruction. Zen attracts rebels and nonconformists because of its anarchic and deliberately paradoxical nature. According to Terent'ev:

> "Back in Soviet times there was already a firm belief that Zen is a cultural, not a religious, phenomenon. This view survives to the present day."

Today another branch of Buddhism called Theravaada is gaining adherents. It appeared in St Petersburg some time ago with Bodhimandala and Patibodhana communities (in existence as early as 1992) which were visited periodically by teachers from Thailand, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. However, Theravaada remained a relatively minor phenomenon in the Buddhist subculture of St Petersburg until the mid-2000s. In 2006 the Theravaada monk Phra Chatra Hemapandhoi, a Thai and graduate of the St Petersburg State University, set up the Abhidhamma Buddhavihara Centre on the outskirts of the city in the village of

Gorelovo. It was supported by the Thai Embassy and attracted teachers from Thailand and Sri Lanka and was visited by an impressive number of pilgrims.[21] Some sought truth in this branch of Buddhism, some were attracted by its forms of meditation, particularly by Vippasana meditation, which is a method for transforming the personality through self-observation. It focuses on the interconnection between mind and body, perceived by concentrating attention on the physical sensations of the body, interacting with the mind and conditioning its state. Practitioners of Vippasana believe that this practice leads to a balanced mind, full of love and compassion.

Chatra Hemapandhoi had a deputy, the monk or *bhikkhu* Topper Pannyaavudho, a Russian engineer (formerly known as Oleg Onuprienko), whose understanding of Buddhism gradually diverged from that of Chatra, leading in 2009 to Topper and some members of the Buddhavihara Centre leaving and organising their own centre called "Theravaada.ru". In Topper's view, the Buddhavihara Centre under Chatra's leadership had increasingly focused over the last ten years on the esoteric, on yoga and vegetarianism because these were more easily accepted by the broad mass of people and reached a larger target audience. In contrast, the "Theravaada.ru" headed by Topper aimed to appeal to more orthodox Buddhists and those for whom Theravaada was their fundamental faith, as well as to those who did not wish to mix this faith with some general spiritual crusade, with ecumenism and the esoteric.

On feast days about 50 people, including visitors from other towns, would gather at the "Theravaada.ru" centre where traditional meditation, as favoured by Europeans, was not emphasised; rather this centre tried to be an Asian Buddhist temple, where the Buddhist way of life took centre stage, with services, occasional offices, lectures, tea drinking, the taking of vows, and discussions with monks and other Buddhists. The Theravaada branch of Buddhism became popular some 30 years after Buddhism had developed in St Petersburg, after Buddhist neophytes had been attracted to the exotic nature of Tibetan Buddhism with its admixture of pagan beliefs. According to *bhikkhu* Topper:

Sergei Filatov with
bhikkhu *Topper Pannyaavudho*

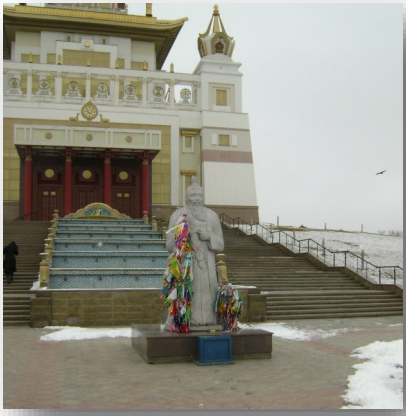
"People come to Theravaada in search of pure Buddhism, because Tibetan Buddhism contains too many mythological elements, is syncretistic, with later religious ideas added

and borrowings from Hinduism. Theravaada is the most 'atheistic'."[22]

The Buddhist movement in St Petersburg, no matter how spiritual and intellectually striking and original it may seem, involves only a few hundred people, too few for it to be considered significant, yet its influence is extensive, and at the beginning of *perestroika* this isolated and relatively small circle of people suddenly found itself at the centre of public attention. Many of Petersburg's Buddhists are involved in the serious study of Buddhist and related oriental subjects. The authors of academic collections of articles resulting from conferences are often (if not mostly) Buddhists; most of the more prominent Buddhist scholars at least do not call themselves *non*-Buddhists. Andrei Terent'ev told me that the second most authoritative Buddhist scholar in the city, Evgeni Torchinov (1956–2003), would "call himself a Buddhist one day, and then the next day deny his allegiance to that religion"; he did not always distinguish the fine line between a Buddhist and a Petersburg scholar of Buddhism.

Interest in Buddhism has declined over the past decade both in St Petersburg and in Europe as a whole, although book publishing has grown, and in St Petersburg alone several dozen books on the subject are published every year. In the early 1990s people were attracted to Buddhism because of what they saw as its exotic nature, while today, according to Andrei Terent'ev, "it is the intellectuals and well-educated who are seriously interested in Buddhism. Some of the Buddhist centres founded in the 1990s have disappeared, but there are others which have grown in all senses of the word."[23] Buddhism in St Petersburg has absorbed all the ideas and all the contradictions which are common to Russian and European Buddhism as a whole.

There is constant tension between European Buddhists and those for whom Buddhism is their traditional religion. Some 30,000 Buryats, Kalmyks and Tuvans in St Petersburg represent traditional ethnic Buddhism; for them everyday culture, folklore, elements of pagan practices, and medicine are of central importance. Europeans, in contrast, consider that the essence of Buddhism lies in philosophy and meditation; it is this, and not Eastern cultural traditions, which attracts new people to Buddhism, and it is the wish to develop namely these aspects which in fact unites both European Buddhists and the highly educated members of traditionally Buddhist ethnic groups.



The main Buddhist temple in Elista, capital of Kalmykia, built in 2005: in the foreground stands the "White Starets", spiritual protector of the Kalmyk people – a figure blending Kalmyk Buddhism with shamanism

1. A. Alexeev-Apraxin, *Buddizm v Peterburge,* SPB*,* Olearius Press 2008, p.76.
2. *ibid., loc. cit*.
3. For example "Devassari abuntu", 1905; "At a Japanese Exhibition", 1906; "Boundaries of the Kingdom", 1910; "Lakshmi - the Winner", 1909; "Indian Way",1913; "Commandment to Gayatri", 1916.
4. For example "Devassari abuntu", 1905; "Devassari abuntu with Birds", 1906; "Boundaries of the Kingdom", 1916.
5. The poets Andrei Belyi, Konstantin Bal'mont, Valeri Bryusov and Nikolai Gumilyov were particularly influenced by Buddhism. See: Tatyana Bernyukevich, *O retseptsii buddiiskikh idei v literature i filosofii Rossii kontsa XIX-nach. XX veka. V Buddizm Vadzhrayanny v Rossii: ot kontaktov k vzaimodeistviyu,* Moscow, Almaznyi put', 2013, pp.736–743.
6. Anna Shimanskaya, "Otechestvennaya tibetologiya: istoriya i sovremennost'" in *Buddizm Vadzhrayanny v Rossii: istoricheskii diskurs i sopredel'nye kul'tury*, Moscow, Almaznyi put', 2013, p.82.
7. The author's interview with Buda Bal'zhievich Badmaev, lama in charge of the St Petersburg *datsan*, 17 September 2018. Author's personal archive.
8. *Revival of Buddhism in Russia*. URL: http://buddhismrevival.ru/news/ (accessed 22 January 2019).
9. E.V. Leont'eva, *Putevoditel' po buddizmy,* Moscow, 2016, p. 227.
10. Vladimir Poresh, "Tibetskii buddizm v Rossii," *Sovremennaya religioznaya zhizn' Rossii. Opyt sistematicheskogo opisaniya,* Vol.3, Moscow, Logos, 2005, pp. 249–251.
11. Andrei Terent'ev, "How can one be a Buddhist scholar if one does not know what Buddhism is?" *Sokhranim Tibet* [*Let us save Tibet*]*,* 8 February 2018. URL: http://savetibet.ru/2018/02/08/print:page,1,andrey-terentiev.html (accessed 22 January 2019).
12. Author's interview with Alexandr Koibagarov, 18 September 2018. Author's personal archive.
13. Author's interview with Andrei Terent'ev, 19 September 2018. Author's personal archive.
14. Yu.V. Morozov, N.P. Morozova, *Against the Current*.// *KnigoGid*. URL: https://knigogid.ru/books/125780-protiv-techeniya/toread (accessed 22 January 2019).
15. For example, Viktor Tsoi, Alexandr Bashlachev, Sergei Kurekhin, Mike Naumenko, Sergei Shnurov, Evgeni Fedorov and his "Splean" group.
16. Author's interview with Alexandr Koibagarov, 18 September 2018. Author's personal archive.
17. A. Alexeev-Apraxin, *op.cit.*, p. 116.
18. Author's interview with Andrei Terent'ev, 19 September 2018. Author's personal archive.
19. At that time Maximov, a pensioner and former engineer, had earlier translated works of Carlos Castaneda. Later he moved to South Korea where he became a Buddhist monk. This first Russian monk of the Kwan Um school died in Korea in 2014.
20. Seung San died later in 1993.
21. A. Alexeev-Apraxin, *op.cit.*, p. 111.
22. Author's interview with *bhikkhu* Topper Pannyaavudho, 18 January 2019. Author's personal archive.
23. Author's interview with Andrei Terent'ev, 19 September 2018. Author's personal archive.

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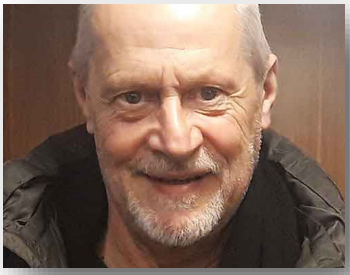
A Memorable Meeting: Sandr Riga

by Xenia Dennen

In 1992 I returned to Russia as Keston's Moscow Representative, after I had been refused a visa in 1976 by the Soviet authorities, and was thus unable to visit the country for many years. Those early days after the fall of Communism were a time when the people I talked to in Moscow feared the return of a tyrannical regime, when there was little food in the shops and there was social disorder. But how different it was to my short visits to the USSR in the 1970s, when you could not speak to anyone about such things as religious faith, apart from outside in the street, for fear of being overheard by ubiquitous listening devices. I found it extraordinary to be able now to speak openly. I remember particularly a meeting on 15th June 1992 when I visited Sandr Riga, founder of an ecumenical fellowship in the USSR. That evening I noted in my diary: "Sandr Riga lives in a communal flat – his room reminded me of a monk's cell. It had a table, two chairs, a hard bed (upon which I sat) and a cupboard. I drank my herb tea, he his coffee, and we talked. It was a joy to meet someone of such depth, intelligence, open mindedness and compassion."



Sandr Riga

Sandr was born Alexandr Rotberg in 1939 in Riga. In his youth he led a life without direction or meaning, he later recalled,[1] was interested in philosophy and the fine arts and in June 1960 decided to adopt the name of Sandr Riga. A dramatic turning point in his life – an unexpected spiritual experience – occurred one day when he was walking along a street:

> "… suddenly I felt I was someone walking in the Garden of Eden. Everything round me was transformed, although the same houses, trees, people and the noise of the city surrounded me. Everything was enveloped in an unearthly harmony, I could hear quiet heavenly music, colours strangely glowed, movement seemed almost to stop, time stood still, a crystal purity and love reigned everywhere. I experienced an inexpressible happiness, all that was ugly became beautiful. How long this sense of unity with all creation lasted I do not know."[2]

He endured thereafter much inner turmoil and a complex spiritual struggle: "I was like someone emerging from the grave after experiencing a spiritual crisis at around 30, and realising that life has no meaning without God."[3] He described a moment when he became acutely conscious of his helplessness, and failure to reform, while standing in semi-darkness before a crucifix in Riga's Church of St

Francis.[4] Many years later, in a 2009 interview, he related how someone whom we now consider to be a hero of the Soviet Gulag, Fr Josef Svidnitski, secretly ordained as a Catholic priest and who was imprisoned for his faith in 1984, came to his rescue when they met in Moscow:

> "He came to Moscow specially; we talked, he explained everything and while we walked in Sokol'niki I made my confession which took two hours… I remember the next morning saying 'Fr Josef, is there any hope?', as, like St Paul, I felt I was the greatest of all sinners… He replied, 'You are now clothed in white, like a small child.' I then believed that the Lord was able to forgive me."[5]

Church of St Francis in Riga

In 1971 Sandr, who did not want to identify with any particular Christian denomination, founded a fellowship called the Ekumena (registered eventually after the collapse of the USSR as the Society of Christian Ecumenists), whose members were committed to Christian unity and regularly produced a samizdat publication called *Prizyv* (*The Call*). A book about Sandr's life and the history and teaching of the Ekumena fellowship, also entitled *Prizyv*, was published by the fellowship in 1992.

From 1972 Sandr was followed, subjected to interrogation, as were many other members of Ekumena, until his home was searched and he was arrested on 8th February 1984. In the Butyrsky prison he refused to reveal the names of Ekumena members; six times he was examined at the Serbsky Institute, the notorious psychiatric facility which was used against Soviet dissidents before *perestroika*. Eventually he was diagnosed as suffering from "a sluggish type of continuous -form schizophrenia", a Soviet psychiatric definition[6] debunked in the West. On 31st August 1984 the Moscow City Court sentenced him *in absentia* to "indefinite enforced treatment".[7] In November he was transferred to the Soviet Far East, to a prison psychiatric hospital in Blogoveshchensk, a journey which took 50 days: "Here began hell on earth."[8] Sandr was forcibly injected with drugs, which gave him a high temperature, constant muscle pain and eventually a heart attack. After one treatment his tongue was paralysed; Sandr felt that his brain was being destroyed, and that he was dying. Miraculously he survived intact.

During his time in Blagoveshchensk, Sandr was allowed no contact with the outside world, apart from corresponding with his mother. She was able to send him small parcels of food, which took 20 days to reach Blagoveshchensk from Riga. His letters to her, covering the period November 1984 to March 1987,

are published under the title "The Abyss"[9] in the book *Prizyv*. On 12th April 1986 he writes:

> "My time here drags slowly. I don't know when I'll be let out. But meanwhile I try not to lose heart and to remain strong. I feel all right. April is windy and in the morning the ward is colder than in winter. But gradually it's getting warmer. I remember my childhood and youth, I remember

Riga Cathedral

> our city. How I would love to wander through Riga when the chestnut trees are in flower, how I would love to listen to some music in Riga Cathedral! But most of all I dream about seeing you again, hugging you, and talking endlessly about everything. Let's hope that such a meeting will be possible in the end."

He particularly needed literature to feed his soul, and on 16th December 1986 he writes:

> "… yesterday I received your letter and today your parcel. I shall have something to read now. Don't forget that more than anything I long for spiritual food. It helps me to forget about myself, to overcome the melancholy which is unavoidable in a place like this, and to feel a connection with home."

In early 1987 the enforced drug treatment was stopped – there was a sense of change in the air, Sandr recalled (Gorbachev had become Party leader in 1985), and in March 1987 he was flown to a psychiatric hospital in Riga where he was allowed visitors. Here he spent four months until his release on 20th July 1987. On 16th September he celebrated his birthday with his friends and members of the Ekumena fellowship, back in the room in a Moscow communal flat where we met in 1992.

From late January until late May 1990 Sandr was able to visit Italy, with a few days spent in Paris on the way back to Moscow. It gave him an opportunity to meet many of those who had prayed for him while in captivity. He mentioned to me how moved he had been by a group of Carmelite nuns, and in my diary I recorded: "At first he was perturbed to find them behind bars and himself looking at bars from the outside. So, for a minute he was unable to speak. Then he told them how they were more free in their 'prison' than many in the world outside." From his own diary entries,[10] covering his visit to Italy, we learn how he struggled to decide whether to remain in the West. On 20th March 1990 he heard that Soviet tanks had entered Lithuania, and a few days later appealed on Vatican Radio that "everything must be done to rescind the death sentence imposed on the Baltic States."[11] On 28th March he asked himself:

"Has the time really come to make that fateful decision? Must I lose my homeland, no longer see those close to me? I am an ecumenist, I have friends all over the world, but my home is over there. That's where I'm needed."

By the time he gave a short interview on Swiss television on 8th May, he had made up his mind. When asked whether he would return to the USSR, he replied:

"I am returning without really thinking about my own safety, but rather because I can be of greater use there; that's where the battle is being fought, and I can't give up."[12]

Four days earlier he had been granted an audience with Pope John Paul II, and that evening, while sitting in a café, had heard the news that the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian SSR had declared the independence of the Latvian Republic. In his diary he noted: "The beginning of the Exodus. The first line of our victory song."[13] The Soviet Union, however, did not finally collapse until December the next year.

Keston, Pope John Paul II, Amnesty International, and other Western organisations publicised Sandr's fate and campaigned for his release. As Keston's representative in Moscow I received a great welcome from him. He said to me: "Our brothers and sisters abroad came to our defence, including Keston College, to whom we are very grateful because it did great work in defending all the persecuted, including the Ekumena fellowship."

Today Sandr lives in Riga, and continues his life of prayer and his ministry of reconciliation. His words spoken 28 years ago, which I quoted in an interview published in Keston's magazine *Frontier* in 1993, are as relevant today as they were then:

"We want the barriers to go, the enmity to disappear, so that all confessions can enrich each other…We must stand together and recognise that the border dividing East and West is a human one. The most important thing is prayer; we can pray together…The closer we come to God, the closer we come to each other."[14]

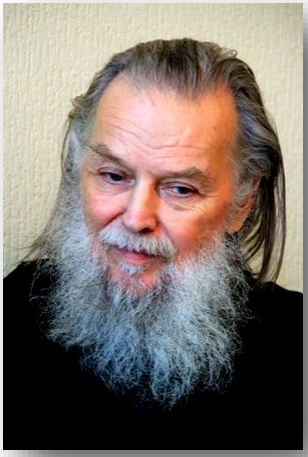
1. "My Call", *Prizyv*, Moscow 1992, p.223ff.
2. *ibid*., p.224.
3. http://yakov.works/library/17_r/radio_svoboda/20090919.htm (hereafter "Interview")
4. "My Call", *op.cit*., p.225.
5. "Interview"
6. *Russia's Political Hospitals: The Abuse of Psychiatry in the Soviet Union*, by Sidney Bloch & Peter Reddaway (London: Victor Gollancz) 1977, p.246.
7. "Pre-history", *Prizyv*, p.229.
8. *ibid*., p.230.
9. *ibid*., pp.160-79.
10. *ibid*., pp.251-319.
11. *ibid.,* p.297.
12. *ibid*., p.313.
13. *ibid*., p.310.
14. *Frontier,* Jan-March 1993, Keston College, p.9.

White Raven. The Story of Pavel Adelheim

by Alexandra Yudovich

Alexandra Yudovich *emigrated from the Soviet Union aged 22, and now lives in San Francisco, USA. She studied law and established an international company dealing with cross-cultural communications. She is also a professional writer and actor. This article was written in 2014 since when her father, a distinguished lawyer, has died.*

Every time my 90-year-old father had another nasty fall, that somehow left only bruises, scrapes, and relatively minor broken bones which always healed, my absolutely non-religious mother used to say to me with feeling: "there must be someone up there watching over him." Neither of us ever meant this literally, just a figure of speech. Then, one evening in January 2014 when we were talking on the phone, she rather out of the blue asked me: "Do you remember Pavel Adelheim?"



Fr Pavel Adelheim

I did of course, though I had never met him in person. I only knew of him through my father. As a young Russian Orthodox priest in the rabidly anti-religious Soviet Union, he had built a tiny church (St Nicholas) in a remote town called Kagan (Bukhara oblast, Uzbekistan) in 1969, funded by donations from his parishioners. Within months he was arrested for "disseminating anti-Soviet propaganda", his lodgings were ransacked and searched, his friends interrogated, and the church closed. Pavel's wife Vera travelled to Moscow in search of a lawyer, who would dare to take on her husband's case. She was referred, by whom we do not know to this day, to my father. He did indeed take on the case, and began to disappear for weeks travelling to Kagan and Tashkent by train – three days each way. He would return home exhausted and black with helpless rage, for this sort of trial was predetermined, and there was no possibility of acquittal. The best he could do was to articulate and speak the truth at the trial; and also provide the only link between Pavel and his family and community, and maybe, if he was very clever, soften the sentence just a little.

My father was visibly and fundamentally impressed by this man, by his extraordinary depth, compassion, valour, and simplicity. Adelheim was a scholar who spoke of mysteries simply; a man of endless kindness, he opened his home to anyone in need, for as long as they needed. He had inexhaustible

Pavel Adelheim with Vera, on his wedding day in 1959

patience with mentally ill and problem children. Decades later he, a poor priest, would build more churches, orphanages, and schools for "defective" children, as they were regarded in the Soviet Union and now in Russia. And every time a church or an orphanage was built he would be reprimanded, demoted, kicked out of his parish by the Church authorities; his schools and orphanages were closed, torn down or turned into hotels for rich foreign tourists. But that would be decades later…

Fr Pavel' s grave in Pskov, in the cemetery of the Church of the Myrrh-Bearing Women

In the summer of 1969, he was transported to stand his first trial in the city of Tashkent, in a hot courtroom, filled to the brim by the prosecution sympathisers. His parishioners, who had travelled 400 miles from Kagan, were not admitted to the building, and stood vigil outside. When the black car carrying Adelheim and his guards pulled up to the curb, the parishioners surrounded Adelheim in a thick, heaving mass. People were weeping, some dropped flowers under his feet,

Church of St Nicholas in Kagan, Uzbekistan (photographed in 2009)

many asked for his blessing. The guards unnerved, and impeded in their progress, did not interfere, just held the accused tighter by his arms and shoulders. It was a blindingly sunny day; the path from the car to the courthouse was no more than a hundred yards, but the progress was slow. My dyed-in-the-wool atheist father watching from the steps of the courthouse, thought the sun was playing tricks with his eyes, because, no matter how hard he blinked, what he saw was a halo over the head of this tall man, with his hands bound behind his back, being led by the guards through the mourning crowd.

Adelheim was tried and sent to labour camps for three years, where he would lose his right leg below the knee in an "accident". My family and I left Russia a few years later, and none of us had any news of him till his name appeared in the media in August 2013: Fr Pavel Adelheim was stabbed to death[1] – knife to the heart – by a disturbed house guest, who had come to the priest asking for help.

Adelheim's death, like his life, was both extraordinary and all too common for a man of conscience in Russia. The murder caused a wave of retrospectives[2] and publications about his life. A correspondent contacted my father for an interview, which took place in early January 2014 in Berlin. During the six hours the crew spent with my parents, they organised a call with Adelheim's widow. My father and Vera spoke for a little while, simply, just about life. When they said goodbye, Vera mentioned that she and her husband had prayed for him every day ever since 1968, and she continued to do so. They had been praying for my father for the last 45 years! I feel a little like my father did standing on the steps of the courthouse, trying to blink the halo away. It would seem my mother was right; someone had been watching over him.

Fr Pavel walks through snowy Pskov, his home from 1976 until his death in 2013

I am myself not the praying kind, and praying now for Pavel's soul would not be in my gift; but what I want is for the name of Pavel Adelheim to be known outside the confines of the Russian language and the Russian religious community.

1. News report in English: http://www.news.com.au/…/pro-p…/story-fndir2ev-1226692432964. For more on Fr Pavel see: *Keston Newsletter* No 6, pp.17-20, No 9, pp.11-15 & No 10, p.15.
2. The following links lead to Russian material about Fr Pavel:
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHyNXRBVSoM
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fo5CQFiGv_4
   http://oleg-kozyrev.livejournal.com/4631328.html

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