

The East-West Church & Ministry Report

by Mark Elliott

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Origins

The *East-West Church & Ministry Report* is a 16-page quarterly newsletter which began publication in 1993 at Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL, and since 1999 has been published at Samford University, Birmingham, AL. It serves as a clearinghouse for information on church life and missions in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. “It also serves as a forum for the exploration of a variety of issues relating to Christianity’s presence in Europe’s formerly Marxist states.”¹ In its support of East European missions, the *Report* advocates, recommends, critiques, and cautions. As a forum for a wide range of topics related to religion in Eastern Europe, the *Report* gives voice to a variety of perspectives on contentious issues such as humanitarian aid, bribery, government legislation on religion, and the vagaries of church statistics.

As founding editor of the *Report* this writer seeks to be an objective and independent observer of developments in the post-Soviet orb. Yet at the same time as the *Report* aspires to dispassionate analysis, it naturally is influenced by its editor’s own participation in the drama that has unfolded in the wake of glasnost and perestroika. Like the great majority of Soviet and post-Soviet specialists who entered the field at any point prior to 1989, I have seen my research methodologies, travel, contacts, and career dramatically transformed since 1989. My graduate work in modern European and Russian history (University of Kentucky, 1969-74) began with a decided focus on political and military affairs. And my revised dissertation, published in 1982 under the title *Pawns of Yalta: Soviet Refugees and America’s Role in Their Repatriation* (University of Illinois Press), dealt with political, diplomatic, and social history. Meanwhile, in my early visits to the Soviet Union (1974, 1981, 1985, 1989), I took what opportunities came my way to worship with fellow believers and was deeply moved by the tenacity and perseverance of Christians under siege. Those church visits ultimately drew me into an exploration of Russian church history and church life that continues to this day.

¹*East-West Church & Ministry Report* 1 (Winter 1993), 16.

With glasnost and perestroika came a flood of new opportunities for travel, research, and cross-cultural collaboration in Soviet, and then, post-Soviet territories. What was true for academia and business was also true for churches and ancillary mission agencies, often referred to as parachurch missions. The early 90s witnessed an explosion of East European mission activity. In 1991 alone, meetings dealing with East European missions numbered at least 16.²

It was at just such a gathering at the O'Hare Sheraton Hotel in June 1992 that various church and mission representatives urged the publication of a newsletter as a clearinghouse for information relating to Western Christian missions in Eastern Europe. Individuals who were key catalysts in the launching of what became the *East-West Church & Ministry Report* included Peter and Anita Deyneka (Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries), Billy Melvin (National Association of Evangelicals), and Peter Kuzmic (Evangelical Theological Seminary, Osijek, Croatia).

From Subventions to Subscriptions; From Print to Internet

While Deyneka staff member and founding coeditor Wil Triggs and I decided questions of coverage, format, and frequency of publication, Billy Melvin provided key contacts which led to foundation grants that saw the *Report* launched, with the first issue published in early 1993. In 1995, after two years of substantial grant support, the *Report* began to wean itself from dependence upon outside funding. It managed to survive the transition to a subscription basis and has maintained a stable, if modest, circulation to the present. 1996 brought additional change with the introduction of an e-mail subscription option. As expected, print subscriptions declined, but steadily growing e-mail subscriptions have more than compensated. Since mail service is problematic for much of the *Report's* intended constituency, e-mail has permitted the *Report* to reach a much more geographically dispersed audience than previously. E-mail, in addition, has tremendously simplified the process of communication with writers as well as subscribers.

Since 1997 the *Report* website (www.samford.edu/groups/global/ewcmreport) has posted the full text of all issues more than one year old. These back issues on the Internet are available without charge, while a keyword search function expedites use of the *Report* for purposes of research.

Report Readership

²“New Opportunities, New Demands in the Old Red Empire.” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 28 (January 1992), 34.

The *Report's* readership is broader than its subscription base might suggest because libraries account for one quarter of subscriptions (Appendix A). Also, the *Report* regularly receives requests either to reprint or to redistribute published articles by electronic means: from 12 requests in 1993 to 20 in 2001, the last year available for annual totals (Appendix B). Of these 16 organizations four are churches (Quaker, Baptist, Lutheran, and Wesleyan), two are educational programs (Donetsk Christian University and Russian Language Ministries), and the remaining ten are mission organizations (Appendix C).

For the month of September 2002, the *East-West Church & Ministry Report* received 4,205 visitors to its website. The average visitor session was 16 minutes, 37 seconds, with 14.45 percent of visitors being international. The three most frequently accessed articles from the nine years of articles currently accessible on the web have been the recounting of Leo Tolstoy's short story, "How Much Land Does a Man Need?," "Popular Faith and Practice in Bulgaria," and "Five Protestant Views of Orthodoxy."

Content

Topics of articles most frequently requested for reprinting or redistribution have dealt with cross-cultural communications, theological education, or church statistics (Appendix D).

In terms of overall coverage, the *Report* has addressed three issues more than any others:

1. mission case studies and advice for cross cultural missionaries, including examples of effective and ineffective outreach;
2. the interface of Orthodox and Evangelical Christianity in theology and in practice; and
3. East-European religious demographics, including statistical breakdowns by confession and denomination, by membership and attendance, and for missionaries, by country, organization, and terms of service.

Articles on Missions

Mission case studies and articles offering advice on best practices have included the following: Christian ministry to particular groups: women, youth, orphans and street children, alcoholics, prisoners, and Roma (Gypsies); medical ministries; sports ministries; and humanitarian aid guidelines.

The article in this genre that has generated the greatest editorial response from readers is "Collectivism in the Russian World View and Its Implications for Christian Ministry" 6 (Fall 1998): 12-14; 7 (Winter 1999): 9-10. The author, Steve Chapman, served as a missionary with the Evangelical Free Church in a Muslim region of Russia and is married to a Russian currently enrolled in a U.S. medical school. Another well-received contribution of this type, one that

stresses both Orthodoxy's positive and problematic influences upon Russian culture, is a two-part article, "Perceptions of a Great Country," 8 (Spring 2000): 1-3; 8 (Summer 2000): 11-12. The author, Peter Lowman, is a British academic and pastor who frequently spoke to Russian student groups in the 1990s. It was reprinted in Moscow in 2002 in a Russian-English diglot, together with memorial tributes to highly respected missionary Peter Deyneka, Jr. (1931-2000) who first urged the wide distribution of Lowman's reflections.

The *East-West Church & Ministry Report* also frequently tackles point/counterpoint mission theme debates, examples of which include Western funding of indigenous missionaries: 4 (Winter 1996), 2-5; bribery: 5 (Winter 1997), 8-11; language study methodologies: 4 (Fall 1995), 4-6; and the pros and cons of Western subventions for East European Christian publishing: 8 (Spring 2000), 3-8, 16, 15.

Articles on the Orthodox Protestant Interface

After articles on missions per se, the second largest number of articles in the *Report* treats Eastern Orthodoxy, especially as it relates to its uneasy relationship with Protestants in Eastern Europe. A review of *From Nyet to Da: Understanding the Russians*, Yale Richmond's excellent compendium of Russia's history, culture, and spiritual and cultural psyche, appeared in the *Report's* first issue 1 (Winter 1993): 13. And the latest issue includes six articles on the prospects for, and pros and cons of, Orthodox instruction in Russian schools. In addition, in the latest issue, Nina Naletova and Father Georgi Edelstein respectively absolve and condemn the Moscow Patriarchate's Soviet-era Kremlin ties. In between these two bookmark issues, a sampling of articles exploring the Orthodox-Protestant interface include a summary of five Protestant perspectives on Orthodoxy: 3 (Spring 1995), 5-7; an article that notes the frequently overlooked affinities of Eastern Orthodox and Slavic Evangelicals, in contrast to Western Evangelicals: 3 (Fall 1995), 16, 15; tributes to Father Aleksandr Men: 7 (Summer 1999), 1-5, 16; the debate over what constitutes evangelism and proselytism: 8 (Fall 2000), 1-3; and the troubled troika of The CoMission, the Russian Ministry of Education, and the Russian Orthodox Church: 8 (Summer 2000), 1-5.

Articles on Demography and Religion

The *Report* also has frequently entered the murky waters of demography and religion. Enumerating the region's believers and missionaries is fraught with multiple, methodological dangers. But, hopefully, attempts at balanced, educated guesses are preferable to no figures at all, and preferable to wildly divergent, contradictory claims by various parties. The *Report's* estimates of East European missionaries have prompted reactions of both "too high" and "too low," which, on balance, is some comfort: 2 (Winter 1994), 5; 3 (Fall 1995), 3. Attempts at

quantifying church allegiance have been at least as problematic and contentious an exercise: 9 (Summer 2001), 1-12, 16. Perhaps the biggest debate in the *Report* to date on church statistics has centered on the new second edition of David Barrett's *World Christian Encyclopedia* which, in this editor's opinion, frequently overstates Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic allegiance in post-Soviet territories: 9 (Summer 2001): 4-5, 16, 9; 9 (Fall 2001): 11-12.

Other Themes

Additional themes that have received ongoing coverage in the *Report* have included:

1. state and majority faith interference in religious minorities' exercise of freedom of conscience;
2. Protestant theological education;
3. East European Catholicism;
4. Christian themes in East European film; and
5. new religious movements in the post-Soviet era.

Subjects that this editor would like to address more fully in the *Report* in the future include Pentecostal and charismatic church growth, church finances, church- and mission-sponsored microenterprise development projects for the benefit of indigenous churches and charities, and Christian ministry to the handicapped. As for geographic regions, the editor hopes to publish more in the future on the Balkans, Central Asia, and Siberia.

Other Features of the *Report*

One final feature of the *East-West Church & Ministry Report* that deserves note is the attention it regularly draws to other resources for the study of religion in post-Soviet societies. The *Report* publishes excerpts from new studies with the hopes of drawing readers into more extensive study of the issues involved. Recent examples include excerpts reprinted from two lucid and sober treatments of Orthodox and Evangelical common ground and irreducible distinctives: one edited by Timothy Grass for the British Evangelical Alliance: "Evangelicals and Orthodox: Crossing Paths and Crossing Sword," 9 (Fall 2001), 1-4, an excerpt from *Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2001); and the other, Don Fairbairn's article, "Suggestions for Christian Workers in the East," 9 (Fall 2001), 16, 14-15, an excerpt from his newly published *Eastern Orthodoxy Through Western Eyes* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

The *Report* also carries reviews of books, videos, and websites dealing with religion in post-Soviet states. Its annotations for one-hundred-plus religion websites have been collected from various issues of the *Report* and have been posted on the *East-West Church & Ministry*

Report section of Samford University's Global Center website under the heading of links: www.samford.edu/groups/global/ewcmreport.

The *East-West Church & Ministry Report* is a member of the Evangelical Press Association and received EPA Awards of Merit in 1993, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2001. It is indexed by OCLC Public Affairs Information Service (formerly PAIS), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), and Zeller Dietrich (formerly Zeller Verlag).

Geographic Coverage

In terms of geographic distribution, the *Report* has covered various post-Soviet territories roughly in proportion to their percentage of the region's population, with the exception of Russia, which because of its size and its historic, political, and cultural importance, has received greater attention: 35 percent of the region's population, but 45 percent of articles (Appendix E).

A Subscriber Profile

Based on surveys conducted in 1998 and 2001, a profile of the typical subscriber is as follows: male (86%), in his 40s or 50s (60%), Protestant (94%), holding an M.A. or doctoral degree (64%), who uses a computer 20 or more hours per week (62%), and who regularly uses the Internet (98%). The typical subscriber is most likely to be a missionary (42%), a mission administrator (42%), an educator (36%), or some combination of the above (Appendix F). The academic orientation of the *Report's* readership may be underscored by the fact that libraries, as noted earlier, account for 25 percent of total subscriptions.

In Conclusion

A major goal of the *East-West Church & Ministry Report* from its inception has been (1) to publish material from academic sources that could benefit the understanding and the ministry of East European missionaries and church administrators, in the East and in the West; and (2) to publish material drawn from the experience of missionaries and indigenous Christians in post-Soviet territories for the benefit of academics with an interest in religious life in Eastern Europe. Letters to the editor and anecdotal evidence suggest that the *Report* is reaching both an academic and a missionary audience. The *Report's* goal for the second decade of publication is to develop a much wider readership among both academics and the church and missions community.

Appendix A

East-West Church & Ministry Report - Library Subscriptions

Institution	Subscriptions
Seminary*	49

Christian University	15
Christian College*	14
Bible College	13
Mission Organization	5
Church Library	3
Foundation Library	2
Secular College or University/Institute	1

*Includes three double entries for combined Christian college and seminary libraries.

Appendix B

East-West Church & Ministry Report - Requests to Reprint and Redistribute Articles

Number	Year
12	1993
10	1994
13	1995
5	1996
14	1997
13	1998
24	1999
19	2000
20	2001
16	2002 (to date)

Appendix C

Organizations That Have Made Multiple Requests to Reprint or Redistribute

East-West Church and Ministry Report Articles, 1993-2002

Number of Article Requests	Organization	Location
7	Eastern European Harvest	Alabama
5	Russian Language Ministries	South Carolina
4	Friends United Meeting	Indiana
3	Donetsk Christian University	Ukraine
2	The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting	Hungary
2	Berry Publishing Services	California
2	Covenant Baptist Church of Topeka	Kansas
2	Christian Medical & Dental Society	Tennessee
2	Eastern European Bible Mission	Colorado
2	InterAct Ministries	Oregon
2	Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries	Illinois
2	Project Cross	Arkansas

2	Reach Out Ministries	Georgia
2	Russian Resources Press	Florida
2	Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod	Wisconsin
2	Wesleyan World Missions	Indiana

Appendix D

East-West Church & Ministry Report - Reprinting and Redistribution of Multiple-Request

Number of Requests	Author	Article Title	Vol/No/Year
5	Mark Elliott	"Guidelines for Guest Preaching, Teaching, and Cross-Cultural Communication"	10/2/2002
3	Sharyl Corrado	"Early Russian Evangelicals: Ministry Lessons for Today"	8/4/2000
3	Nicholas Holovaty	"An Ideal Theological Education: The Vision of Moscow's Protestant Leaders"	8/4/2000
3	Tiberius Rata	"Theological Education in Romania"	10/2/2002
2	David Barnes, Irina Kargina & Mark Elliott	"Protestants in the Former Soviet Union: What Survey Findings Reveal"	10/1/2002
2	Mark Elliott	"Analysis of <i>World Christian Encyclopedia</i> Figures for Post-Soviet Christians"	9/3/2001
2	Kimmo Kaariainen	"Lowest Church Attendance Rates in Europe"	9/3/2001
2	David C. Lewis	"A Sobering Critique of Russian Protestant Church Growth"	9/3/2001
2	Mike Stachura	"Seven Principles for Highly Effective Short-Term Missions"	2/4/1994

Appendix E: East-West Church & Ministry Report - Geographic Coverage, 1993-2002

Country/Region	Number of Articles/ Editorials	Percentage of Articles/Editorials	Population Percentage	Population**
	Russia	167	45	35
Ukraine	6	2	12	48,200,000
Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)	4	1	2	7,200,000
Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Krygyzia, Kazakhstan)	6	2	14	57,100,000
Other Former Soviet Republics (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova)	2	1	7.5	30,600,000
*Former Soviet Union	46	12		
Former Soviet Union Subtotal	231	57	*70	286,600,000
Bulgaria	9	2	1.9	7,800,000
Albania	4	1	1	3,100,000
Romania	12	3	5.5	22,400,000

Hungary	4	1	2.5	10,100,000
Czech Republic	4	1	2.5	10,300,000
Slovakia	0	0	1	5,400,000
Poland	8	2	9	38,600,000
Former Yugoslavia	6	2	5.5	22,400,000
*Central and Eastern Europe	21	6		
Central and Eastern Europe Subtotal	68	24	??	120,100,000
***Articles that Cover Both the Former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe	72	19		
Total	371	100	100	406,700,000

*Covers through Volume 10, Issue 3

** PRB 2002 World Population Data Sheet (Population Reference Bureau: <http://www.prb.org/>).

*** Articles treating more than one country.

Appendix F: East-West Church & Ministry Report - Typical Subscriber

Typical Subscriber	1998	2001
Male	75%	86%
40 to 59 years old	59%	60%
Protestant	91%	94%
Holds an M.A. or doctorate	71%	64%
Uses a computer 20 or more hours per week	20%	62%
Has Internet access	94%	98%
Is most likely to be a:		
Missionary and/or	47%	42%
Mission administrator and/or	35%	42%
Professor/teacher	21%	36%
Lives in the United States	43%	65%

Appendix G

Ten Most Frequently Accessed Articles - (September—December 15, 2002)

Kristian Ismail and Gary Griffith, Popular Faith and Practice in Bulgaria Today

Mark Elliott, How Much Land Does a Man Need?

Don Fairbairn, Eastern Orthodoxy: Five Protestant Perspectives

Juris Rubenis, Rebirth and Renewal in the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church

Sharyl Corrado, Internet Visa Instructions

Boris Vukonic, Catholic Pilgrimage: The Phenomenon of Medugorje

Don Fairbairn, Islam in Pre-Soviet Eurasia

Paul Carden, Cults and New Religious Movements in the Former Soviet Union

Caroline Swartz, Longer Term Solutions for Romanian Orphans

Mike Stachura, Seven Principles for Highly Effective Short-Term Missions