Keston Newsletter

No. 35, 2022

Fr Gleb Yakunin addresses a crowd after the end of Communism

The Legacy of Fr Gleb Yakunin

by Dr Wallace Daniel

In the early 1950s, shortly after he left his native Lithuania for the West, the poet Czeslaw Milosz wrote a book-length essay that soon became widely read. Titled *The Captive Mind*, Milosz sought to describe what he called the New Faith of Communism and its "magical attractions."[1] Milosz had recently witnessed Stalin's tanks in the streets of Vilnius, the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto, and the Soviet suffocation of Poland. Earlier, in 1939, when the German army conquered Poland, he had joined the Polish resistance and after World War II, he served as a diplomat for the new Polish government. In 1951, unhappy about the Stalinist control of the government, he went into exile in Paris. Milosz's *Captive Mind* seeks to explain why so many thinking people choose to give away their independent lives and collaborate with an authoritarian Communist government. He writes about the power of illusions and the attractions of human beings to an imaginary world, offered to them by a tyrannical leader, who pledges to take

From the Editor

Dr Wallace Daniel, to whom Keston will be always indebted for the way he enabled the Keston Archive to find a home at Baylor University, gave a talk at the 2021 Keston AGM about Fr Gleb Yakunin. He has kindly allowed me to publish his talk at the start of this issue of the *Keston Newsletter*.

Fr Gleb was a close friend of Michael Bourdeaux, Keston's founder, and much admired by him for his heroic struggle in support of religious liberty in the USSR. Michael recalls in his memoirs his first meeting with him in 1988, when the Millennium of the Russian Orthodox Church was celebrated in Moscow. Fr Gleb invited him to his flat and ushered him into a room, where some of the great activists of the religious liberty movement in the USSR were gathered.

August last year saw the 60th anniversary of the building of the Berlin Wall. Keith Clements in his article (p.15) explores the involvement of the churches in the peaceful demonstrations, campaigning for democracy in East Germany – sometimes called the "revolution of the candles" – which led to the fall of Communism in 1989, and then to the setting up of round tables for political dialogue and discussion, which during 1990 channelled the aspirations for a new order and led to the formulation of a new constitution.

The leader of our Encyclopaedia team, Sergei Filatov, is the author of an article (p.26) about a fascinating complex outside St Petersburg called Little Fyodorov Town (*Fyodorovsky gorodok*) which was built in an old Russian architectural style and was the brainchild of Nicholas II. Before the Revolution it housed Russian Orthodox clergy, who served in the adjacent Fyodorov Imperial Cathedral, frequented by the royal family. It was also a centre where all Russia's arts and crafts were promoted. Filatov relates the post-revolutionary history of Little Fyodorov Town, and records his interview with the priest who today is in charge of the complex, which he plans to restore and to turn into an academic centre and focus for arts and crafts.

Following my report to the 2021 Keston AGM and that of the Keston Center's director (p.32), I have included my review of Professor Peter Reddaway's memoirs (p.39). He, with Professor Leonard Schapiro and Sir John Lawrence (later Keston's first chairman), helped Michael Bourdeaux found Keston in 1969. To end this issue I have included some extracts (p.41) from an essay by Sir John Lawrence about his work as Press Attaché in the USSR during WWII.

Xenia Dennen

Also in this issue:

away all their doubts and fears. Milosz calls this the New Faith. It entices the individual to surrender the self, submit to a higher authority, and accept, without questioning, the "truth" advanced by this government power.

The Captive Mind explores an acute condition of the 20th and 21st centuries, a condition that characterises the authoritarian state. Milosz's description, however, goes much beyond the political. It portrays a way of thinking, of being, and of forsaking human creativity, and its accompanying anxiety, for a false sense of well-being and comfort. He depicts a sickness, an unhealthy condition in which human beings and entire societies exchange their personal identity for something magical, fantastical, and utterly seductive.

As I will argue, it was the captive mind and the structures supporting them that Fr Gleb Yakunin fought against, especially those structures that undermined freedom of conscience and the God-given creative spirit that lay embedded in each individual. These sacred gifts authoritarianism suppressed and, ultimately, sought to destroy. In Russian history, a strong tradition of dissent existed alongside an established political order that sought to compel compliance. Yakunin was part of that tradition, a rebel who rarely felt at home in a society that compelled submission and fostered what he saw as injustice. He was not without flaws: they often revealed themselves in an overwrought imagination that political transformation lay immediately ahead, a fiery personality, sometimes unwilling to accept compromise, and a naiveté about the good intentions of people with whom he came in contact. Yakunin's friend and confident Fr Aleksandr Men referred to him as a "fighter by nature," a term Yakunin used to describe himself.[2] He also had, however, an indomitable, questioning spirit, a willingness to take great personal risks in pursuit of causes he considered just, and a curious mind that never ceased to wonder. His life and behaviour fell outside Milosz's portrait of conformity to the established order and the fear of thinking for the self.

A questioning spirit

Born in 1934, in Moscow to a musician father and mother who worked as an accountant, Yakunin's childhood took place during some of the darkest years of Soviet history. As a young boy, he lost his father, whom he adored, in the Second World War. A deeply religious person, his mother regularly took the child to church. Prayer and the veneration of Mary, Mother of God, were common features of their household. The youth, however, rebelled against what he considered a lifeless and excessively ritualistic order of worship, and, like most other Soviet youth, professed himself to be an atheist.[3] Even then, however, he did not lose his curiosity about religion, the creation and evolution of the universe, and different systems of belief. Neither did he fear to raise questions, either in school or at home, although he found neither capable of giving him satisfactory answers. He, therefore, turned to books to open a world different from the realities he experienced around him. He was also deeply engaged in study of the natural world, whose exploration

aroused in him additional questions about the order of the universe.

Yakunin demonstrated his inquisitive spirit multiple times in his student years and early adulthood. It was displayed in his initial encounter with the young Aleksandr Men on the train, on a Sunday afternoon in 1953. Travelling from their Moscow homes to the Institute of Furbearing animals in the suburbs, he happened to strike up a conversation with Men about books, boldly telling Men about his fascination with Eastern religions, and asked his fellow student if he had any books on the subject.[4] The subject itself lay outside the Soviet mainstream; in the early 1950s, a person with an abiding interest in this topic would have immediately aroused suspicion. But it led the two students of biology to a wide-ranging discussion that soon blossomed into a friendship. The 17-year-old Men was a voracious reader, whose reading the same year that he met Yakunin consisted of the German Lutheran theologian and historian Adolph von Harnack, Pavel Florensky, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and the poetry of the great Orthodox Church Father Gregori the Theologian.[5] At that time, as Men soon learned, Yakunin had a serious interest in theosophy and Eastern mysticism, both of which contradicted the materialist philosophy that lay at the core of the educational system. He gave Men a copy of the philosopher Mitrofan Lodyzhensky's book *Higher Consciousness and the Ways to Achieve It*, the first of a three-volume study of mysticism in Western and Eastern religions at the beginning of the 20th century.[6] He asked Men to read it, so that they might discuss its contents and significance.[7] Yakunin had not left his atheistic beliefs, but, as he later told me, he was in the process of seeking his own way of being and seeing the world.[8]

Fr Aleksandr Men (left) celebrates his birthday with Fr Gleb Yakunin, 22 January,1963 © V. Andreyev

Aleksandr Men would have a lasting influence on Yakunin. In 1955, when the institute moved from Moscow to Irkutsk, Siberia, the relationship between the two young men deepened. The move placed both students in an unfamiliar city, whose diverse population and flat layout required a significant adjustment in their perspectives. Gone were the cultural attractions of Moscow, their places taken by the rough-hewn, simplistic ways of a frontier city. "At first, I did not like Irkutsk at all," said Aleksandr Men; the city and its environs had to grow on him, but in time, both he and Yakunin developed a liking for the multi-ethnic population and its diverse customs. Choosing to live in a rooming house on the outskirts of Irkutsk, apart from the other students,

Yakunin and Men developed a close friendship. Apart from their course work, the two students spent a great deal of time discussing theology, reading some of the same books, engaging in lengthy conversations about the history of religion, and arguing about the future of the Russian Orthodox Church. It was here that Gleb Yakunin moved beyond the atheism of his schooling and accepted Christianity, a change that set him on a new pathway.[9]

The three-and-a-half years Yakunin spent in Irkutsk changed him in several other specific ways. After discovering a cache of discarded books in the belfry of the church in which he worked part-time, Men shared these writings with his friend. He introduced Yakunin to the philosopher-theologian Nikolai Berdyaev, a favorite of Men's, whose theological ideas had a large impact on both of them. Yakunin found especially appealing Berdyaev's book *Philosophy of Freedom*. It opened up a new way of thinking about the independence of the self, and how it must seek its own creative path, unfettered by the state or any other outside authority.[10] Visiting a wide assortment of religious confessions in Irkutsk, the two students also experienced at first-hand many different approaches to the relationship between the church and society. Their visits convinced both of them that the Orthodox Church needed fundamental reform if it ever hoped to reach out to the Russian people. Moreover, in talking to various priests in and around Irkutsk, Yakunin learned of the catacomb church, which had never agreed to cooperate with the Soviet state.[11] His experiences in Irkutsk gave Yakunin a much broader perspective on religion, and they made him conscious of what the Church was not and what it could be. He would never be satisfied with the status quo.

In the process of his own intellectual and spiritual growth, Yakunin found the relationship with Men extremely beneficial. He gained from Men access to a world much different from the one he had previously experienced in his schooldays, a world whose boundaries were less fixed, the images less constrained, and his own future course less determined by the political system. The three and a half years he spent in Irkutsk broadened his understanding of Russia, its religious and cultural diversity, and its future needs – subjects he and Aleksandr Men continued to explore long afterwards. Each October, during the harvest season, the institute sent its students to nearby collective farms to help gather the potato crop. The institute

Fr Gleb Yakunin in 1993

assigned Yakunin to a different farm than his friend. But Men missed his companionship, and on days off, Men went in search of him – hoping to converse freely on topics that neither could discuss with their fellow classmates.[12] Such interactions probably led Yakunin to the priesthood.

Fr Gleb with his wife & children

Although they shared similar interests, Aleksandr Men and Gleb Yakunin took radically different pathways in their lives. Both young men entered the Orthodox priesthood at approximately the same time – Men in 1960, Yakunin two years later – during the massive closure of churches during the Khrushchev period. Both were convinced that the survival of the Orthodox Church depended on its capacity to reform and, despite the hardships that stood in the way, its ability to reach out to a needy population. Men saw himself as a parish priest, a writer, and a scholar, whose chief purpose lay in speaking to a people who had little knowledge of the Gospels, and who lacked the printed materials to fill the gap between the desire to know and the resources to satisfy this hunger.[13] In contrast, Yakunin was an activist. He was willing to confront the agencies of the state, despite the personal costs it might engender. Courageous, passionate about the need for change, and determined to fight injustices, he had little reticence about speaking up on matters he considered sacrosanct. Both Men and Yakunin embraced Nikolai Berdyaev's conception of human freedom. But while Men incorporated this view into his teachings and writings, Yakunin took it directly into the public square. He had less patience than Men, who for many years worked quietly within the confines of his parish community. Conversely, Yakunin's activities quickly reached beyond his local community to a national audience and, as early as the mid-1960s, his criticisms of the Moscow Patriarchate brought condemnation from the religious and political elite.

Yakunin differed from Men in yet another significant way. Aleksandr Men had an interest in politics. He regularly listened to the Voice of America and followed the political discussions within the Soviet government; as a student, he paid close attention to the national and international news. But he never wished to enter politics, and even when his friends, much later, during the tumultuous years of *perestroika*, urged him to run for office, he never took their pleas

seriously. In contrast to his friend and mentor, Gleb Yakunin had little hesitation about entering the political arena, never avoiding the chance to speak out on major policy issues, particularly concerning freedom of conscience and the defense of minority rights.[14] Despite the efforts of the Patriarch and other officials, who tried to silence his voice, Yakunin did not refrain from addressing political causes that he considered important to the well-being of religious believers. Politics, to him, was much more than the interplay between the competing interests of secular parties. It had a moral component, too, and he considered it a priest's obligation to keep this component alive.[15]

Lev Regel'son

Reaching beyond Russia's borders

In the *Captive Mind*, Milosz likened the Party to a church. "Its dictatorship over the earth and its transformation of the human species" depended on whether it could successfully direct the will to believe towards the goals of the Party. The Party refused to tolerate any other church than itself, and, therefore, Christianity became "Public Enemy No. 1."[16] In the Party's world, everything was prepackaged and delivered; little room existed for independent thought. In the mid-1970s, Fr Gleb, normally with his colleague the physicist and layman Lev Regel'son, wrote multiple letters to various groups and authorities. Among their letters, three are especially prominent on this subject: their "Appeal to Christians of Portugal," "Appeal to the Delegates of the 5th Assembly of the World Council of Churches," and "Letter to the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios." In the treatment of the letters, scholars have rightly emphasised the authors' descriptions of religious persecution, which these materials documented in detail. Much less noted was the critique of the captive mind that ran through all of these letters, how the fear of violence flattened the mind, suppressed human creativity and personal initiative, and destroyed the ability to imagine anything different beyond the illusions promulgated by the Party.

Fr Gleb and Lev Regel'son wrote their "Appeal to the Christians of Portugal" in April 1975, as the national elections approached. In the previous spring, in Portugal, its military had staged a coup, successfully overthrowing an authoritarian regime that had long existed, and setting the stage for free elections. Viewing these events from afar, Yakunin and Regel'son saw a similar pattern which Russia had experienced in 1917. They wrote their appeal as a warning for what might befall the country if it should follow a similar course, particularly given the developing strength of the Portuguese Communist Party. Portugal, they wrote, stood at the crossroads of history. They appealed to the Portuguese people to study the tragic events that had taken place earlier in Russia. Their letter cautioned the people against seductive,

simple, and straightforward proposed solutions to their problems. Then came the following sentences that might have been lifted directly from the novels of Dostoevsky about the consequences of the radicals' seductive promises. They "have attracted the politically inexperienced and spiritually unstable part of the people with simple and straightforward solutions," which has led to "an unconditional and unlimited coercion of the whole over the part, of the majority over the minority, of the government over the person." "Even now, they continue to attract many people in free countries by the supposed benefits of life without freedom."[17] The promise of security and the pressure to conform, prized by the captive mind, paralysed the responsibility to think for oneself.

Perhaps emboldened by the sending of their "Appeal" beyond the borders of the USSR, Yakunin and Regel'son soon followed it with another, their famous "Appeal to the Delegates of the World Council of Churches," meeting in Nairobi, which they wrote in October 1975. Beyond their survey of Soviet history and their account of state persecution of religious believers in the USSR, they spoke to the needs of the present, exigencies that went beyond the Soviet Union. They addressed a major problem facing Christianity as a whole: "Pluralism in our modern life requires that each community apply its particular creative efforts in order to establish new forms of Christian life and new forms of ecumenical cooperation."[18] They decried the suppression of freedom of thought, conscience, and human dignity, which political forces employed not only in the Soviet Union but also throughout the world. They thus connected the struggles in their own country with those taking place elsewhere.[19] The enemies of Christianity, as Yakunin and Regel'son argued, were those religious and political authorities who extinguished creative thought and action. In a world of naked force, when a collective and creative search for solutions to major problems was denied, humanity lost one of its most important resources.[20]

Many of the same themes the authors elaborated in the "Letter to the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios." Composed in April 1978, the letter was signed by Fr Gleb and members of his Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights in the USSR. The letter represented an attempt to reach out to members of the world community, as Yakunin and Regel'son had done earlier in their letter to the World Council of Churches. Yakunin and his colleagues wrote to Patriarch Dimitrios at a time when they had come under increasing pressure from the KGB. The letter's contents signified much more than an effort to seek protection from an impending danger. They spoke of their duty to support the future "freedom of the Russian Church" and of their concern for the Russian people, to whose needs the episcopate, in its "present blindness and deafness" and in complicity with governmental power, paid little heed.[21] The actions of leading church officials had psychological consequences; they had bred confusion about the role of the Church among believers: "The obstruction and detriment to church life are beginning to be accepted as something inevitable and even fitting."[22] The

actions of Russian church leaders had additional consequences. By discouraging any initiative on the part of the clergy, they had flattened everything out. They bred an "extreme mistrust towards all human creativity and human activity, including the defense of [religious] rights." To Orthodox believers, the result had been catastrophic: "It denied that God could act in history through human will and a human's creative activity."[23] In essence, the Church's complicity with political power had fostered an illusion of freedom, when, in reality, no one was free and the use of words masked the truth.

Faith and creativity

Arrested on 1st November, 1979, and put on trial the following summer for his work on the Christian Committee, Yakunin spent the next seven years living in extremely difficult conditions. While in prison and Siberian exile, he began to write poetry. During these years of suffering, Fr Gleb used poetry to help mitigate the harsh psychological and physical hardships. He composed a large part of a long narrative poem, which he titled "Eulogy of a Simple-minded Fool of God: In Honour of God, the Universe, and My Homeland."[24] In it, he discussed the conditions of the labour camp, the cold, hunger, and isolation he faced each day. But the poem was also about nature, the beauty of the skies, the seas, and the earth, with references to the Book of Genesis and the creation of the world, the wisdom and compassion of the Creator for human beings, and the sanctity of labour. Most importantly, Yakunin's poem emphasised the importance of freedom of conscience, which he maintained was a central component of human dignity.

Yakunin's poem also offered a reflection on Christianity and its introduction into the Russian land. Christianity had entered a pagan country; as Christianity spread, it had intermingled with paganism, with its shamans and witchdoctors, who cast magic spells and asserted special powers over the world.[25] In the Church, Yakunin noted, pagan thinking continued to manifest itself. His poem spared little criticism of the impact. Paganism expressed itself in forms that were antithetical to Christianity, which might be seen in multiple ways: in the Church's desire for power, its deceptions and lies, its cult of the leader, support for the Russian Empire, subordination to the state, excessive commitment to rituals, preference for the static over the dynamic, and, most insidiously, its collaboration with the KGB.[26]

Since the world's creation is an ongoing process, in Yakunin's view, the person is a participant in its creation. The Creator had not made human beings to be slaves, but, because God had endowed humans from birth with a divine spirit, they were made to be creative beings:

"The world is developing like a child,
Whom the father conceived.
You are not only our Creator,
You – are a child-loving Father.
We have this rare gift,
That a Supreme Authority gave us."[27]

The connection between creativity and faith Yakunin repeatedly emphasised. He

viewed the strengthening of this relationship as a primary task of Christianity, a compelling theme in the teachings of the Gospels. Yet the Church, in the 20th century, had turned away from that mission. In its place, the Church had promulgated an anti-Christian message, locking the door to society, wrapping itself in a pagan cult of empire, power, and collaboration with the KGB. In his poem, Yakunin severely condemned this captive mind and its effects on his country:

"Lies
I will not utter
From my mouth
And from my writing.
Listen –
You will listen to tears."[28]

In combatting this paralysing force, Russia had to rediscover the "revelatory voices in Russian literature" – from Maksim the Greek to Denis Fonvizin, Aleksandr Radishchev, Nikolai Gogol, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, and Nikolai Pomialovsky. Their writings showed how members of the Russian clergy always talked about God, but their actual behaviour demonstrated how little the spiritual occupied a primary place in their lives.[29] Such revelatory writers' support for freedom of thought, their willingness to look beyond static norms, and their courage to challenge unexamined beliefs, Yakunin said, had made significant contributions to the moral strength of Russian culture. They, along with the philosophical/theological writers of the late 19th and early 20th century – Vladimir Solov'ev, Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, and Vyacheslav Ivanov – offered guidance for Russia's future. They were the apostles of spiritual freedom whose voices had enduring importance.

Democracy and authoritarianism

After his release from exile in 1987 and his return to civilian life, his strong commitment to freedom of the spirit played a central role in Yakunin's future pursuits. They permeated his chief activities in the following decade: his service as a priest in a suburban Moscow church, his contribution to the creation of the Russian Christian Democratic Movement, his desire to enter politics, his work as a representative to the Federal Assembly of People's Deputies, his role in the writing of a new Law on Freedom of Conscience, his defense of that law against its critics, and his severe criticism of the Moscow Patriarchate. After the demise of the Soviet authoritarian order, Yakunin was intent on creating a new, more democratic, and open Russia. He contrasted the democratic model that he supported with an authoritarian society that, in different forms, threatened to re-emerge. Spiritual freedom, in his view, lay at the core of a democratic order, and it had to be enshrined in the laws.

What did democracy mean to Yakunin? How did he understand the Church's part in Russia's evolution towards a democratic society, and what opportunities and obstacles lay ahead? Several major principles underlay his vision for Russia's future. First, the renewal of Russian society had to begin with an unqualified rejection of the Communist ideology which had dominated the country's

thinking for the last 70 years. That ideology had injected into society the "spirit of malice". It had placed everything in the service of a radical and godless doctrine of power, which Yakunin called the ideology of destruction. Second, the

Fr Gleb addressing a conference on the KGB in 1993

Christian had the moral duty to serve other people, selflessly and through the spirit of love, and through politics and reform. He criticised the many times in Russia's history when passion had ruled and reason fell by the wayside. Third, the building of a free society and a democratic government could not be accomplished quickly, but required time. They had to begin with an educational system free of ideology, a system that valued independent thinking and creativity. These habits of mind had to be painstakingly cultivated by an educational process that prepared people for independent judgment and self-discipline. Yakunin believed all of the above to be prerequisites for a "creative democracy".[30]

Based on these general principles, Yakunin converted them into a political strategy for change. The moral reconstruction of Russian society stood as a fundamental need, a society built on truth, not fantasy, and on trust, rather than deception. Trust could not be gained without the Orthodox Church having a central place in Russian life. Its dramatically increased presence, however, did not resemble the Orthodox Church of the past, but rather a radically different Church, built on repentance and humility. The Church he envisaged drew on the best of Russia's heritage, and on compassion for the outcast, openness to the world, tolerance for dissenting views, separation from the government, and close adherence to the teachings of the Gospels and the writings of the Church Fathers, notably St John of Chrysostom. St John had denounced the abuses of power by ecclesiastical and political authorities, and the Church needed to follow his example. When driven apart by violence and the desire for power, the community cannot flourish.

The kind of future state Yakunin had in mind did not follow the Western liberal-democratic model, which he is often accused of desiring to emulate. Despite his emphasis on the importance of independent thinking, he did not admire the radical individualism that flourished in Western societies. The kind of democratic order that he advocated gave priority not to the individual, but to the interests of the community, to a conciliar form of government in decision-making. Authority rested on the principle of *sobornost'* (conciliarity). Rather than coming from the top down, power resided below, in the whole community, in which all the members and all religious confessions had an equal voice. A new democratic Russia, Yakunin asserted, required that the Church reclaim the principle of

sobornost'. In doing so, he maintained, it would help us "overcome the legacy of totalitarian slavery" and ensure that no one had "the right to infringe on the conscience or faith of the individual".[31]

As the Russian Orthodox Church seeks to recover its heritage and the voices from its past, it should not overlook Fr Gleb Yakunin. The Church has had a history of suppressing its chief critics, who fell outside the mainstream of the political orbit. Unafraid to suffer for his religious commitments, Yakunin risked everything, including the well-being of his family and his career as a priest, for the sake of his primary beliefs, most notably his defense of the freedom of conscience. Warned about the dangers he faced, he turned down the KGB's request that he cease his activities on behalf of religious believers or emigrate, for what he viewed as service to Russia and its future well-being. His admirers remember him as a courageous priest, a fighter for justice and the right to believe according to the dictates of one's heart.[32] As the Russian Orthodox Church, in recent years, has moved towards an alliance with the government, he has remained the voice of dissent, warning of the dangers to the Church's integrity. He is a spokesperson of democracy – Russian democracy – against authoritarianism. "We need such a person, now perhaps more than ever," recently said Viktor Popkov, a prominent member of the Moscow religious intelligentsia.[33] Yakunin's commitment to truth and to the dignity of the human spirit lie at the core of his legacy, and they convey a powerful and abiding message for the present.

Michael Bourdeaux (centre) with Fr Gleb & his wife in 1998

1. Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, trans. Jane Zielonko (New York: Vintage International, Random House, c1951, 1990), xi.
2. Aleksandr Men', *O sebe: Vospominaniya, interv'iu, besedy, pis'ma* (Izd-vo Zhizn' s Bogom, 2007), p.116; Fr Gleb Yakunin, interview by author, 10 May, 2007, Moscow.
3. Fr Gleb Yakunin, interview by author, 10 May, 2007, Moscow.
4. Zoia Afanas'evna Maslenikova, *Zhizn' ottsa Aleksandra Menia* (Moscow: Pristsel's, 1995), pp.117-19.
5. Men', *O sebe*, p.67.
6. In the first of his three-volume study, Mitrofan Vasil'evich Lodyzhensky (1852-1917), Russian theologian and theosophist, also explored the beliefs of Saints Francis of Assisi, Seraphim of Sarov, and Simeon the New Theologian. Mitrofan Vasil'evich Lodyzhensky, *Misticheskaya trilogiya*, vol. 1: *Sverkhoznanie i puti ego dostizhehiyu: Indusskaya radzhaoioga i khristianskoe podvizhnichestvo: Opyt issledovaniya* (Petrograd: Ekaterininskaya tip., 1915).
7. Men had not previously read Lodyzhensky's work and was highly critical of theosophy, but he read the book several times, in preparation for his discussions with Yakunin (Maslenikova, *Zhizn' otssa Aleksandra Menia*, pp.118-19; Men' *O sebe*, p.68).

8. Fr Gleb Yakunin, interview by author, 10 May, 2007, Moscow.
9. Ibid.
10. Nikolai Aleksandrovich Berdyaev, *Filosofii svobody. Smysl tvorchestva: Opyt opravdaniya cheloveka* (Moscow: Tip. A. I. Mamontova, 1911).
11. Fr Gleb Yakunin, interview by author, 10 May, 2007, Moscow. As a child, Aleksandr Men participated in the catacomb church in Zagorsk, where he came under the influence of a remarkable priest and nun. See Vera Vasilevskaya, *Vospominaniya XX veka* (Moscow: Fond Aleksandra Menia, 2001); English translation: *Women of the Catacombs: Memoirs of the Underground Church in Stalin's Russia*, trans. and ed. Wallace L. Daniel, preface Archpriest Aleksandr Men, foreword Roy R. Robson (Ithica: NIU/Cornell University Press, 2021). Yakunin did not know of the catacomb church's previous existence and expressed surprise to learn of its history and significance, both of which he learned in conversations with a young Orthodox priest in Irkutsk and Aleksandr Men.
12. Maslenikova, *Zhizn'*, pp.143-44.
13. In order to help fulfill this need, Men published abroad his *Son of Man*, which became a widely distributed and popular text on the Gospels. Aleksandr Men, *Syn chelovechesky* (Brussels: Zhizn' s Bogom, 1968). See Wallace L. Daniel, "Father Aleksandr Men's Son of Man," in *Voices of the Voiceless: Religion, Communism and the Keston Archive*, ed. Julie deGraffenried and Zoe Knox (Waco.TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), pp.30-31.
14. See, for example, Yakunin's commitment, which he expressed in the statement of fundamental principles, in Khristiansky komitet zashchity prav veruyushchikh v SSSR, "Deklaratsiya," in *Dokumenty khristianskogo komiteta zashchity prav veruyushchikh v SSSR*, vol. 1, Moscow, 1977 (San Francisco: Washington Street Research Center, 1977), p.1.
15. Fr Gleb Yakunin, "First Open Letter to Patriarch Aleksi II," 19 January, 1994, *Religion, State and Society* 22, no. 3 (1994): pp.311-312.
16. Milosz, *Captive Mind*, p.207.
17. Fr Gleb Yakunin and Lev Regel'son, "Obrashchenie k khristianam portugalii," 3 April, 1975, *Vestnik Russkogo Khristianskogo Dvizheniya*, no. 116 (1975): p.254. An English translation is available in Fr Gleb Yakunin and Lev Regel'son, *Letters from Moscow: Religion and Human Rights in the USSR*, ed. Jane Ellis (Keston, Kent, England and San Francisco: Keston College, Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism and H. S. Dakin, 1978), pp.29-31.
18. Fr Gleb Yakunin and Lev Regel'son, "Obrashchenie k delegatam V Assembleya Vsemirnogo Soveta Tserkvei," 16 October, 1975, Arkhiv Samizdata, no. 2380, in KA, Ort/SU/8/2, Yakunin file. An English language translation is included in Yakunin and Regel'son, *Letters from Moscow*, pp.41-50, and in *Religion in Communist Lands* 4, no. 1 (1976): pp.9-14.
19. Yakunin and Regel'son, "Obrashchenie k delegatam V Assembleya."
20. Yakunin's and Regel'son's thoughts came close to Milosz's statements about the perils of collective belief and how it forced new ways of thinking. The Party adopted from the Church the recognition of the power of collective suggestion. Spiritual hunger induced a person to accept a certain state of belief. "The Party has learned this wise lesson from the Church," Milosz wrote. "People who attend a 'club' submit to a collective rhythm, and so come to feel that it is absurd to think differently from the collective. The collective is composed of units that doubt; but as those individuals pronounce the ritual phrases and sing the ritual songs, they create a collective aura to which they in turn surrender" (Milosz, *Captive Mind*, pp.198-199).

21. Fr Gleb Yakunin, Hierodeacon Varsonofi Khaibulin, Viktor Kapitanchuk, and Vadim Shcheglov, "Pis'mo Pravoslavnomu Vselenskomu Patriarkhu Dimitriiu," 11 April, 1978, in *Dokumenty khristianskogo komiteta*, vol. 2: p.161; English translation, "Letter to the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios," in vol. 3: pp.290-97. An abridged copy of the letter was also published in *Religion in Communist Lands* 7, no. 3 (1979): pp.191-94.
22. Yakunin, Khaibulin, Kapitanchuk, and Shcheglov, "Pis'mo," p.161.
23. Ibid., p.160.
24. Gleb Pavlovich Yakunin, *Khvalebnyi primitiv iurodivyi, v chest' Boga, mirozdan'ia, rodiny: Poema*, with an introductory essay by Elena Volkova (Moscow: Biblioteka PravLit, 2008).
25. Fr Aleksandr Men made this distinction between magic and faith the subject of the second volume of his *Istoriya religii: v poiskakh puti, istiny, i zhizni,* vol. 2: *Magizm i Edinobozhie: Religioznyi put' chelovechestva do epokhi velikikh Uchitelei* (1971; repr., Moscow: Izd-vo Sovetsko-Britanskogo sovmestnogo predpriyatiya "Slovo," 1992).
26. Yakunin, *Khvalebnyi primitiv iurodivyi*, pp.85-89. Yakunin's criticisms of the institutional Church – its corruption, its silence, its refusal to stand up on behalf of religious believers, and its tight relationship with the regime – spoke to what had led religious believers away from the official Church. As Gregory L. Freeze has convincingly argued, "The Soviet regime sought to secularise by dechurching, but the net effect was not to dechristianise but to laicise, to free popular Orthodoxy from clerical control and to lay the ground for a dechurched religious revival in post-Soviet Russia." Gregory L. Freeze, "From dechristianization to laicization: State, Church, and believers in Russia," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 57, nos. 1 and 2 (March-June 2015): p.7.
27. Ibid., p.35.
28. Yakunin, *Khvalebnyi primitiv iurodivyi*, p.22.
29. Ibid., pp.88, 90-91. Yakunin quoted Iudushka Golovyov, in Saltykov-Shchedrin's novel *The Golovyov Family,* who remarked that the Russian clergyman is "very devout, but in his affairs, he is ungodly/and in the lives of our native clergy, the spiritual is not primary" (ibid., p.90; Volkova, "Poetichesky manifest Pravoslavnoi reformatsii," p.8).
30. These principles were inscribed in the founding documents of the Russian Christian Democratic Movement (founded in 1990), which Yakunin helped to write. ("Osnovnye polozheniya politicheskoi programmy rossiisskogo khristianskogo demokraticheskogo dvizheniya," and "Deklaratsiya Uchreditel'nogo Sobraniya Rossiiskogo Khristianskogo Demokraticheskogo Dvizheniya (RKhDD)," in *Khristianskie partii i samodeiatel'nye ob'edineniya: Sbornik materialov i dokumentov* (Moscow: Akademiya obshchestvennykh nauk pri TSK KPSS. Institut nauchnogo ateizma, 1990), pp.102-104, 106-107, 115, 120-22.
31. Yakunin, "First Open Letter to Patriarch Aleksi II," p.315.
32. Fr Gleb's lifelong commitment to social justice is underscored in Elena Volkova's recent *Glyba Gleba: Zapreshchenneishii ierei Yakunin* (St Petersburg: Izd. "Dom Galicha," 2021). Another recently published biography of Fr Gleb, a valuable addition to the literature, is Sergei Sergeevich Bychkov, *Sviashchennik Gleb Yakunin: Nelegkii put' pravdoiskatelya* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2021). Bychkov's book is particularly important in demolishing the portrait of Yakunin that the Soviet press attempted to create.
33. Viktor Popkov, interview by author, Moscow, 17 May, 2018. I am grateful to Alyona Kozhevnikova for her assistance in arranging the interview.

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The Fall of the Berlin Wall: the Churches' Role

by Keith Clements

August 2021 saw the 60th anniversary of the building of the Berlin Wall between East and West Berlin. Even though it was much shorter than the border between the German Federal Republic (GFR) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and represented only a fraction of the so-called Iron Curtain between the Western and Eastern blocs, for nearly 30 years this 26-mile barrier of concrete and wire mesh, its 302 armed watchtowers overlooking a forbidding "death strip", became the defining symbol of the Cold War. In an attempt to disguise the fact that before the building of the Wall some 3.5 million East Germans had defected from the GDR, many by crossing from East Berlin into West Berlin, from where they could travel to the GFR and thence to other Western countries, the GDR authorities officially called the Wall the "Anti-Fascist Rampart". By contrast the mayor of West Berlin at the time, Willy Brandt, called it the "Wall of Shame". Emigration from East to West was now almost halted, but between 1961 and 1989 over 100,000 people attempted to escape the GDR. Over 5,000 even managed somehow to get through, under or over the Wall. Estimates of those who lost their lives in making such attempts in or around Berlin vary from 136 to 200.

The Wall across the centre of Berlin © Thierry Noir

Building of the Wall started on 13th August 1961. Some of us can remember well the sense of shock and foreboding at the news. Soon the barbed wire barricades put up by the East German police were replaced by the grey concrete slabs of the Wall proper. It brought a sense of immovability, which came to be accepted resignedly by people in the West no less than the East. For those of us in that generation, the Wall came to be regarded as a permanent feature of our world, certainly as far as Europe was concerned. But if the Wall enforced ideological division within Germany, and signified the wider separation and hostility between Communist East and capitalist West, it also underlined the GDR's intention to exercise total control over the lives of its citizens, including of course the life of the churches. It is now more than 60 years since the Wall went up, and later this year it will be 33 years since the dramatic night of 9th November 1989

when the Wall was opened and people began to move freely across it in both directions.[1]

A whole generation is now with us for whom that event, let alone August 1961, is bygone history. Only odd bits of the concrete now survive as mementos of a former time, in various parts of the world. But taking a distant view of the past can reduce its significance. The Communist period being over and done with, the notion can grow that it does not matter now, and that its passing was in any case inevitable, like so much else in history.

Gethsemane Church, focal point of the Berlin peaceful protests

The fall: not a foregone conclusion

At the time however, even in the autumn of 1989 as things were stirring dramatically in the GDR, as the church-led prayer-vigils and peaceful, candle-lit demonstrations were attracting massive support on the streets of Dresden, Leipzig and Berlin, real change seemed anything but certain. The hopes were wrestling with deep fears. Over the whole scene hung the shadow of what had happened less than six months before, in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, when on 5th and 6th June the students' appeal for democratisation in China were brutally crushed by the military. Would the GDR respond similarly here? Would the ruling Communist Socialist Unity Party (acronym SED) make concessions, or entrench itself still further in power? Not all the signs were good. There had been arrests in response to earlier pro-democracy activities from 1987 onwards, including some church-related groups. In February 1988, the SED politburo member for church affairs. Werner Jarowinsky, issued an unmistakable threat to growing church-related voices for change in the GDR:

"That which causes concern is the open and increasing misuse of church facilities for purposes that have nothing to do with the church or the exercise of religion, but that on the contrary hinder and even endanger the right of believers to the free exercise of their religion."[2]

The matters proscribed for church engagement included peace and disarmament, for which the state alone claimed responsibility. In 1989 Jarowinsky reported on the growingly popular meetings in and around churches:

"The happenings in several Berlin churches are matters of justifiable concern: they have become an unreasonable and dangerous burden. Purely political events have been staged, and anti-government slogans and appeal for street brawls and confrontations are permitted... The boundary of reasonable behaviour has been overstepped, the bow has been pulled too tight…"[3]

The "revolution of the candles", as it was being called, was attracting international attention and excitement. But for the people actually taking part in it fears were also mounting. The first demonstrations in Leipzig and Berlin were met with police brutality and many arrests. Even as late as 18th December 1989, weeks after the dramatic night of 9th November, Superintendent Johannes Richter speaking to a packed congregation in the historic St Thomas Church, Leipzig, felt impelled to say:

> "We look back on 9th October. We gathered together for the first time in a prayer service here in our church. We can remember that day vividly. The blood in our veins froze. What we knew was so frightening that it almost took away our ability to speak. We prayed and then went outside into a situation fraught with uncertainty, one in which anything could happen... And then the miracle of Leipzig took place. The overwhelmingly massive demonstration moved completely around the centre of the city unmolested. The shadow cast by the Square of Heavenly Peace in Beijing had been driven away.
>
> We look back to the weeks lying between that memorable Monday and today. We have witnessed breathtaking events. Unimaginable, indeed, inconceivable things have happened since then. But mixed with the great hopes and expectations of those days are concerns. There are concerns about the movement's calm, peaceful and nonviolent continuation. There are concerns that decisions about our future will once again be made by others. There are concerns whether we have sufficient competence and altruism to meet the demands placed upon us. There are concerns whether we have the staying power after so many years of humiliation, those times when we were treated like children, to pursue our own way [with] patience, clarity, and decisiveness. There are concerns whether we will be able to structure a society of reconciliation, one in which all people, regardless of their world view or political persuasion – as long as it is not a Neo-Nazi one – are able to feel safe and secure."[4]

Richter went on to say that the churches and representative opposition groups, had asked the citizens of Leipzig, on this day, 18th December, to form a human chain along the streets, which on the previous ten Mondays had seen hundreds of thousands walking in peaceful demonstration:

> "The lights of countless candles will remind us of those who suffered under the violence and oppression of the Stalinist power structure, of the events during this autumn in our country, of the imprisonments, of the nonviolent resistance, and of the beginning of democratic renewal. This quiet rally will reflect a spirit of determination and at the same time demonstrate a spirit of peaceableness, in spite of the discordant voices that are being heard on the fringes of our society."[5]

The revolution of the candles

That is indeed what happened, then and thereafter. The "revolution of the candles", in which the churches took a leading part in sponsoring the non-violent demonstrations, and articulating and mediating to the regime, and the public as a whole, the demands for dialogue with the democracy movements, led to the setting up of the round tables for political dialogue and discussion across the GDR. It was these which during 1990 channelled the aspirations for a new order in the GDR, and a new relationship to the GFR, into the formation of a new constitution for the state, and in due course for a reunified Germany.[6]

That the churches had been able to play such a key role in the *Wende*, the dramatic change towards democracy, surprised many in the outside world, who had assumed that nearly 45 years of Communist repression would have irremediably weakened the churches' capacity for witness in the public sphere. It also surprised many in the GDR churches themselves. Not that there were no precedents for church agency for change in Eastern Europe – witness the crucial role of the Roman Catholic Church in events in Poland, especially the Solidarity movement from 1980 onwards. Of course there were a number of important levers of change in the GDR. There was the progressive sense among the population at large that, while the country was materially faring better than most other Eastern bloc states (in social provision and healthcare for example), in comparison with the GFR and other Western neighbours, its citizens were economically second-class European citizens. Dissatisfaction with the political culture itself was growing. I recall one Baptist pastor at an international meeting in 1985 saying of the GDR, "This country is built upon one big lie"; by 1989 such feelings were being expressed more openly. The local elections in May that year were widely dismissed as a manipulated farce. Despite the restrictions on travel abroad, emigration via the GFR's embassies in Warsaw, Prague and Budapest steadily increased during 1989, and became a flood when in September Hungary opened its borders with the GDR. Emigration was now no longer a running sore, but a massive haemorrhage from the entire social fabric, and the Wall was an ineffective torniquet. At the same time, the signals from Moscow were not encouraging for those in the regime, who were counting on continuing Soviet support for the status quo. All over the GDR the government propaganda posters had for years been proclaiming slogans like "The unbreakable solidarity between us and the USSR is the guarantee of our progress and prosperity". That was sounding rather hollow now as Mikhail Gorbachev, innovator of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, was hinting that the GDR would now have to solve its own problems by itself. But that left open how that problem-solving would be achieved, by a regime which hitherto had operated only by rigid control and the threat of force. The outcome could all too easily turn into violence and bloody chaos.

A long history of faith and hope

The crucial response of the churches in helping to ensure a transition that was

both peaceable and productive, cannot be understood as simply a daring reaction to immediate crisis. It was the outcome of a history of faith and thought, dating from well before change began to vibrate in the later 1980s, from well before the building of the Wall in 1961, and in fact originating before the official founding of the GDR in 1949, in what since the end of World War II in 1945 had been the Soviet occupation zone. It used to be a slightly subversive joke in the GDR, that every official statement about the standing of the government and the main political party, the SED, began with "In 1945…" The dire state of the country left by Nazism and military defeat provided the justifying backdrop to all that was now being attempted by Marxist socialism, and which needed protection from the allegedly continuing Fascist threat from the West. As far as the churches were concerned, however, the dark experience of living under Hitler carried a less self-justifying lesson. The years 1933–45 had scarred the churches both negatively as they contemplated the degree to which they had acquiesced in the Nazi ethos, and positively as they held before themselves the example of the Confessing Church in its rejection of the Nazi ideology. The famous 1934 Theological Declaration of Barmen, the charter of the Confessing Church, included in its theses the statements:

> "We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords – areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him.
>
> We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the Church's vocation as well.
>
> We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church, over and beyond its special commission, should and could appropriate the characteristics, the tasks, and the dignity of the State, thus itself becoming an organ of the State."

In other words, church and state may be separate, but they are both areas over which God, as known in Jesus Christ, is sovereign, and where his will is to be sought and obeyed. The church has its God-given commission and responsibility in the public sphere, as well as in the private and "religious" domains. After 1945 this theological landmark was kept in view in the East as well as in the more congenial West.

Paradoxically, while of all the Soviet-bloc states it was in the GDR that Marxist materialism and "scientific atheism" were most rigidly proclaimed as the official ideology, at the same time the churches were able to maintain a relatively high degree of autonomy in their life, structures and governance. In 1949 the founding constitution of the GDR included guarantees of religious liberty, individual conscience and belief, and the rights of the churches to form corporate entities, to give religious instruction in schools, and to hold services and provide pastoral care in hospitals and prisons. Compared with some other regimes, the

GDR held back from a full-frontal attack on the churches, however much they represented an alternative to official state ideology. For one thing, the territory of the GDR was the heartland of the Lutheran Reformation. The great historic sites of Wittenberg, Erfurt and Magdeburg lay there, and in 1946 about 80% of the GDR population identified as Protestants, 12% as Roman Catholics. The regime therefore had to act with some care. An all-out attack on Protestantism would involve a provocative assault on Martin Luther as a great father of modern German nationhood, its language and culture: better to allow him a place on the cultural pedestal, and downplay the religious element in his legacy. Moreover, for all the ambiguities of the churches' attitudes during the Third Reich, including the outright Nazism of the "German Christian Movement", respect had to be paid to the Confessing Church and its resistance to the nazification of the Protestant faith, not to mention the stance of those who like Dietrich Bonhoeffer had actually ventured into political opposition to Hitler and paid the ultimate price. From the beginning, the GDR state strategy towards the church was one not of enforced elimination but of toleration – with very strict *control.* The linchpin of this strategy was the Marxist belief that material progress under socialism would itself convince people that religion was, if not an obstacle to their welfare, unnecessary and irrelevant, and would wither away. The success of this argument, of course, relied much upon the promise of social well-being and happiness actually being delivered. Meanwhile the churches had to live within the confines prescribed by the state, being allowed to practise their strictly religious activities. But who was to define what constituted "religious" activities? It was on this issue that much friction was to develop. In late 1989, it ignited the "revolution of the candles", but the potential for it was there from the beginning. The pastoral and educational work in hospitals and prisons, the provision of care homes for the elderly – such social service was accepted and welcomed within the framework of state social care policy. But public discussion of the basis for such provision, not to mention wider issues of social justice and above all international peace – these were not regarded as anything to do with "religion", being the sole province and responsibility of the state. Among the small political parties authorised to exist alongside the SED was the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which gave some Christians opportunity to participate in political discussion, but only in line with the SED. Long before the concrete Wall went up in 1961, therefore, the wall-mentality was in operation: an attempt to hem in a section of society, in this case the churches, to call that area "religion" and proscribe activities deemed inappropriate within that wall. This did not augur well for many Christians, especially those who felt a continuing loyalty to what the Barmen Declaration had set out in 1934.

Inner emigration and the war of attrition

The GDR therefore proved an uncomfortable context for Christians. It is not surprising that some took the line of

"inner emigration". This phrase was coined by Johannes Hamel, a former Confessing Church pastor, who served as pastor and lecturer in the GDR during the 1950s, and whose short book *A Christian in East Germany* is one of the most moving and thought-provoking testimonies from that period. "God's Beloved East Zone" is how Hamel described the early GDR, which no doubt sounded offensive to some of his Western readers, who could only think of any part of the Soviet bloc as the territory of the devil. His point was to make clear that for Christians there can be no wholesale disengagement from their context however forbidding (he himself underwent a period of imprisonment under the Stasi, as he had likewise suffered the attentions of the Gestapo), because the loving God is present and active there. He vividly warns students of the temptation to inner emigration as leading to abnegation of all civic responsibility, or to isolation in hate or fear, or a dangerous double existence:

> "On the one side in the Bible Study hour, in public worship, communion and cell group; on the other side in the public life of the student. With time one becomes accustomed to this double life and one finds it no longer unbearable; or one emigrates spiritually in secret, to the West, and hopes for the Americans, i.e. for American bombers and tanks – a strange hope for us in Germany! Alongside of this runs a deep, only too understandable, human bitterness and national hate, which longs for the day when the foreign tormentors will be beaten, and the German tormentors will hang from the gibbet. Under the so uniform surface of our national life smoulders a dangerous fire. One can only shudder to think of the time when it may break forth."[7]

I well recall, during a visit to the GDR in 1978 with a group of British church people under the auspices of the British-GDR Friendship Society, one of the state-appointed "minders" of our visit saying to us after an informal prayer service in a hotel bedroom, which he had joined at our invitation, "At heart, I feel I'm still a Catholic".

In such an environment it was not easy to maintain a life of faith with integrity, either individually or corporately. Despite all the official assurances about freedom of religion and belief, if one believed that faith included an orientation to justice and peace one had to tread warily outside that wall marked "religion". Not that this deterred some individuals from voicing the gospel in the secular realm. For example, a young woman of whom Hamel tells, who was threatened with dismissal from her factory job because she would not vote for a resolution that had been put before all 900 employees, against "the capitalist and warmongering West", above all the USA. Summoned to the podium to justify her refusal to vote, she declared: "This resolution... breathes hate. Do you think that peace can come from hate? From hate comes only fighting, strife, blood and tears. Real peace between man and man, and between nation and nation, comes from God, who has brought peace to us all. Where his peace is accepted, peace arises among human beings. But the resolution says nothing of this."[8] She decided to resign her job, but

she had stirred up a vigorous debate at the factory.

For the reasons stated earlier, throughout the period of the GDR's life – under both the regimes of Walter Ulbricht (to 1971) and Eric Honecker (from 1971 to late 1989) – the churches did not face a policy of total elimination by the state. But they certainly had to endure a steady war of attrition, aimed at confining their activities ever more tightly within the religious wall, and even seeking to replace Christian baptism and confirmation with the state's own secular rites of passage. Immense pressure was brought upon young people to join the Communist youth organisations at the expense of the church-led ones. An incident which scarred many consciences was the suicide in 1976 of Pastor Oskar Brüsewitz of Zeitz, in protest about the GDR policies towards youth and what he saw as the church's too-ready accommodation with the state. There was discrimination against committed Christians, as was brought home to me when a Baptist pastor took me into his teenage son's bedroom – set out as a science laboratory with instruments on the table and charts covering the walls – and said that his son's consuming ambition to be a biochemist would not be fulfilled, since a pastor's offspring could not expect to be given a university place. Moreover, while the churches were debarred from public life, the state did not debar itself from attempting to monitor the church's internal life within the religious wall. The formidably efficient State Security Service saw to that, and the full extent of its infiltration of the churches became clear only after the *Wende*.

Not a spare time Gospel, no withdrawal from the secular world

But the default position taken by the state, that the church had no voice in the public and political realm (unless it was that of endorsing the state's policies), greatly concerned a number of church leaders. One such was Heino Falcke, during the 1970s Principal of the Gnadau Theological College, and then Provost of Erfurt. At a Synod meeting in 1972, and in an address to the Baptists, he publicly challenged the state view that socialism was in effect primitive Christianity put into practice, and that specifically religious activity was for private life and leisure hours:

> "To this we must say 'No'... We cannot accept withdrawal from the secular world ... Were we to settle for that we would be falsifying the Gospel of freedom into a spare-time Gospel... We would be conceding that man's political maturity depends on his liberation from Christ rather than on his being liberated by Christ."[9]

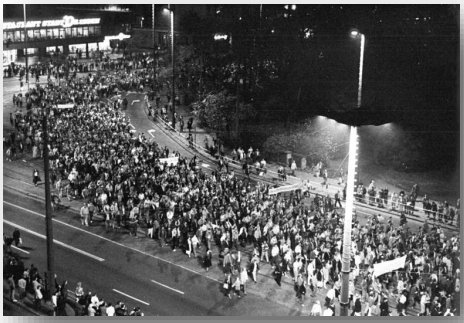
This stance refused either to withdraw totally from the socialist context, or to give socialism a carte blanche blessing. Rather, it sought a better kind of socialism than the state was capable of, and therewith appealed for dialogue with the state, and an opening up of public discussion on how people were actually faring in the present socialist society. There was little immediate response from the state to Falcke's plea, but over the years there came a grudging respect for the churches' social role, with frank exchanges on matters such as youth and education, the

military education imposed on schools, care of the elderly, and opportunities for the church to extend its ministry on the airwaves. At a much publicised "summit meeting" on 1st March 1978 between Eric Honecker and the Church Federation executive board, certain concessions for the churches were agreed, on media access, prison chaplaincy work and a number of charitable enterprises, through which the state recognised the reality of the "social presence" of the churches. At this time and into the 1980s the Presiding Bishop of the Protestant church in the GDR was Albrecht Schönherr, who had been one of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's students. He now proved himself a shrewd diplomat. Associated with him were phrases like "a church within socialism" and "critical solidarity" with the socialist state. These were terms that Schönherr himself did not invent but felt he could live with. He safeguarded space for the church – "a church without privileges" – while at the same time insisting that the church must not simply stay in that space away from the wider world, but be, as Bonhoeffer put it, "the church for others". The state was being served notice by the church that it had its own understanding of its role, and was not going to relinquish it, however much the state was to deny it.

Breaching the Wall from both sides: the universal Christian fellowship

One unsurprising effect of the erection of the Wall in 1961 was the opportunity it gave the GDR to entrench and codify its separateness from the GFR, and this had major consequences for the Protestant churches. Hitherto the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD) had embraced under its umbrella the regional (*Land*) Reformation churches of both West and East Germany. This became a deeply divisive issue for the church leaders, but in 1969 the regional churches in the East decided to form a separate Federation (*Bund*) of Evangelical Churches in the GDR, and similar action was taken by the Baptists, Methodists and other free churches. It might have seemed that the Wall-mentality was being triumphantly imposed on the churches themselves. But it did not prevent a continuing close relationship between the EKD and the *Bund* of the GDR (with certain economic benefits for the GDR). Still less did it affect the participation of the churches in their respective confessional fellowships at the European and world levels, nor their active membership of the ecumenical bodies, the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches (WCC). The GDR regime of course watched such participation carefully, with an eye to using it for its own political ends. At the same time, the ecumenical movement had the potential for stimulating and supporting the internal movements for justice and peace, at work in the GDR, which were to prove a major force for change in 1989. Care of the environment in the relatively heavily polluted GDR, for example, was of increasing concern to activist groups. At the 6th Assembly of the WCC in Vancouver, 1983, the programme on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation was initiated as a priority. In line with this, at the 9th Assembly of the Conference of European Churches in 1986, it was the churches of both the GFR *and* GDR who called for the convening of an assembly of all churches, of all denominations, in

countries that were signatories to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Thus was initiated the ecumenical process leading to the First European Assembly on the theme "Peace with Justice" at Basel in the growingly excited summer of 1989. In one sense the Berlin Wall was becoming less and less relevant to the ecumeni-



Leipzig demonstration, October 1989

cal churches of the GDR. The new international currents of hopes and commitment to issues of peace, justice and creation, were flowing into their life and consciousness, however solid that Wall still seemed to be. Certainly the demarcation between "religion" and public life was being progressively disregarded. By now, it was evident that the only Wall that now mattered was not that which divided Berlin at the Brandenburg Gate, or which cut the whole of the GDR from the West, but that which the GDR government, impervious to reality, was maintaining between itself and the people of the GDR at large.

In taking on the role of mediator of the calls for democratisation in late 1989, in providing church buildings for gatherings of prayer and protest; in calling for the cry "*We* are the people!" to be heard by the government; in going onto the streets and into the city squares with their candlelit processions and vigils, for the sake of a non-violent and peaceful end to totalitarian rule; above all in calling for *dialogue* – in all this risky venture the churches were not suddenly acting out of character. They were identifying with and drawing upon a stream in their history, going back to the Confessing Church of the 1930s, which had somehow survived, however tenuously at times, through all the hardships, disappointments, and compromises of the years since 1945. To illustrate the depth of spirituality and commitment at the heart of such action, I close by referring to one of those who played a major role in the peaceful demonstrations in Leipzig, Lutheran Professor Ulrich Kühn. In October 1989, at one of the meetings in the historic St Thomas Church, using the gospel account of the encounter between Jesus and Pilate, he preached on the topic of power. Power he said, "is a commodity loaned to us" for the welfare and protection of the people:

> "We do not appropriate it for ourselves; rather it is given to us by God for the welfare and protection of the people. Political power must be protected from misuse, and in our country it must be controlled by the public. Power must be shared and the people must have a say. This requires the separation of state and party, because dialogue and a monopoly of power are incompatible. Free elections that include a choice among party programmes are imperative. A separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and the judicial branches is also needed."[10]

This was as far removed as imaginable from the corralling of "religion" away from the public square, and indeed Kühn was introducing a new element into the public discussion – nothing less than a revision of the GDR constitution itself. I first met Ulrich Kühn in 1985, well before the *Wende* was on the horizon, at a Faith and Order meeting in Norway. Over lunch one day he told me about his early life. He had been born in 1932 and brought up in a village near Dresden. One day in February 1945 he and his parents had to go into Dresden. They had heard about an allied air-raid on the city a day or two previously, but nothing had prepared them for the sight of utter devastation that met them. In all the innocent ardour of youth, his response was, there and then, a prayer to God in which he dedicated himself to the cause of peace. That might have been dismissed as a piece of youthful romanticism, and it certainly seemed totally unrealistic as he grew up in the GDR, where the government had its own idea of "peace", in which the churches had no role but to follow the official line. But the seed had remained in his heart, and at the time when it was really needed, in November 1989, it burst into full flower. Neither the concrete wall, nor the confining wall built around "religion", nor the political wall of control between the regime and the people, in the end, could withstand the persistence of faith.

The Wall no longer a wall

1. For a full and vivid account of the churches' role in these events, see Jörg Swoboda. *The Revolution of the Candles. Christians in the Revolution of the German Democratic Republic* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press), 1996.
2. Swoboda, *The Revolution of the Candles,* p.30.
3. Ibid., p.31
4. Ibid., p.25.
5. Ibid., p.25.
6. Official demolition of the Wall began on 13 June 1990. Dissolution of the GDR, and enactment of German reunification, took place on 30 October 1990.
7. Johannes Hamel, *A Christian in East Germany* (London: SCM Press, 1960), p.20.
8. Ibid., p.48. The full account of this incident makes powerful reading.
9. Cited in Trevor Beeson, *Discretion and Valour. Religious Conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe* (London: Collins, 1974), p.185.
10. Cited in *The Revolution of the Candles,* pp.59–60.

***Keith Clements**, a Baptist minister, is a member of Keston's Council of Management, and was General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches 1997-2005.*

Nicholas II's Fairy Tale Town

by Sergei Filatov

The Fyodorov Icon of the Mother of God is highly revered by the Russian Orthodox Church, and has been associated with the Romanov family since the year 1613, when Mikhail Romanov was chosen by a general council as the next tsar, and, according to tradition, was blessed by this icon on accepting the throne. The icon was housed in the Holy-Trinity Ipatyev Monastery in Kostroma, where Mikhail Romanov lived with his mother. Nicholas II and his wife chose the name Little Fyodorov Town for their fairy tale creation, which began to be built in 1909, because it had associations both with the Romanov family and with the icon. The cathedral beside this new "town" was dedicated to the Fyodorov Icon of the Mother of God, and was named the Fyodorov Imperial Cathedral. It became customary for the future wife of a Russian royal family member, who had converted to Russian Orthodoxy, to use a feminine form, derived from "Fyodorov", as their patronymic – namely Fyodorovna; thus, Nicholas II's wife was known as Alexandra Fyodorovna. Ed.

Tsarskoe Selo (known as Pushkin since Soviet days) is a constellation of palace complexes built for Russian emperors in the architectural style of the 18th and 19th century. But there is one corner of Tsarskoe Selo which belongs to old Russia – this is Little Fyodorov Town, which consists of a group of buildings with the Fyodorov Imperial Cathedral nearby.

How did Little Fyodorov Town come to be created? In 1905 the royal family moved from the Winter Palace in St Petersburg to the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoe Selo, where they could lead a more secure and secluded life. The Alexander Palace was built by the architect Quirenghi in 1792 on the orders of Catherine II, whose tastes were very different from those of Nicholas II, who preferred early styles of Russian architecture. His wife, Alexandra Fyodorovna, on the other hand, particularly liked Art Nouveau.

Nicholas II & his wife, Alexandra Fyodorovna

When in 1902 work began on refurbishing the Alexander Palace, the Empress gave orders for the palace's interior to be redecorated in the Art Nouveau style; her study, known as the "Maple Sitting-Room", is especially famous and is

The Maple Sitting-Room

considered to be one of the chefs d'oeuvres of Art Nouveau. Many experts believe she sought the advice of her brother Ernst Ludwig, a patron of Art Nouveau artists, when decorating the "Maple Sitting-Room".

Nicholas II at the same time started applying his ideas of beauty: in 1909 he launched a building project to create an ensemble of buildings in an early Russian architectural style next to the Alexander Palace. In 1912 the Fyodorov Imperial Cathedral was built, with the upper church dedicated to the Fyodorov Icon of the Mother of God and the lower church dedicated to St Seraphim of Sarov. After the cathedral's consecration, a small fairy tale town was constructed nearby, also in an early Russian architectural style, which included a number of buildings: housing for the clergy (the White Stone Residence), a house for deacons (the Pink Residence), a house for junior deacons (the Yellow Residence), a sacristy and a refectory with an apartment for a church warden and an office. Work was completed in early 1917: on 12th February, 1917

Nicholas II lays the foundation stone for Little Fyodorov Town

Nicholas II wrote in the visitors' book in the refectory: "I have inspected with pleasure the buildings near the Fyodorov Imperial Cathedral. I welcome this excellent initiative, reviving the artistic beauty which was once part of Russian everyday life." The cathedral became the parish church for the royal family, and was used by His Imperial Majesty's Own Convoy and His Imperial Majesty's Consolidated Infantry Regiment. Entry for anyone else was by invitation only.

An architect's reconstruction of the "town"

The Fyodorov Imperial Cathedral

The Fyodorov Imperial Cathedral has some unusual features: Nicholas II's private study, where he rested or worked after a church service, was directly next to the areas within the upper and lower churches reserved for worship. The Empress, who converted to Orthodoxy before her marriage, could never get used to some aspects of Orthodox worship; for example, she could never accept that part of the liturgy took place behind the iconostasis with the royal doors closed, where nothing could be seen or heard, so a small room was built to the side of the sanctuary (behind the iconostasis) from where all was visible and audible.

In 1915, while the cathedral and "town" were being built, the Society for the Revival of Artistic Russia (SRAR) was founded by leading Russian painters and architects – by Apollinari and Viktor Vasnetsov, Ilya Repin, Ivan Bilibin, Mikhail Nesterov, Nikolai Roerich and Aleksei Shchusev, for example. Prince Aleksei Shirinsky-Shikhmatov, who had served in many important government posts and specialised in early Russian works of art, was chosen as chairman. The society gathered information about all Russian trades and crafts, while its leaders, with the support of Nicholas II, planned to encourage the development of national applied arts with a series of grants; Little Fyodorov Town became a museum to showcase examples of applied art from the past. With the outbreak of the First World War, some rooms within the "town" were turned into a hospital, where Nicholas II's daughters worked as nurses.

Nurses, who include the Tsar's daughters, pose in the "town's" hospital

Immediately after the October Revolution, the Fyodorov Imperial Cathedral became an ordinary parish church. The incumbent, Fr Aleksi Kibardin, refused to accept the 1927 Declaration of Metropolitan Sergi, which was seen by many Orthodox to have been a serious compromise with the Communist-run authorities; the following year the cathedral became a centre of support for that part of the Russian Orthodox Church which refused to compromise. In 1930 the cathedral was

Little Fyodorov Town in a dilapidated state

fan club called "Nevsky Front" frequently met there. Soon after his appointment to the cathedral, Bishop Markell set up a centre near Gatchina for rehabilitating alcoholics called "House on the Hill"; he also gave much attention to the teaching of the faith at parish level, and ensured the Church Slavonic texts of many prayers were translated into Russian.

closed, and Fr Kibardin was sent off to Solovki (the first Soviet labour camp founded in 1923). Thereafter the buildings of Little Fyodorov Town were used by many different organisations; little effort was made to maintain them, so that by the time the Communist era came to an end in 1991 the site was a total ruin.

In 1991 the cathedral and Little Fyodorov Town were given back to the Russian Orthodox Church. During the next few years, the buildings were used by an association of radical nationalists and traditionalists, who were strongly criticised by the liberal press. In 1996 the Bishop of Tsarskoe Selo, Bishop Markell (Vetrov), who in his youth had served as a deacon to Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov), was put in charge of the cathedral. Part of his ministry involved work with sportsmen; he had been appointed head of the Department for Relations with Sporting Organisations and the spiritual director of the football team "Mitropolia". As a result of this appointment, the Fyodorov Cathedral became a centre for football fans, and the football fans who gathered at the cathedral were aggressive nationalists – so-called "patriots" – and made life difficult for Bishop Markell: they constantly opposed his educational work and his experiments with the use of Russian in religious worship. In 1996 a massive protest was organised against the bishop, because he had invited an Italian Catholic priest to take part in a service; the outraged "patriots" wrote a joint letter to the Metropolitan of St Petersburg, to the Patriarch and to the Holy Synod demanding that they intervene and take action. Although no "administrative measures" were taken against Bishop Markell, he experienced constant pressure from these "patriots" right up to his death in 2019.

The dilapidated state of the buildings of Little Fyodorov Town was a serious problem for the cathedral congregation. Bishop Markell managed to partially restore the cathedral, but the other buildings were in ruins – and still are to this day; this situation was caused mainly by a lack of clarity on the legal status and ownership of Little Fyodorov Town. In 1992 the buildings were rented to the Moscow Patriarchate on a long lease, and two years later entirely made over to it on condition that by January 2000 the whole site was restored by the Patriarchate at its own expense. The mayor of St Petersburg, Anatoli Sobchak, stipulated that the site was handed over "to be used as a centre for spiritual and educational work".

From 1994 to 1995 the Moscow Patriarchate planned to create its own "*podvorye*" (representative centre) in Little Fyodorov Town. From 1995 to 1996 the Patriarchate allowed the buildings to be used by the Society for the Revival of Russia's Spiritual Traditions, which continued the work of the pre-revolutionary SRAR. In 2006 the Patriarchate's project for a "*podvorye*" was taken under the wing of the Trinity-St Sergius Monastery with a view to incorporating a museum complex in the plan. In 2010 the Russian Orthodox Church considered using it to house the bishops who were due to attend a session of the Bishops' Synod. In 2007 a festival called "The Tsar's City" took place there and organised a procession of the cross (the Tsar's Way); then a festival of traditional Russian culture was organised by the Alexander Nevsky Brotherhood, under the chairmanship of Bishop Nazaria of Vyborg, the Abbot of the Alexander Nevsky Monastery. By 2010 the site was still dilapidated, and was returned to the State, into the care of the Presidential Administration. In April 2020 a critical article was published by *Novaya gazeta* directed at the Moscow Patriarchate, accusing it of having allowed an important historical monument to fall into a state of extreme disrepair, and repeating a rumour that the Patriarchate had planned to turn the complex into yet another luxurious residence for the Patriarch at the state's expense (see "The Patriarch in Pink will be Released for Half a Billion More" by T. Likhanova, *Novaya gazeta*, 20 April, 2020).

Sergei Filatov (left) & Fr German Ranne

In September 2019 Fr German Ranne was put in charge of the Fyodorov Cathedral. He comes from a family of priests, from a line of clergy who supported Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov), well-known in Soviet times for his friendly attitude to Western religious traditions, and in particular to the Roman Catholic Church. His father and the future Bishop Markell served as deacons under Metropolitan Nikodim, and to this day his father is the priest-in-charge of

the St Sophia Cathedral in Novgorod, where the local bishop is another supporter of the "Nikodim line". His elder brother is a popular priest at the Church of Mary Magdalene in Pavlovsk. When Fr German finished school, he decided to escape from ecclesiastical circles: he was accepted by the philosophy department of the St Petersburg State University and then went on to study for a PhD.

In March 2021 I conducted a long interview with Fr German. We sat in Nicholas II's study, and I was allowed to sit at the desk where the Tsar usually worked. Fr German said that, as each year passed, he had become more and more disillusioned with secular society, and had become convinced that church circles were morally and intellectually far superior. The university world seemed to him to be impoverished and grey, while the world at home among Orthodox clergy was not only more moral and spiritual, but also more interesting intellectually. After leaving university he entered the St Petersburg Spiritual Academy, and after completing his studies was appointed to the Fyodorov Cathedral. Despite starting this ministry during the Covid epidemic, he had managed to achieve a great deal.

He remembered Bishop Markell well, and greatly respected him. Like him, and unlike the majority of clergy who were more concerned about the lack of a bible in a modern translation, Fr German gave more attention to believers' lack of understanding about the words of the liturgy and of prayers. He encouraged his parishioners to understand the meaning of prayers by getting them to learn them in a Russian translation. He also thought believers should be able to pray in their own words; not without opposition from some parishioners, he started saying the words of the eucharistic prayers out loud. He founded a youth group called "Genesis" which studied the scriptures, and commented, "the church faces the challenge of not being just a ceremonial institution". He ran a popular Sunday school, named after the Tsarevich Aleksei, with a successful theatre studio which had won a number of awards.

Fr German did not plan to revive any of the former work with sportsmen and alcoholics, which had been part of Bishop Markell's ministry. "I've received both a secular and a theological higher education, and I've written a thesis in the field of museum studies; I have another priest and two deacons working with me – all of us have an excellent education in the humanities; our job is to focus on teaching, on religious education and culture." He insisted that the Moscow Patriarchate had finally given up any idea of converting Little Fyodorov Town into a residence for the Patriarch; however, what the future would be had not yet been decided. He aimed to carry out the plans of Nicholas II, to create a museum of applied art (a museum of design) and to rebuild the wooden sacristy, part of the museum, using the original plans of Viktor Vasnetsov. The museum, he said, would work closely with the State Museum for the Imperial Palaces in Tsarskoe Selo, adding that he and the director of this secular museum saw eye to eye. In addition, he had his own plans: he hoped to turn Little Fyodorov Town into an academic centre, and to make it a focus for all the arts and crafts.

Keston AGM
6th November 2021

Chairman's Report

This year of 2021 is a sad one for us members of Keston: we have lost our founder and President, Michael Bourdeaux, and we feel his absence deeply. It is particularly significant for us this year therefore to have with us Lorna Bourdeaux, his widow, and his daughter Karen Barnes and her husband Nick. Thank you very much for being with us today.

I met Michael first in 1966 when I had just finished my degree course in modern languages at Oxford University. Michael came to see me with Professor William Fletcher, who had just founded a new research centre in Geneva to study the religious situation in the USSR, and had taken Michael on as one of his researchers. Michael in his turn was keen to have an assistant, and in the end I was selected.

I was fascinated by the subject of religious believers in the Soviet Union. I knew nothing about the USSR: at Oxford I had studied the literature of the 18th and 19th century, but knew nothing about Russia after the 1917 revolution. I was therefore stunned when I started reading the mass of *samizdat* documents which were arriving at Michael's house, and learned about the lives of religious believers during a period when the Communist Party was continuing the anti-religious campaign championed by Nikita Khrushchev between 1959 and his fall in 1964. My first job was to translate the documents which Michael used for his book about the Baptist Church, *Religious Ferment in Russia*. I may say, my tasks were not always quite so serious: during one of Michael's holidays, I was asked by him to weigh the tomatoes from two different tomato plants in his garden, so that he could calculate which plant was the more productive!

So I started working with Michael some time before Keston was actually founded, and was a member of Keston's council from the very beginning. I miss him very much. At the same time, I am profoundly glad that he was present at the 2019 Keston AGM, and heard that wonderful address given by Bishop Rowan Williams, which so affirmed Michael's life and work.

Two members of the academic staff at Baylor University, Dr Michael Long and Dr Julie deGraffenried, are currently working with me on compiling a Festschrift of articles in honour of Michael Bourdeaux, and I am delighted that Bishop Rowan Williams has agreed to write the preface for the collection. We have already received abstracts from a number of young scholars working in the field of religion in Communist countries, and will soon meet (virtually) to select which we would like developed into articles ready for publication.

When we last met in person in 2019, I recorded in my address that it had been 30 years since the Berlin Wall had fallen. This year is the 30th anniversary of the end of Soviet Union and of the Communist Party, which were both abolished in December 1991.

Sir John Lawrence, Keston's first Chairman and President, who frequently visited the Soviet Union, did not believe the Communist system could survive for long. As early as 1977 he wrote an essay entitled "If I were Tsar" in which he laid out his ideas on how the Soviet Union could be reformed gradually, rather than enduring another revolution. He was careful to make sure that this essay was not published, as this would have prevented him from getting visas for future trips to the USSR. He wrote:

> "One does not need to be a prophet to foretell that there will be a reforming Tsar before long. The Soviet system works after a fashion, but so creakily. And it gives so little satisfaction, that the case for reform is overwhelming. I am convinced that an evolution of the present Soviet system provides the best hope both for Russia and for her neighbours. Another revolution would be likely to make everything worse."

He recommended agricultural reform, the establishment of the rule of law, religious freedom, that the Lubyanka be destroyed with all the KGB archives, but he did not advocate a multi-party system, which would have been too much too soon in his view, and instead advocated rule through the army and bureaucracy, with enlightened leaders promoted to positions of authority.

John Lawrence appears to have prophesied the coming of Gorbachev! Unlike many of us who did not expect the Communist era to end so quickly, he foretold its demise long before his death in December 1999. In his obituary in the *Guardian*, written by Michael Bourdeaux, his words are quoted: "There's no substance in it! Communism will collapse like a house of cards, and I shall live to see it." And John Lawrence did.

Since the last AGM, which was held virtually because of the Covid pandemic, Keston's project studying the current religious situation in the Russian Federation, *Religious Life in Russia Today*, has continued to be affected by the pandemic. Field trips had been planned to Samara, Penza, Oryol, Perm and Rostov-on-Don, and work was due to start on the next volume. So far, however, no field trips have taken place, and Keston's Council do not think it would be safe for me to travel to Russia at the moment. A more positive bit of news is that the volume on St Petersburg, for which a final field trip was possible in March last year, is currently being set by the publisher, and I hope it will not be long before it is published.

Owing to the pandemic and travel restrictions, Keston UK has not sent any scholars to work in the Keston archive at Baylor. The Council has one pending application from a scholar, who would like to study the way the Communist regime in Hungary used religion in its

international diplomacy during Détente. Although we have not sent any scholars, Keston UK has sent £10,000 to help the Keston Center digitise the large collection of videos within the Keston archive. The Director, Kathy Hillman, will tell us more about this and the other activities of the Keston Center in her report.

I would like to thank the Council for all their work over the past year and for their support. My grateful thanks also go to Michael Hart, our Company Secretary, and to John Hanks, Keston's administrator, without whose work the business of the Institute would not run so smoothly.

Report from the Director of the Keston Center, Professor Kathy Hillman

Kathy Hillman & the late Canon Michael Bourdeaux

Michael Bourdeaux wrote in the afterword of *One Word of Truth*, "I began this memoir by claiming that the unseen hand of God was present in my life, guiding it throughout…It is obvious that divine intervention was never far away and, at times, directly controlled a series of events which led me to found Keston College, and sometimes reassured me and pointed the way forward…"

In many ways, Michael's words reflect my own journey. Only God could have guided a child, who grew up in the small, remote West Texas town of Eldorado, and experienced primary school under-the-desk "duck and cover" drills during the Cold War, to become Director of the internationally focused Keston Center for Religion, Politics, and Society at Baylor University. Only the Heavenly Father could have orchestrated the path to a comprehensive library and archives that holds "stories chronicling courage in the face of religious persecution," *samizdat,* government publications, personal papers, photographs, trial transcripts, propaganda posters, art, and much, much more.

Time and time again that divine, guiding hand has been evident. In October, Dr David Hardage, the Executive Director of Texas Baptists, called to arrange a last-minute visit by the Regheta family, led by Leonid, Pastor of Russian River of Life Church that meets at Hunter's Glen Baptist in Plano. The third-generation Russian pastor brought his wife, eldest daughter and prospective Baylor student, along with their three other children. Leonid marvelled at the materials about Unregistered Baptists, and knew or had heard stories about many of them. Pastor Regheta later called to arrange a day in early 2022 to bring visitors Pavel Minyakov, son of Council of Churches member Dmitri Minyakov, and Alexei Rytikov, a relative of persecuted Unregistered

Leonid Regheta's family with Texas Baptist Executive Director, David Hardage, and Historical Collection Director, Alan Lefever

Baptist Pavel Rytikov. The Regheta appointment was not the first time that Keston visitors connected personally with archival materials in the Michael Bourdeaux Research Center. When Hynek Kmoníček, Ambassador from the Czech Republic to the United States, gave a Keston Lecture and visited the archives, his Uzbekistan-born wife Indira Gumarova began to cry when she saw a propaganda poster, which she remembered from her childhood. Another researcher unearthed information about the imprisonment of her uncle, a Catholic priest, and later shared family photographs of him and told us the rest of his story.

Although the pandemic consistently modified plans, the virus also created opportunities to refocus efforts. Covid time brought a redesigned website, and in late November, we completed metadata for the first 26 audio-visual materials which were digitised through a Keston grant. Today, from anywhere across the world, an individual can watch Michael Bourdeaux's 1984 Templeton Prize Address;[1] interviews with Irina Ratushinskaya, Jane Ellis, and Fr Gleb Yakunin; a recording of the gospel rock opera *The Trumpet Call*; documentaries and more. Already, the next AV group has been sent to the vendor.

Other ongoing projects include preparing women's collection entries, reorganising periodicals, processing materials to create finding aids, and as always, answering reference questions, and consulting with scholars, students, and others.

During 2021, Keston hosted or co-hosted four virtual events and a lecture/panel in person.

- On 7th October, Dr Flagg Taylor of Skidmore College lectured in-person on *Totalitarianism, Faith, and Dissent: Czech Catholic Vaclav Benda and Beyond.* A discussion followed by panelists Joanne Held Cummings, Foreign Service Officer, US Department of State (ret.); Michael Long, Professor of Russian and Chair of Baylor's Department of Modern Languages and Cultures; and Fr Timothy Vaverek, Pastor of St Mary's of the

[1] https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/1984-templeton-award-ceremony-honoring-rev.-canon-michael-bourdeaux/1866577

Assumption Catholic Church in West, Texas, with moderator Keston Advisory Board Chair Steve Gardner, Herman Brown Professor of Economics and Director of the McBride Center for International Business. The Czech Heritage Museum and Genealogy Center hosted a Czech-themed reception. (60 in person, 30 livestream, 11 recording)

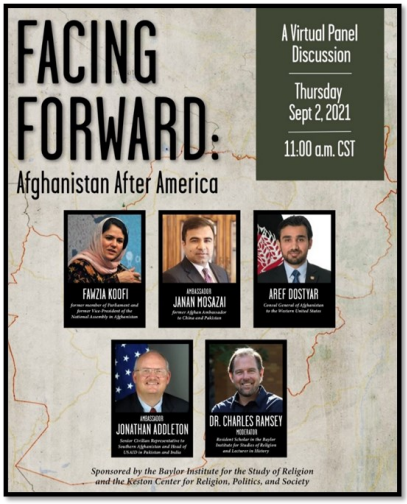
Dr Flagg Taylor

Researchers Report. Xenia Dennen spoke on behalf of Keston, and Wallace Daniel moderated. (127 webinars, 23 recording)

- On the February day when ice and freezing temperatures approached Texas, Keston co-sponsored *Life! Standing Together in Hope!* a Women's World Day of Prayer virtual experience, that included inspiration, music, and prayers offered from across the globe. (110 webinar, 29 recording)

Left to right: Dr Steve Gardner, Dr Michael Long, Ms Joanne Held Cummings & Fr Timothy Vaverek

- In September, Keston partnered with the Institute for the Study of Religion to present a discussion panel titled *Facing Forward: Afghanistan After America*. Two of the panelists participated from the region at personal peril, including Nobel Peace Prize nominee Fawzia Koofi and Aref Dostyar, Consul General of Afghanistan to the Western US. Joining them were Ambassador Jonathan Addleton and Charles Ramsey as moderator. (150 webinar, 63 recording)



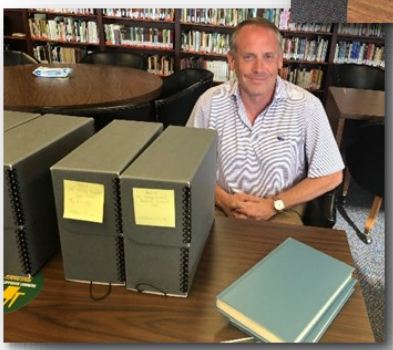
- Last spring, Keston brought together ten scholars, representing six different countries for two virtual presentations of *Where in the World: Keston*

Fellow Charles Ramsey, and two sections of Writing and Academic Inquiry, with the theme of Faith, taught by 2021 Teaching Fellow Luke Sayers, met in the Michael Bourdeaux Research Center. A Baptist women's group also visited Keston and enjoyed a tour and overview.

Following all required University protocols, in June 2021, the Center resumed summer internship and teaching fellows programmes, and welcomed visiting researchers. Nancy Newman Logan Summer Intern Anna Williams, with triple majors in Business Management, Eastern European and Slavic Studies, and Russian, said that her Ukrainian heritage and passion for Soviet history had attracted her to the Keston Center. Summer Teaching Fellows for 2021 included 2019 Summer Intern Luke Sayers and 2016 Teaching Fellow Julie deGraffenried. In August, student employees returned to in-person work. During the fall, three classes, Modern India (History 4340) taught by 2019 Teaching

Dr Thomas Albert "Tal" Howard

Sarah Lee



Mr Andy Bunnell

Today's AGM speaker, Dr Wallace Daniel, spends about a month each year researching in Keston, and managed to travel to Waco in 2020 and 2021. Non-Baylor scholars have also visited, including Dr Thomas Albert "Tal" Howard from Valparaiso University, and Andy Bunnell, PhD Candidate at the University of Washington. Sarah Lee, PhD candidate at UC Berkley, reviewed materials on the link between religion and politics in international relations and comparative politics.

Keston's new Museum Studies Graduate Assistant, Tesia Juraschek, curated *The Berlin Wall: 60 Years Later*, which involved moving content from Keston's two previous exhibitions to wall cases in the hall outside the Center. In addition, an ongoing periodicals project seeks to catalogue and consolidate periodicals into one alphabet, determine status of issues, and consider binding options. Baylor's Women's Collection moves forward with recent Keston additions of Svetlana Alliluyeva, Maria Golovina Braun, and Lidija Doronina-Lasmane. More than 25 finding aids have been uploaded into Baylor's Archival Repository Database (BARD) this summer and fall, including the Jane Ellis Papers as well as numerous individual Soviet religions and denominations files.

Berlin Wall exhibition

Thus, the Keston Center at Baylor University continues to steward Keston College's library and archives, to support students and scholars in their quest for knowledge, to spread the influence and reach of Keston, and to seek avenues for communicating truth.

Yet, even as we look forward to a hopefully brighter 2022, we glance backward. Hebrews 13:7 (KJV) instructs us to "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." As we honour the life of Michael Bourdeaux, we pray with Christian composer Steve Green (1988), "O may all who come behind us find us faithful, may the fire of our devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe, and the lives we live inspire them to obey. O may all who come behind us find us faithful."


Left to right: Michael Bourdeaux, Lorna Bourdeaux, Kathy Hillman & John Hillman

Review

Peter Reddaway: *The Dissidents: A Memoir of Working with the Resistance in Russia 1960-1990* (Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC) 2020

Professor Peter Reddaway

Unlike the "Gang of Four" who founded a new political party (the SDP) in 1981, another "Gang of Four" – Michael Bourdeaux, Sir John Lawrence, Professor Leonard Schapiro and Professor Peter Reddaway – founded a new charity in 1969, namely Keston, which has not had to merge with other institutions to survive 'though it works closely with its sister organisation, the Keston Center at Baylor University. Sadly out of Keston's "Gang of Four" only one is still alive today – Professor Peter Reddaway, who published his memoirs in 2020. He with the other three understood the importance of the religious aspect of Communist reality, which had been neglected by journalists and academics, and would be highlighted by Keston following the virulent Soviet anti-religious campaign of 1959-64, launched by Khrushchev.

Professor Reddaway continues to be an enthusiastic supporter of Keston, and it is gratifying to read in a footnote (p.313) that the *Keston Newsletter* "is so nicely produced that it looks more like a journal than a newsletter"!

Peter Reddaway had a distinguished academic career as a specialist in Soviet politics, and was appointed Director of the Kennan Institute (Washington DC) in 1985. After being expelled from the Soviet Union in 1964, he was able to return during the reform period under Gorbachev, and to talk to many leading political figures of that exciting period. Reddaway had an uncanny sense of what the future would bring; he was able to see that Gorbachev's time in power would not last long. As early as March 1987 he testified before a committee of the US Congress, stating, "I think it is extremely possible that if Mr Gorbachev continues with his present policies, he will be removed within the next two to three years." (p.224)

Reddaway analyses succinctly why Communism collapsed, despite its many promises about a bright future: the system had never been voted in by the population at large, the Communist Party was unable to manage the economy effectively, and many Soviet citizens had minds which were not influenced by

Communist propaganda and could think freely. These individuals contributed to what has come to be known as the dissident movement, which Reddaway studied and publicised to great effect. Those involved in this movement are some of the world's great heroes, whose courage should continue to inspire us today: the poet, Irina Ratushinskaya, sentenced in 1983 to seven years in a strict regime labour camp for her religious poetry, spoke of their heroism in her poem "I will live and survive":

"And I will tell of the best people in all the earth,
The most tender, but also the most invincible,
How they said farewell, how they went to be tortured,
How they waited for letters from their loved one."

The Soviet dissident movement's many facets, groups and organisations, despite continuous oppression by the Soviet state and Communist Party, circulated information about its aims, about prisoners of conscience and its campaigns to establish a just society, through the medium of *samizdat*, or self-published literature. It was Reddaway who translated and circulated the early issues of the dissident movement's *samizdat* publication, the *Chronicle of Current Events*, and helped get many of the later issues published by Amnesty International. Many in the West doubted the authenticity of such unofficial publications, and indeed of the existence of these extraordinarily brave, intelligent individuals, who often had to endure the horrors of a Soviet labour camp; it was Reddaway, through his meticulous research and persistent publicity, who managed to convince these doubters.

Perhaps one cause, for which he will be particularly remembered and honoured far into the future, was his exposure of the abuse of psychiatry in the Soviet Union, which he delineated in his 1977 book *Russia's Political Hospitals*, co-authored with the psychiatrist Sidney Bloch. With the support of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, campaigners within the USSR, former Soviet victims of psychiatric abuse who had been expelled to the West, and the International Association on the Political Use of Psychiatry, he and a London-based Working Group put pressure on the World Psychiatric Association, which led in 1983 to the Soviet society resigning as it realised it was about to be expelled. It is sad to read Reddaway's conclusion that in Putin's Russia today "the practice of psychiatry in the Russian Federation remains in many respects unchanged from the way it was practised in the Soviet Union." (p.256)

Reddaway was also a champion of ethnic minorities, and, in particular, of the Crimean Tatars, who had been deported by Stalin in 1944 and had begun campaigning in 1956 to return to their homeland. By 1966 the Crimean Tatar movement had made contact with the dissidents in Moscow, and an issue of the *Chronicle of Current Events* (No.31, 1973) was later entirely devoted to their cause. Like Michael Bourdeaux who, in his speech at the Guildhall after being awarded the Templeton Prize, formulated his conviction that a combination of religion and

nationalism would bring down the Soviet system, Reddaway saw that the institutions of different nationalities, although only formally independent when they were set up by Lenin and Stalin, would take on a life of their own, and eventually evolve into channels for national independence.

The importance of the past for understanding the present is acknowledged by Reddaway. Like a character in a Chekhov short story, who says to himself "the past is linked with the present by an unbroken chain of events flowing one out of another" and who, managing to see both ends of that chain, felt "that when he touched one end the other quivered", Reddaway by considering the past confronts that great question of why democracy has failed in Russia. He points to Russia's traditional culture which has opposed promoting the rule of law and opposed dismantling authoritarian forms of government. Under Gorbachev, whom so many in the West believed would transform his country, many of the key political figures were "recently retrofitted Communist apparatchiks" who were not interested in a democratic system of government. What has developed since the advent of Putin confirms this diagnosis: when you touch the world of Soviet apparatchiks, the other end of the chain – the present era of corrupt officials indebted to their mafia-like-boss – begins to quiver.

Xenia Dennen

Keston's First Chairman: Sir John Lawrence

Sir John Lawrence, in an autobiographical essay entitled Russia in My Life*, recounts how he came to be Press Attaché at the British Embassy in the Soviet Union during World War II. He created and edited the only uncensored newspaper in Soviet history called* Britansky Soyuznik *(*The British Ally*) which was avidly read by Soviet citizens. The following extracts from this essay describe how he initially worked at the BBC, and then, after his appointment as Press Attaché, sailed in a convoy from Dundee to Murmansk in April 1942, was torpedoed and rescued from the sea before he was eventually able to start his new job as editor of* Britansky Soyuznik. *Ed.*

[…] In 1939 war broke out. I worked in the BBC, first as European Intelligence Officer and then as European Services Organiser. By February it was obvious to us in the BBC – though not to Stalin – that the Germans were going to attack Russia. We did not have any top secret information, but we had a paper prepared by the Ministry of Economic Warfare, which gave the size of the German call-up for that year […] We in the BBC must be ready to broadcast in Russian. My boss John Salt, a man who has never had justice done to him, told me to find out what kind of wireless sets the Russians had. I tried everything I could. The Embassy in Moscow had no idea, nor had any of the secret departments that I was in

touch with […] Then one day my dear friend and colleague, Jonathan Griffin, who had succeeded me as European Intelligence Officer, said "I have just heard of a man who has been working in Moscow. Let's ask him round to the BBC." He came and I said: "What were you doing in Moscow?" "My job was to mend wireless sets." We could hardly believe our luck. "What sort of wireless sets do they have in Russia?" Is it all wired wireless or long wave or short wave?" "Oh, nobody in Russia would dream of having anything but a short wave set." "Are there many sets in Russia?" "Lots and lots." So I spoke to the BBC's Head of Overseas Engineering and told him what we had found. He came back to me in a week and said "We have got it all arranged. As soon as you give the word we can start broadcasting in Russian."

[…] Towards the end of 1941 there was an unnecessary upheaval in the BBC, which would never have happened if Lord Reith's strong hand had still been in charge. So I quarrelled with my bread and butter for reasons that I still think are valid. There was no future for me in the BBC, and just at that moment they wanted a Press Attaché to go to Russia. I applied for the job; Peter Smollett who was head of the Soviet Information Department said: "What are your qualifications?" I said, "I have been to the Soviet Union, I know a bit of Russian and I can learn more and I understand British foreign publicity," which last was a rare accomplishment in those days. I got the job in the face of stiff opposition from people who had better qualifications […]

The next step was to recruit some staff. To start with I could have two; an assistant and someone to do everything else. I went round all the old Moscow hands in London, Sir Robert Bruce-Lockhart, Baroness Moira Budberg, who had been the mistress of Maxim Gorky, to get advice, and I could see that they all thought I was a fool to take the job. It was obvious that it was altogether uncertain what I could do when I got to Moscow, but I thought there was bound to be something to be done, and I should find out what it was when I got Russia. During this time I went round to the Ministry of Information nearly every day. One day we were very tired and George Reavey, who had been an assistant in the Press Attaché's office in Madrid, said: "Let's go round to the pub." George was the son of an Irish father who had worked in Russia. His mother was a Russian Jewess. He had spent much of his childhood in Russia and spoke almost perfect Russian. He was also a poet and had corresponded with Pasternak. We clicked and I told my opposite number at the Ministry of Information that I had found my assistant […]

I got introductions from everyone I could think of, from the President of the Royal Society to the Chairman of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, from the head of the British Museum Library to his opposite number, and from Brendon Bracken to his opposite number Salomon Lozovsky at the *Sovinform* Bureau. These were put into diplomatic bags, weighted with lead, and we had an awful time lugging them around Edinburgh and Dundee, the port from which we sailed in April 1942, on the PQ15 SS Jutland, a 10,000 ton merchant ship. I was the best equipped Press Attaché ever to leave Britain, but it would have been entirely useless in the Soviet Union. We had no idea of the primitive conditions that we should find.

We sailed to Murmansk via Iceland in a large convoy and it took us a month. We were protected by large warships and then by smaller warships. For the last part of our journey beyond the North Cape near Bear Island, capital ships were too valuable to be risked. I worked eight hours a day learning Russian.

We went as near the ice of the North Pole as we could, so as to escape the enemy, but on the 1st May 1942 an enemy aircraft kept circling round us out of range. On the 2nd May bombers flew in with their torpedoes. We had been on the alert all day until nearly midnight, but it was quite light – at that time of the year the sun just dips below the horizon. We were going to lie down in our clothes, when suddenly there was a sound of firing. We rushed to our cabins and there was a tremendous shaking, after which I found myself standing up in the dark but with my glasses on. The stern of the ship had been blown off […] I looked over the edge and saw a crowded lifeboat below. The boat parade had taken place one deck lower. But the ropes were still attached and I shinned down into the lifeboat […]

In war time one does not know where one is on a convoy. "Were we near land?" I asked. "What's the programme now?" The answer was a stunned silence. But after half an hour we were picked up by a rescue ship, an anti-submarine trawler, the Vizelma […]

We stayed in the Arctic Hotel in Murmansk where there were many other survivors, among whom was the cabin boy of the Jutland, who greeted me saying, "I saw these bags of yours floating in the sea. I reached out my hand and took them in." These were the specially weighted diplomatic bags, which we were never allowed to lose sight of. They had floated! After that the Foreign Office put rings on them so that, in future, they would sink.

It took two or three days to get from Murmansk to Archangel […]

Archangel still had some of its pre-revolutionary character with old wooden houses. And there was a British Consulate which gave George Reavey a new passport. Here I learnt to my astonishment that I was to edit a weekly newspaper in Russian. I did not know what printer's ink was and had no journalistic experience […] So I became the first person to publish an uncensored newspaper in the Soviet Union, and very nearly in all Russian history.

[…] I wanted to gain time before I entered on my official duties, so I said I could not possibly present myself to the wartime capital (Kuibyshev) of the Soviet Union unless I was properly dressed. The shirt I was wearing had no collar. We got an order for clothes from *Mostorg*, which had been a Scottish clothes store before the Revolution called Muir and Mirrielees. It was often called by its pre-revolutionary name. There was no choice of materials. I was given a brown three-piece suit of a colour that does not suit me and we got shirts etc […]

It took two days to get from Moscow to Kuibyshev (now Samara) on the Middle Volga, to which the embassy had moved. The latter was quite small and we all lived together in a house that had belonged to a pre-revolutionary merchant.

[…] It was time for me to call on Solomon Lozovsky, the head of the *Sovinform* bureau. George Reavey translated for me. Losovsky was an old Party member, a Jew, as so many of them were, who had organised a strike of umbrella makers in Paris before the Revolution. I presented my introduction from Brendan Bracken and then went straight to the point. "We want to publish a weekly newspaper in Russian, but it will not help us unless it will help you too." I heard afterwards that Lozovsky believed me. He gave us printers, some staff, ink and good quality paper, but no office accommodation […]

Distribution of print was in the hands of an organisation called *Soyuzpechat*. They expected me to concentrate it in the capital, but I gave detailed instructions about how many copies were to go to each region of the Soviet Union, and my instructions were loyally carried out, as I discovered in subsequent travels. I made a point of visiting the public library wherever I went, and I was always shown a copy of the *Britansky Soyuznik* which was worn to a frazzle by the countless hands reading it.

[…] I was very lucky in my time in Russia. To be the editor of a newspaper gives one a position in society much like being a viscount in Britain. Of course I made mistakes, but none of them ever came home to roost.

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