
A table of contents for the *Calvary Baptist Theological Journal* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_cbtj.php

CBTJ 11 (Fall 1995) 15-37

Penetrating a Crumbling Curtain: A Look at Missionary Broadcasting to Russia

Samuel P. Slobodian

Vice President, Baptist International Evangelistic Missions
Oak Forest, Illinois

Throughout most of the present century, Russia epitomized a "closed country" in missiological terms. The imagery used to describe missionary effort directed at this field often depicted difficulty and limited opportunity by the use of phrases such as "penetrating the Iron Curtain." At the forefront of these unique ministries which targeted Russian were missionary radio broadcasters. These ministries are an important part of missions history for two reasons. First of all, missionary broadcasting played a key role in missionary efforts in a part of the world where missions was dramatically affected by historical events of the past, and secondly, these same missionary radio broadcasters are being greatly affected by historical events of the present. The purpose of this presentation is to provide a brief overview of how historical events in Russia have affected missionary efforts both past and present.

The Russians and Their History

Stretching across eleven time zones, the former Soviet Union was not only extremely large geographically (8,649,484 square miles) but also extremely diverse ethnically, containing

more than one hundred nationalities and people. The nationalities could be divided into three groups: the conquered people, the people who immigrated or were absorbed, and the Slavic people. Our attention will focus on this third group, the Slavic group, which is also referred to as Eastern Slavs, or Russians, to distinguish them from the Western Slavs (Czechs, Slovaks, Poles) and the Southern Slavs, or Yugoslavs (Serbs, Croates, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Bulgarians).

The Eastern Slavs are comprised of three groups. First there are the **White** or **Belo Russians** (9.6 million according to the 1979 census). Second, there are the **Little Russian** or **Ukrainian** people (42.3 million according to the 1979 census). Third, there are the **Great Russians** (137.4 million according to the 1979 census). These three types have influenced one another and there have been marriages and endosmosis, and yet there are shades of distinction between these three types of Russians.[1]

The Eastern Slavs alone were found well distributed throughout the immense Soviet realm. Even when the surrounding countryside was non-Slavic in ethnic character, they were often the most numerous nationality in town, and tended to occupy more than their share of positions of responsibility and power. The Russians, along with their fellow Eastern Slavs, the Ukrainians and Byelorussians, were by far the largest (75.2 percent of the population according to the 1979 census) and most influential group in the Soviet Union. It is this particular grouping that the world regards as being "Russian." For the sake of clarification, it is the Eastern Slavic grouping (Great Russians, Little Russians or Ukrainians, and Byelorussians or White Russians) that is identified in this study by the name "Russian."

The history of the Russian nation began when East Slavic tribes living along the Dnieper River formed a loose federation

---

[1]Georges Jorre, *The Soviet Union: The Land and Its People*, 2nd ed., trans. E. D. Laborde (New York: Wiley, 1963), 72-74.

around the city of Kiev, which was established in 862. The name of the new nation was Rus, identifying the possible Scandinavian roots of the ruling tribe or clan. The Russians adopted Christianity from Byzantium to the south in 988. Most of the tribes were conquered by the Mongols in the first half of the thirteenth century, and Muscovite Rus replaced Kiev as the center of the surviving Russian nation. The difficult struggle for survival under the Mongolian (Tartar) Empire is still reflected in Russian ballads, songs, and proverbs. Moscow rulers were able to consolidate Russian lands and lead a national liberation which achieved total independence from the Mongols in 1480. The Russians conducted a vast territorial expansion for the next few centuries, establishing colonies even in the New World (in Alaska and California). St. Petersburg became the third capital at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and the reign of Peter the Great (1689-1725) brought cultural advancement and certain progress to the nation. The situation of common Russians, however, remained as poor as the miserable conditions of the prior centuries, for the majority of the Russians were serfs or peasants tied to the land belonging to squires, the czar, or monasteries. The end of the Russian Empire came as a result of the military defeats in the Crimean War during the 1850s, which forced the government to abolish serfdom in 1861, and the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-1905, which resulted in the introduction of a limited parliamentary system. The "Provisional Government" replaced the monarchy in February 1917, as a result of Russia's military setbacks in World War I. Russia's brief experience with democracy ended quickly with the October Revolution of 1917, engineered by Lenin and his followers. For the last several decades, the Communist government has ruled Russia with totalitarian power and Marxist-Leninist ideology.[2]

---

[2]Vadim Medish, *The Soviet Union*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice, 1987), 9-44.

To the Western observer it seemed that there was no prospect for significant change. However, not long after Mikail Gorbachev came to power he proposed dramatic changes as he introduced revolutionary concepts such as *glasnost* (openness, transparency) and *perestroika* (change, transformation, restructuring). When Gorbachev first spoke of these and other such concepts, many in the West seemed skeptical. Within a relatively short period of time, however, Gorbachev was caught in a struggle between democratic forces he had unleashed and an old-guard authoritarian regime. In dramatic events which captured the fascination of the whole world, Gorbachev was toppled from power and replaced by Boris Yeltzin, the first democratically elected president of Russia. Also, the Soviet Union was dissolved and its fifteen "republics" became independent countries loosely organized as "the Commonwealth of Independent States." The results of all this produced a great deal of economic hardship as well as political instability. Today, like his predecessor, Yeltzin is in the precarious leadership position of a country that is struggling between forces committed to democratic reform politically and free market reform economically and communistic forces which are resisting those reforms. Presently, these forces are locked in a struggle and no one can predict the outcome. However, it can be said without exaggeration that Russia has undergone dramatic political and social changes. In the following pages, it will be demonstrated that political and social conditions in Russia have greatly influenced missionary broadcasting both past and present.

Christianity in Russia before *Glasnost*

For most of this century, the Christian community in Russia has endured a great deal of suffering inflicted upon them by their hostile, totalitarian, and Marxist-Leninist government. The anti-religious element which controlled the government often quoted Marx who labeled religion as "the opium of the people." Marx saw religion as an unfortunate consequence of a corrupt

economic order which bound men in chains and needed to be eliminated. According to Marx:

> Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness.[3]

Just how religion was to be eliminated was a subject of debate among the Bolsheviks who seized control in the revolution of 1917. There was a faction which believed that religion deprived of the State's political support and the bourgeoisie's economic support would wither away without any intervention from the state. This thought was opposed by the other faction whose sentiments are expressed by N.S. Timasheff in his book *Religion in Soviet Russia*:

> The bourgeoisie was beaten, they said, but not totally annihilated; it certainly had not lost hope of avenging itself and would be likely to exploit the political inexperience of the workers. In so doing, it would naturally resort to religion. Therefore religion must not be left unmolested, but was to be fought with all the impetus of the newly acquired political power, and destroyed as quickly as possible. This demanded a violent intervention in the struggle between the old and the new faiths, an active anti-religious policy.[4]

---

[3]Trever Beeson, *Discretion and Valour: Religious Conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons and Co., 1974), 19.

[4]N.S. Timasheff, *Religion in Soviet Russia* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1943), 22.

It seemed as if the first faction had prevailed when the State's new Constitution committee included a statement in its draft which stated that "religion is a private affair of its citizens." However, Lenin intervened and ordered that statement to be replaced by another one which guaranteed the freedom of religious and anti-religious propaganda. The ominous import of this statement is also explained by Timasheff:

> The new clause seemed to be fairly moderate, for it apparently equalized religious and anti-religious propaganda. The actuality was different: religious propaganda was left to a weak Church, severely afflicted by the sudden destruction of its privileges, and anti-religious propaganda was to be furthered by the new State with the strong Communist party as its backbone. Actually, the formula in the new Constitution was a declaration of war on religion.[5]

The assault on religion began almost immediately:

> It was the boldest, most consistent attempt ever made by a responsible government to destroy the religion of its people. It began within a few months of the victory of the revolutionists by nationalizing all lands including those of the Church. Thus the enormous landed wealth of the Church passed out of its hands. The schools followed; even the theological schools were brought under government control. Marriage became only a legal contract, and registry of births and marriages was taken over by government. Then all financial support, which the Church had long enjoyed, was withdrawn, and all connection with the State was dissolved. There was no prohibition of public worship, but little by little all the remaining functions of the Church were prohibited, including the right to teach religion to more than

---

[5]Ibid., 22-23.

three persons at a time. The intent was perfectly clear. Those who were already deeply indoctrinated with the faith of the Church would be permitted to continue to worship, but the rising generation would be effectively prevented from acquiring that faith. Religion would thus in time die out.[6]

Further, the Communist government began and continued an intensive anti-religious campaign designed to end the faith of believers and win over the rising generation to scientific atheism. They closed thousands of churches, exiled, executed, and imprisoned many Christian leaders. They published anti-religious periodicals, set up anti-religious museums, launched an intensive atheistic education program in the schools, and introduced many regulations designed to curtail and suffocate religious life and practice. Writing on the subject of the suffering Soviet church, Ralph Mann states:

In 1965, in Byelorussia alone (a republic in the European part of the Soviet Union that contains large numbers of Christians), 5,500 atheist lecturers and political instructors worked to erode Christian influence. In addition, 1,400 propagandists and 23,000 workers called "agitators" conducted individual work with believers.

Under Khrushchev in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the state made extreme efforts under a five-year plan to eradicate every vestige of religion. Penal code modifications resulted in increased penalties for infractions of laws relating to religious activities. New laws enabled the government to legally deprive Christian parents of the custody of their

[6]Charles S. Braden, War, *Communism and World Religions* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1953), 257-258.

children, a practice that was already in effect in some regions.[7]

The persecution of Christianity in Russia varied in intensity and methods. This was due to at least three reasons. First, there was the desire on the part of the Soviet government to find more efficient methods. Secondly, for pragmatic reasons, the government found it necessary to adjust anti-religious policy due to changing conditions within the Soviet Union. Thirdly, within the sphere of international relations, the Soviet Union occasionally had to bend to pressure from the free world.[8] Therefore, there were many fluctuations in the anti-religious policies and tactics of the Soviet government that require an examination of each period in order to be understood and which is beyond the limits of this study. However, one example of a fluctuation was when Stalin relaxed persecution for pragmatic reasons during the war to gain the support of the church. When Khrushchev came to power, Stalin's more lenient war-time policies towards religion went by the wayside:

> In sharp contrast to its liberalizing implications in other spheres, the de-Stalinization campaign of the Khrushchev era led to the gradual withdrawal of many concessions granted to organized religion since the early forties and to a marked re-intensification of anti-religious propaganda. The first portents of the new course came in the form of a resolution of the central Committee of July 7, 1954 (not published until seven years later), attacking the position of "neutrality and passivity toward church activities" and ordering a resumption

---

[7]Ralph Mann, *Glasnost: Gateway to World Revival* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1989), 68.

[8]Timasheff, *Religion in Soviet Russia*, 24.

of the anti-religious campaign by both Party and state agencies.[9]

Furthermore, persecution varied not only from period to period, but from place to place. In certain areas, the Soviet government made life more miserable for Christians than in other areas. This variation seemed to be due to local concerns and issues as well as the temperament and agenda of local officials and party members.[10]

The suffering and persecution of Christians in the Soviet Union was made known throughout the world by human rights groups and other organizations who detailed and publicized the accounts of Christians who were arrested, tried, imprisoned, tortured, and harassed. When this dark chapter of human history closed with the end of Communist rule and the granting of religious freedom in Russia, Christians everywhere rejoiced and thanked the Lord for hearing the cries of the suffering and answering the prayers of the concerned.

However, until that time, these political and social events had a drastic impact on missionary efforts within the Soviet Union. No missionaries were permitted in the Soviet Union and any missionary efforts by the Christians within the Soviet Union among themselves was extremely limited indeed.

Missionary Broadcasting to Russia Prior to *Glasnost*

Despite apparently closed doors within Soviet Russia, there were those in the West who felt compelled to direct mission efforts into Russia from without. Their reasoning was two-fold. First of all, the Scriptures did command in Hebrews 13:3 that we

---

[9]Max Hayward and William C. Fletcher, eds., *Religion and the Soviet State: A Dilemma of Power* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 96.

[10]Anita Deyneka and Peter Deyneka, *A Song in Siberia* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook, 1977), 16.

should "remember them that are in bonds." Secondly, the Lord did command us in Mark 16:15 to go "into *all* the world." Therefore, there must be ways, though limited, that that commandment could be obeyed.

Prior to *Glasnost*, there arose more than three hundred parachurch and denominational missions targeting Russia and Eastern Europe. According to Mark Elliot, "the vast majority hold to theologically conservative positions, including support for evangelism as an essential Christian task."[11] Sixty percent of these agencies were headquartered in the United States, with the remaining 40 percent located mostly in Western Europe. The larger ministries alone represented an annual investment of over forty million dollars.[12] In spite of such a large force, the subject of mission work in Eastern Europe, according to Walter Sawatsky, was not widely discussed:

> Since mission work is forbidden by law in the Soviet Union and is frowned on in most other East European countries--indeed the major missionary enterprise is run by atheists, using many of the Western rationalist tools--the subject of mission in Eastern Europe became a virtual taboo in ecumenical circles . . . There are smaller forums for (talking about the church in mission under socialism), but missiological journals and ecumenical meetings are more notable for their inattention to this subject.[13]

Those ministries directing their efforts towards Russia were essentially limited to four kinds of activities. First, Bible and literature distribution which was severely limited by Soviet authorities. Therefore 90 percent of the 4.1 million Bibles

---

[11]Mark Elliot, "Eastern Europe: Responding to Crisis in the Household of Faith," *Eternity* (July/August 1986): 25.

[12]Walter Sawatsky, "Another Look at Mission in Eastern Europe," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11 (January 1987): 15.

[13]Ibid., 18.

provided for the Soviets from 1917 to 1985 were smuggled in illegally.[14] A second activity was relief work and material aid. Though this was also limited by authorities and often done illegally, what was received by needy Christians and families of imprisoned believers was gratefully appreciated. A third activity of these organizations was the dissemination of information and publicity concerning the plight of persecuted Christians. Apparently these efforts did contribute to the release of some prisoners:

> When Georgi Vins was interviewed following his arrival in America, he confirmed the testimony of many other prisoners when he stated that "all Western support--supplying information, demonstrations, and prayer--helps a great deal . . . whenever there was support action in the West, I was treated better by wardens and prison administrators. When there was no support, conditions immediately became worse.[15]

The fourth activity of mission agencies targeting Russia was missionary broadcasting by international shortwave radio. Unlike the other activities, there was no limitation that could be placed on this and it was the only possible way to preach the Gospel to those who lived in Russia. Therefore, this specialized ministry became the dominant evangelistic thrust in that part of the world.

Even though missionary radio is a small part of the entire scope of religious broadcasting, it is in itself an impressive effort of men, money, and machinery. HCJB in Quito, Ecuador, broadcasts twenty-four hours a day in fifteen languages from twelve transmitters and twenty-eight antennas with one million

---

[14]Ibid., 15.

[15]Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II* (Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1981), 44.

watts of shortwave power.[16] TransWorld Radio, with transmitters in seven locations, covers much of the world, broadcasting in eighty-five languages with nearly six million watts of combined power.[17] Far East Broadcasting Company broadcasts programs in over one hundred languages and dialects, transmitting from five different countries. These are just three of at least sixty-five missionary broadcasting stations around the world.[18] Those acquainted with this expansive effort agree with Barry Siedell who said, "There is virtually no square foot on the earth that isn't reached sometime during the day by a gospel radio broadcast."[19]

While gospel broadcasts have been heard all over the world, Russia became a part of the world in which these broadcasts were particularly important and valuable. That is typical of countries which were closed to conventional missionary efforts. For these hundreds of millions of people, international shortwave radio was of far more importance than can be imagined by those living in free society.

Of the more than one billion shortwave radio sets in the world today, most of them are in countries which have had a history of totalitarian or Communist governments which severely restricted the flow of information. Therefore, in those countries, shortwave radio was the only opportunity by which one could obtain information about events in the world. For this reason, prior to the break-up of the Soviet Union, the United States and the Soviet Union spent billions of dollars in a "radio war." It was a battle of ideologies fought over shortwave radio dials between super powers struggling to influence the minds and hearts of an audience of unparalleled proportions who tuned in

---

[16]Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 376-377.

[17]"Glimpses of the Past," *TransWorld Radio* 13 (January 1992): 5.

[18]Herbert J. Kane, *Wanted: World Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 28.

[19]Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Java*, 372.

the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Moscow, and other government funded broadcast giants. Voice of America alone had over 100 million regular listeners.[20]

While governments vied to gain the minds and hearts of people, missionary broadcasters likewise used the airwaves and targeted the very same shortwave radio sets. The missionary broadcasters, however, sought to gain the very souls of the audience for the Kingdom of God. In these areas where there was no other means by which the Gospel could be preached, these gospel broadcasts assumed the key role in missionary work.

> For millions of people today in countries where normal missionary work is restricted, the radio forms a kind of altar where God may be worshiped and faith strengthened.
>
> Increasingly, over the last forty years as one country after another has closed its doors to missionary activity, radio has assumed a critical role in missions.[21]

Dr. J. Herbert Kane, commenting on the outstanding attribute of this specialized ministry said, "Radio has two great advantages: it can penetrate all the iron and bamboo curtains that were ever erected, and it can be understood by the illiterate."[22]

The first international shortwave missionary broadcast directed at Russia was aired in 1941 by HCJB from Quito, Ecuador. Those first radio messages were delivered by Peter Deyneka at the invitation of Dr. Clarence Jones who pioneered missionary radio in the 1930s. Describing that historic event, Deyneka's biographer stated, "The new tool of evangelism by

---

[20]Chuck Raasch, "U.S. Tunes Up for Radio War," *USA Today*, 6 February 1984, 9A.

[21]Sharon E. Mumper, "The Missionary that Needs No Visa," *Christianity Today* (21 February 1986): 25.

[22]Kane, *Wanted: World Christians*, 29.

radio among the Slavic people had begun its strategic endeavor."[23]

Many organizations responded to that great opportunity. TransWorld Radio, HCJB, and Far East Broadcasting are the three major Christian broadcasters which turned their attention to Russia. Other organizations played a key role by supplying the Slavic gospel preaching programs. Two of the main producers of these programs were the Bible Christian Union and the Slavic Gospel Association which by 1980 employed more than fifty Russian radio preachers.[24]

Eventually there were over fifty ministries that engaged in airing hundreds of hours of weekly broadcasts to Russia. In 1988, they met to form an association named "Christian Broadcasters to the Soviet Union."[25]

The results of these efforts were impressive. Nick Leonovitch of TransWorld Radio reported more than ten million regular Russian listeners with whole families and towns coming to know Christ.[26] "The Slavic Gospel Association estimated that some 80 percent of newly baptized Russian believers say their first serious thoughts about God occurred while they were listening to a Gospel broadcast."[27] Moreover, many churches have formed as a result of missionary broadcasts beamed into the Soviet Union. Missions researcher David B. Barrett recorded in

---

[23]Norman B. Rohrer and Peter Deyneka, *Peter Dynamite* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 147.

[24]Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Java*, 389.

[25]John Poysti, to Christian Broadcasters to the Soviet Union, 1 December 1988, copy of letter in this writer's personal file.

[26]David Benson, "Ten Million Listeners!" *Freedom* (Santa Barbara, CA: Russia for Christ, Inc., 1972), 3.

[27]Mumper, "The Missionary that Needs No Visa," 25.

his *World Christian Encyclopedia* that there are 39,750 "isolated radio churches" in the Soviet Union.[28]

Missionary Broadcasting to Russia After *Glasnost*

It is quite likely that history will regard *perestroika* and *glasnost* as the greatest events of the twentieth century. *Glasnost* and *perestroika* have profoundly and directly affected 40 percent of the earth's population, and their impact is clearly felt over the rest of the world as well. Life for millions of Soviets has been completely altered. Things are not like they used to be. Adjustments have been the greatest, perhaps, for Christians. Of all the sectors of Soviet society, theirs faces the most dramatic changes, and these changes have come at such a dizzying pace that "Soviet believers are experiencing rapid 'persecution decompression.' Like a diver coming up too quickly for oxygen, believers are experiencing such rapid change in coming up for freedom that some of them are in spiritual shock."[29]

Missionary efforts in the Soviet Union have also been greatly affected by the changes in the Soviet Union. Hans Finzel makes this observation in the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*: "Missions likewise sense that the changes are so rapid that entire strategies must be abandoned and re-thought from the ground up."[30]

For many decades field conditions within Russia remained basically constant for missionary broadcasters. The dramatic changes which have taken place in Russia which began with *glasnost* have significantly altered the field conditions for Russian

---

[28]David B. Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World, A.D. 1900-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 695.

[29]Hans Finzel, "A New Day for Training Church Leaders in Eastern Europe," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 25 (October 1989): 383.

[30]Ibid.

missionary broadcasters. These changing field conditions are charted as follows:

Field Conditions Before
An activity of faith
No access
Only way to preach the Gospel
All activity from outside borders
Extremely limited contact within
Absence of reliable field date

Field Conditions Now
A definite and tangible response
Amazing access ('open door')
One of many available opportunities for the Gospel
Many activities can be done within
Virtually unlimited contact within
Abundance of reliable field date

It is clear that the field which missionary broadcasters to Russia have targeted is quite a different field today than before. A new day has dawned in the mission field of Russia today. This has resulted in new trends and developments among Russian missionary broadcasters. While the following discussion will center on trends which have surfaced in the area of missionary broadcasting other types of ministries in Russia will occasionally be mentioned since all Russian ministries have been similarly affected.

Nationalization

Now that there is virtually unlimited access within the borders of Russia, ministries are able to nationalize parts of their operation. TransWorld Radio, for example, now permits no Russian programming with non-native voices. Slavic Gospel Association has nationalized much of its operation by opening

regional ministry centers within Russian and employing Russian nationals to operate them.[31]

Localization

In the past all of the activities involving producing and airing missionary broadcasts had to be done from outside Russian boundaries. Now missionary broadcasters like TransWorld Radio and Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC) are operating within Russia on a local basis. For example, FEBC has established local studios, hired local staff, and is airing local broadcasts in Moscow, Novosibirsk, and Kharbarovsk.[32]

Proliferation

In the past there were relatively few ministries targeting Russia. Now long-time Russian missionary broadcasters are operating in a field that is being flooded with many new missions agencies.

> In 1989, when Mark Elliot, director of the Institute for East-West Christian Studies, compiled a directory of Christian ministries to Eastern Europe, it contained 369 entries. Now Elliott, along with Sharon Linzey of Seattle-Pacific University and Holt Ruffin of the Seattle-based USSR Project, is working on updating that list. By mid-April, the count was up to 969.

---

[31]John B. Askers, "Mission Workers for Life: Putting Future CIS Outreach in the Hands of National Workers," *Breakthrough* (September/October 1993): 5.

[32]Rudi Wiens, "Investing in People for the Future," *Russian Ministries Update* (Winter 1992): 1.

"The three of us are running across new groups almost daily," says Elliott.[33]

Competition

With so many organizations involving themselves in Russia with so many activities, it is perhaps inevitable that a certain amount of competition would arise. An article in the Chicago Sun-Times entitled "A Battle for Souls in Eastern Europe" describes the conflict. Evangelicals are competing with the Russian Orthodox Church, older established missions are competing with new ones, the Russian churches and believers are competing for the attention and aid that comes from Western mission agencies.[34] Unfortunately, some Christian organizations have seemingly ignored the Russian Church in recruiting people and launching programs without any consultation from Russian churches or leaders.

> The new openness is also reshaping church leadership in some unhealthy ways. New leaders are emerging, not because of their spiritual maturity or ability, but because they have the best English and the most contacts in the West, according to the Missions Research Group report.[35]

Cooperation

Among the many mission organizations ministering to the former Soviet Union, there have been some major efforts

---

[33]Randy Frame, "Where Taxi Drivers Read Dostoyevsky," *Christianity Today* (18 May 1992): 42.

[34]Daniel J. Lehmann, "Battle for Souls in East Europe," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 17 June 1990, 37.

[35]Ken Sidey, "An Overdose of Glasnost," *Christianity Today*, 20 August 1990, 34-36.

towards cooperation. Perhaps the most well-known effort is the CoMission.

> More than 60 Christian educational and evangelistic organizations have banded together to help transform the post-Communist republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) through education. That unified effort, called the Co Mission, hopes to recruit 12,000 North American Christians to spend a year in the former Soviet Union. . . .
>
> Well-known organizations that have joined the CoMission include Walk Thru the Bible, of which Eilkinson is president, Campus Crusade for Christ, the Navigators (which is responsible for volunteer training), Moody Bible Institute, and the Association of Christian Schools International.[36]

Deglamorization

Perhaps as a result of past persecution in Russia, western Christians ofter looked upon Russian Christians as inspiring models of spirituality. Now as western Christians have had opportunity to become more closely acquainted with them, a 'de-glamorization' has taken place. For example, Light in the East published a two-part article in their paper entitled "Easier and Yet More Difficult" detailing some of the problems encountered in ministering in and to Russians today.[37] Baptists from the West have published some of their concerns over doctrinal differences, extreme legalism and unbaptistic church hierarchy which they encountered among the unregistered Baptists in Russia.[38] It

---

[36]"CoMission: Teaching Teachers in Russia," *Christianity Today*, 14 December 1992, 54-57.

[37]Adolf Novak, "Easier and Yet More Difficult," *Light in the East News* (November 1992): 14-16.

[38]Changing Church Scene in the Soviet Union," *Sword and Trowel* (29 December 1989): 22-25.

should be noted that this operates both ways as Russian Christians have also voiced concerns over some of the characteristics of western Christianity.

Adaptation

The fact that ministries to the former Soviet bloc are facing major adjustments can be demonstrated by the eye-catching headlines of articles that are appearing in religious periodicals: "Bloc Breakup Forces Ministries to Change Course," "Christian Ministries Struggle to Adjust to Now Open Door,"[39] "New Opportunities, New Demands in the Old Red Empire."[40] Some of the best known organizations targeting Eastern Europe in the past (Christian Solidarity International and Open Doors) have shifted their focus from Eastern Europe to China and the Islamic world.[41]

Disintegration

One of the most difficult challenges for organizations to face is change. Unfortunately, it seems that some excellent organizations have not been able to make necessary adjustments without experiencing some disintegration. For example, Keston College, the leader in reporting about churches and believers behind the Iron Curtain, changed its name, relocated, and reduced its staff by 80 percent.[42] Slavic Gospel Association as well has gone through staff reductions, relocation, and a change

---

[39]Arthur D. Moore, "After the Thaw," *Christianity Today* (3 April 1990): 21.

[40]Mark Elliott, "New Opportunities, New Demands in the Old Red Empire," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 28 (January 1992): 32.

[41]Ibid., 33.

[42]"Bloc Breakup Forces Ministries to Change Course," *Christianity Today* (25 November 1991): 54.

in leadership to such an extent that one mission expert stated, "it may not be recognizable hereafter."[43]

Innovation

Some of the new outreaches available in Russia now are prison evangelism, youth ministry, children's work, social work, orphanages, tent evangelism, hospital work, camp ministry, and university student outreach. New outlets for missions to Russia are continually appearing. One American pastor, upon hearing of the lack of contraceptives in the Soviet Union, arrived in Moscow with a suitcase full of condoms![44]

Complication

During the latter days of the Soviet Union, well-known mission's authority Wil Triggs made the following prediction: "As the U.S.S.R. begins to relax its restrictions on the church, Christian activities are becoming more diversified and the church is dividing itself into several directions. This means that outreach to that part of the world will become more complicated."[45] He further says in a statement that now seems prophetic, "Should the Soviet Union collapse into several different countries, this could change the church and mission outreach in that part of the world even more."[46]

---

[43]Walter Sawatsky, "After the Glasnost Revolution: Soviet Evangelicals and Western Missions," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 16 (April 1992): 58.

[44]Gregory W. Marshall, "Breaking Barriers with Bible Stories," *Christian Century* (2 November 1988): 972-973.

[45]Wil Triggs, "The Soviet Union: A Different Kind of Mission Field," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 26 (October 1990): 437.

[46]Ibid., 439-440.

Conclusion

In light of all these many changes, new developments and shifting conditions that have been brought to bear upon missionary broadcasters to Russia, an important question naturally arises. What is the future of missionary broadcasting in Russia? While no human can know the future, it is the opinion of this writer that missionary broadcasting to and in Russia will continue to play a major role in Russian missionary efforts for the following ten reasons:

1. Despite the break-up of the old Soviet Union, society there has not changed in many ways. People there still rely on shortwave radio and therefore its massive audience remains.

2. Shortwave radio still goes where no other ministry can go. Despite the proliferation of ministries in the CIS, few venture outside large cities.

3. Shortwave radio still effectively reaches and nourishes large numbers of people. In fact, its effectiveness is more indisputable than ever before.

4. Shortwave radio is still considered more reliable when compared with local radio.

5. Shortwave radio is not as vulnerable to the political instability, economic chaos, and the social unrest which plagues that part of the world.

6. Shortwave radio ministry can be conducted without excluding other new ministry opportunities.

7. The new accessibility to the field offers possibilities for improvement and enhancement of shortwave radio ministry.

8. Shortwave radio lends itself well to some of the new trends in missionary effort such as nationalization, contextualization, localization, and innovation.

9. Shortwave radio ministry, done correctly (with the emphasis on the preaching of the Word of God), intertwines itself more perhaps than many other ministries with the most irresistible and potent force the world has ever known.

   For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God . . . it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (I Cor. 1:18, 21).

10. As such, perhaps more than any other kind of ministry, it endows the world with a precious and reproductive commodity, taped Gospel messages.