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## Lutherans in Russia since 1990

GERD STRICKER

### Origins

Lutherans formed the most important Protestant group in the Russian Empire. As early as the mid-sixteenth century Tsar Ivan IV, 'the Terrible', called numerous weaponsmiths, fortification designers, officers, artists and architects to Moscow from German lands, settling them in the 'German suburb' (*Nemetskaya sloboda*). With the tsar's permission the first Lutheran church in Russia was established in Moscow in 1576.<sup>1</sup> Baltic territories with a compact Lutheran population (Latvians, Estonians and Germans) fell to the Russian Empire with the annexation of the former lands of the German Teutonic Order of Knights: Estland and Livland in 1710/1721, Courland in 1796. Germans reached Central Russia (the lower Volga and Saratov region 1763–69: 23,000) and later Ukraine (the Black Sea region 1804–56: 54,000; Volhynia from 1863: 150,000) and the Caucasus (1814–17). Some three quarters of these immigrants were Lutherans. In the Russian Empire (excluding Poland and Finland) Lutherans numbered 3.3 million before the First World War: 1.1 million Latvians, 1.1 million Germans, 1 million Estonians, 140,000 Finns and several thousand Swedes.

The Baltic Germans in Estland, Livland and Courland had built up a well-functioning church organisation that integrated the Estonian and Latvian peasant population. In 1802 the German university in Dorpat/Tartu was established with a Lutheran theological faculty that became famous throughout Europe. In contrast to the Baltic Lutherans, the German colonists in Russia did not succeed in building up a church administration, and so in 1832 an imperial decree established the 'Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia' (*Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Russland*) to oversee all Protestants in the country (including the few members of the Reformed faith). The church leadership, the 'General Consistory' (*General-Consistorium*), was of course located in St Petersburg. This Lutheran Church, whose official language was German, represented a state church with inferior legal rights to those of the Russian Orthodox Church; its spiritual and secular leaders and the heads of the church administration were appointed by the emperor personally and paid by the state treasury.<sup>2</sup> Lutheran ministers, like Orthodox priests, were quasi-state officials who had to maintain state registers (births, marriages, deaths). The church's official language, as well as that of the university in Dorpat, was German. Germans always constituted the majority of the church leadership and of the clergy; Estonians and Latvians entered the pastorate in larger numbers only after 1850.<sup>3</sup>

### **Between Revolution and Deportation**

One result of the collapse of the Russian Empire after the Bolshevik uprising of October 1917<sup>4</sup> was the establishment of independent Baltic states. The Lutherans in what was to become Soviet Russia thereby lost not only their intellectual centre, the theological faculty in Dorpat/Tartu, but also the traditional stratum of their church leadership, the Baltic Germans. In 1921 the administrative centre of the church was relocated from Petrograd to Moscow; and through the adoption of new statutes at a general synod in 1924 the leading clergy attempted to adapt the church to the new situation which involved the withdrawal of state support, the seizure of church property and repressive measures. Until 1929 Bolshevik religious persecution was directed chiefly against the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Lutherans at first suffered less; however, suffer they did: between 1917 and 1929 alone 26 Lutheran pastors were murdered by Bolsheviks.

In 1925 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Soviet Union consisted of 178 parishes (each parish comprising between 5 and 15 villages/congregations), 81 pastors and 12 preachers. In that year it was able to organise a theological seminary in Leningrad. However, the seminary's activities came to a standstill in 1934 with the arrest of all the professors and students. During the following years the 58 graduates from the seminary between 1925 and 1934, together with all other Lutheran pastors, vanished into Stalin's Gulag.

With his 1928 collectivisation decree Stalin had terminated Lenin's liberal experiment – the 'New Economic Policy' (1921–28). The new religious legislation of 1929 introduced a policy of systematic repression of any form of religion. The fate of Lutheran pastors follows the general pattern of religious persecution throughout the Soviet Union during the 'Great Purges': in 1932 there were still 54 clergymen in office; in 1935 24, in 1936 only 10. Finally in 1937 the last Lutheran pastor in the Soviet Union was arrested, and in 1938 the last Lutheran church was closed. Almost all the interned pastors were shot or died of other causes in the Gulag – a total of 68 Lutheran pastors between 1917 and 1943.<sup>5</sup>

### **Church in the Underground**

Despite the persecutions Lutheranism lived on in the underground. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century a movement of decidedly anticlerical tendency had been spreading in the evangelical villages of the Black Sea region. Among the Swabian colonists who had immigrated to the Black Sea region from 1804 there were countless pietists, separatists, chiliasts and other religious enthusiasts who had brought with them the '(Gebets-)Stunde' ('hour' or pietistic prayer meeting) from their homeland.<sup>6</sup> Because of the permanent acute shortage of Lutheran pastors in the region every pastor had to serve between 5 and 14 German villages and was able to appear in most villages only a few times a year. In the absence of the pastor the schoolmaster performed a minimal programme of church-related activities – at the Sunday service, for example, he would read a sermon prescribed by the St Petersburg church leadership. This state of affairs did not satisfy the devout 'reborn' pietists. They gathered every day or several times a week, as in Swabia, for a 'Stunde' of prayer and elected their lay preachers and elders from among those 'born again'. They considered themselves the better Christians, sharply contrasting themselves to the academically trained pastors, the secular-oriented 'bishops' church' and the 'Sunday Christians' living in sin.

The Russian–German ‘brotherhoods’ which developed amongst those gathering for ‘Stunde’ proved themselves in the Soviet-era persecutions. They became the melting-pot for all religious life in the Lutheran villages after the pastors were arrested. Most of the ‘church Christians’ had forsaken the faith of their fathers in the time of persecution. Those among them, however, who remained true to the faith joined the brotherhoods, with the result that from 1938 until the 1980s the ‘brotherhoods’ appeared as the sole manifestation of Lutheranism among the Germans in the Soviet Union. A church in the traditional sense no longer existed.<sup>7</sup>

### From Deportation to *Perestroika* (1941–88)

After Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union (22 June 1941) the first to suffer from Stalin’s rage were the Germans in the Soviet Union. Stalin decreed the collective deportation of all ‘Soviet Germans’ from the European parts of the USSR to Siberia, Kazakhstan and Central Asia. The completely unfounded justification for this was that the Volga Germans had acted as Hitler’s fifth column in his war against the Soviet Union and had thereby betrayed their Soviet fatherland.<sup>8</sup> In the ‘labour army’ (*trudovaya armiya* or *Trudarmiya*): camps for forced labour under a military regime, lasting to the end of 1945) and in the ‘special settlements’ (*spetsial’noye naseleniye* or *Spetsnaseleniye*: deportation regions which no German was allowed to leave, lasting to 1955), they were defamed as ‘fascists’ and ‘traitors’, and they had to perform the heaviest labours as ostracised and second-class citizens without any legal rights. From 1941 to 1948 alone some 300–400,000 Russian Germans died out of a total of about 1.1–1.3 million in 1939: shot, starved, frozen, killed in work accidents or by infectious diseases.<sup>9</sup>

The Russian Germans were rehabilitated in 1964. The charge of national treason was lifted and their deportation was denounced as one of the greatest of Stalin’s crimes; but they were nevertheless not allowed to return to their native regions in the European parts of the Soviet Union. This was allowed only in the 1970s, 30–35 years after the deportation, and by now their old homelands were inhabited by the second generation of Russians and Ukrainians who had been settled there after 1941. So only some 50,000 returned, almost secretly, hiding the fact that they were Germans, settling in scattered groups and ignorant of where other Germans might be living.

One decisive factor in the fate of this ethnic group was the fact that the Germans in the deportation areas had not been allowed to build up a German-language school system, of the kind that had functioned in the German settlements from the very beginnings up to 1939 or 1941. In the deportation German children were required to attend Russian schools and thus forgot their native language, a process reinforced by the fact that many Germans began to speak Russian with their children in order to protect them from the insults of their Russian schoolmates.<sup>10</sup> The younger generation of Germans (born between 1945 and 1960) still understood their parents’ German, but as a general rule they were no longer able to speak it themselves. The generation born after 1980 does not speak or understand German at all, which is the central problem for the 2.4 million Germans who have emigrated from the former Soviet Union to Germany since 1986.

Religious activity was strictly forbidden in the labour army and in the special settlements and it was only in the greatest secrecy that groups of believers could assemble. These groups were all of the ‘brotherhood’ kind. After the Germans’ deportee status was lifted in 1955 it was again theoretically possible for them to register religious communities, and one was registered in 1956 in Akmolinsk (later

Tselinograd, now Astana) in Kazakhstan. But despite the 1964 rehabilitation in most cases the Soviet authorities denied these 'fascists' and 'national traitors' the possibility of registering religious communities, so that in the whole of the Soviet Union there existed only seventeen registered Lutheran brotherhoods/congregations in 1970.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1970s, thanks to the efforts of courageous leading 'brothers', a larger number of congregations achieved registration and by 1985 they totalled 250. However, registration involved almost endless confrontation with the Soviet authorities, and did not put an end to strong control by the KGB, to continual difficulties or to occasional persecutions. Nevertheless people could at least gather officially in their own house of prayer. All registered congregations were 'brotherhoods' which elected lay preachers and elders (lay leaders) from their own ranks.

Three pastors who survived the Gulag (Pastors Eugen Bachmann, Arthur Pfeiffer and Johannes Schlundt) tried to revive the spirituality and theology of the Lutheran Church as well as its liturgical traditions, but without great success, not only because the brotherhoods were sceptical about them, but above all because the KGB placed manifold restrictions on their activity. For decades the brotherhoods remained the typical form of Lutheranism practised by the Russian Germans.<sup>12</sup>

After 1975 the Lutherans in the Estonian and Latvian SSR brought the deported German Lutherans in Asia to the attention of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). After the death or emigration of the last three Lutheran ministers (1972/73), pastor Harald Kalnin (Haralds Kalniņš) of Riga paid a secret visit to brotherhoods in Soviet Central Asia and reported to the LWF about them. There are rumours that Kalnin was sent by the KGB to inspect the brotherhoods and to inform the KGB about what was going on in their ranks.<sup>13</sup> However this may be, he certainly collected valuable information about registered and unregistered German congregations, visited a number of them and kept them together.

In the late 1970s the Soviet authorities finally allowed occasional visits from LWF delegations to chosen congregations in the former deportation areas. The visitors found congregations of greatly differing sizes – between 100 and 2000 persons – all of which however shared a brotherhood orientation of an extremely radical-pietist and fundamentalist character, for example renouncing aspects of secular society such as theatre, cinema and television. Many brotherhoods were suffering from a lack of young people. It was not only the narrow religious orientation of the congregations that drove young people away, but probably even more so the heroic – or stubborn? – loyalty of the elderly to the language of Luther, a language which young people no longer understood. Those young Germans who remained faithful preferred to turn to the Baptists, among whom Russian was spoken and who generally gave them a warm welcome.

The delegations from the LWF and from Germany brought Bibles, hymnbooks, collections of sermons and religious literature. All this was urgently needed. Many Lutheran congregations possessed only hand-copied Bibles and hymnbooks: religious literature had been comprehensively seized from the Russian German 'fascists' in the course of the deportation campaign. Little by little some of the leading brothers began to place confidence in the western visitors and succeeded in persuading some of the brotherhoods to show more openness. Several congregations introduced the liturgical service, but only in addition to their brotherhood 'gatherings' (*Versammlungen*) and perhaps principally as a concession to the western delegations. A number of preachers were specially consecrated for these liturgical

services. The mass of congregations, however, remained highly sceptical of the 'secularised' Lutheran Church reintroduced from the West and its 'liberal' spirituality.

In 1980 the Soviet government allowed pastor Kalnin officially to be named the spiritual leader of the Russian–German Lutheran congregations. However, this was a propaganda gesture to the West rather than a genuine concession: Kalnin was hindered in every way by the authorities, was not allowed to use an office or to engage a secretary and only seldom received permission to visit 'his' congregations in Asia. The actual breakthrough came with Gorbachev's *perestroika*, in the wake of which Kalnin was consecrated bishop of the Russian–German Lutherans in 1988<sup>14</sup> and could then in fact begin to build up an ecclesiastical organisation.

### **Ethnic German Lutherans after *Perestroika***

To distinguish it from the Baltic Lutheran churches, the church which Bishop Kalnin built up was initially named the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Soviet Union (*Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in der Sowjetunion*) and is now called the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Central Asia (*Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Russland, der Ukraine, Kasachstan und Mittelasien*), or, more concisely, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States (ELCROS) (*Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Russland und in anderen Staaten* (ELKRAS)). After the collapse of the Soviet Union the bishop's seat and the church's central administration were transferred from Riga to St Petersburg in 1992; they are now located in the old Petri-Pauli-Kirche ('Tserkov' sv. Petra i Pavla) on Nevsky Prospekt, a church which in Soviet times was converted to a swimming pool and which was returned to the Lutheran Church in 1993. After expensive reconstruction financed by the German government it was reconsecrated in 1997. In 1994 Kalnin reached retirement age, and Dr Georg Kretschmar, a former professor of church history at the University of Munich, who had built up the ELCROS' theological seminary, was elected as his successor. Since 1999 the leading bishop in St Petersburg has had the title 'archbishop'.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Church Today**

#### ***The Church's Organisation***

The ELCROS encompasses all areas of the former Soviet Union where Lutheran congregations of German heritage are found, not including the Baltic states. This immense territory is divided into various dioceses: European Russia, Siberia/Far East, Ukraine, Georgia (since 1999), Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Presiding over these are regional bishops who are still mostly pastors from Germany. Most dioceses are divided into deaneries (*Propstei/propstvo*); the deans (*Propst*), including at present two women, are – in contrast to the bishops – mostly Russian Germans. The church administration gives the total number of congregations as almost 600, of which, however, many number only between 50 and 100 persons. It is difficult to estimate the total number of church members: careful estimates vary from 250,000 to 300,000 *active* members.<sup>16</sup>

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union many juridical problems have surfaced, mainly connected with the fact that the new sovereign states that have emerged from the Soviet Union tend not to tolerate within their borders any church whose spiritual

and administrative centre is located in Russia. With the creation of the above-mentioned relatively autonomous dioceses, the Petersburg-centred ELCROS was able to win recognition in the non-Russian CIS states. The regional dioceses regulate their own affairs through their own synods; the General Synod, which convenes every four to five years, constitutes the supreme authority in the whole ELCROS.

The first General Synod, at which Kretschmar was elected successor to Bishop Kalnin, adopted a future constitution and statute for the ELCROS (1994); but the most recent General Synod (1999) was obliged to adopt a new statute in the context of the new Russian law on religion (from 1 October 1997). The new law requires the re-registration of all religious organisations in Russia. The ELCROS is now recognised in Russia, according to the new law, as a 'central religious organisation' with the rights of a legal entity (public corporation).<sup>17</sup>

### ***Theological Training***

Theoretically the problem of theological training has been solved. At its seminary in Novosaratovka near St Petersburg the church offers a three-year course of studies at the end of which the graduates, both male and female, are to be introduced to practical work in various congregations by experienced pastors for two years and may then be ordained as pastors. The so-called 'sessions' ('*sessii*'), which take place twice a year and last for two or three weeks, offer lay preachers the possibility of deepening their theological knowledge without having to finish an entire course. The 'sessions' are also open to catechists, teachers of religion, church social workers, church musicians and people working in the administration of parishes, deaneries and dioceses. The teachers at the seminary mostly come from Germany, some from America, and only a few from Russia; the languages of instruction are Russian and German.

It is foreseen that only five to eight graduates will finish the seminary course each year (eight graduated in the first year, 2000), and it cannot therefore provide the solution to the problem of training pastors for the church as a whole. In the year 2000 the ELCROS had about 30 Russian–German pastors (ordained lay preachers) in its service; they were being supported by pastors sent from Lutheran churches in Germany to work in Lutheran congregations in Russia for up to five years (in the year 2000 these numbered 25–30). For the foreseeable future it will not be possible to train a sufficient number of pastors in Russia, nor will the existing congregations be in a position to pay the pastors' salaries, so the church leadership has developed the following strategy: graduates of the full three-year course are either to be trained for tasks in the church leadership (bishops, deans) or to be assigned to important congregations in large cities such as Moscow, St Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Odessa, Kiev, Vladivostok and Karaganda.

In addition to the educational courses described above, dioceses offer additional extension courses for lay preachers and other people serving the church; these are all tailored to specific regional needs.<sup>18</sup> Such courses have been held once or twice a year for several weeks, for example in Odessa, Sarepta (now Krasnoarmeisk, some 40 km. south of Volgograd), Omsk and Astana (formerly Tselinograd or Akmolinsk) in Kazakhstan.

### ***Problems for the ELCROS***

Although the organisation and structure of the ELCROS seems well-ordered the

church faces a variety of problems, some of which are 'postsoviet' and have their causes in the economic collapse after the end of the Soviet Union, and some of which are caused by specific problems related to the history and fate of the German minority in Russia.

### *Financial Problems*

The general impoverishment of the population of the CIS states has collectively led to a comprehensive impoverishment of all the churches as well. What the people put into the collection plates at a service scarcely suffices to pay their prayer house's electricity and heating bills. There are still a large number of secularised Lutheran churches in all the larger cities of the former Russian Empire which the Lutherans would gladly put to use for worship services again, but such restoration cannot be financed by a local congregation and is possible only when money from Germany is forthcoming. Up to now only a few of the Lutheran churches secularised in Soviet times have been rebuilt, with substantial financial help from Germany: in St Petersburg, Moscow, Vladivostok, Kiev, Grodno, Tashkent and one or two other places. The same applies to salaries for pastors, catechists, organists and choir leaders, as well as to the organisation of a functioning administration: the Lutheran congregations in the CIS states are unable to finance most of them. The problem is compounded by the fact that although people may be willing to meet one-time financial demands they do not have any understanding of the necessity for regularly supporting their congregation (in the form of a church tax, for example). Here attitudes of mind characteristic of *homo sovieticus* must be overcome before the church members understand that in spite of the present crisis they need to create economic autonomy for their congregation rather than expecting financial help solely from Germany.

### *Mass Exodus of the Germans*

The greatest problem for the ELCROS is mass emigration of Germans. Between 1986 and the end of 2000 more than 2.4 million Russian Germans (including Russian spouses) left the Soviet Union and its successor states. This exodus has meant a significant loss of vitality for the ELCROS congregations. The Lutheran brotherhoods always clung to the German language; in the prayer house and its setting Russian was frowned upon. The German authorities took this unambiguous adherence to their German heritage on the part of brotherhood members as a recommendation to give their emigration requests top priority; they would typically be the first ones to be considered.

Thus it has come about that most of those charismatic figures who led the congregations during Soviet times under the most difficult of circumstances have long since left for Germany (and, incidentally, many who did not do so have now died). Entry to Germany has been somewhat restricted in recent years, but there are still more than a million already waiting 'with packed suitcases' for the immigration visa to Germany. Even older church members and preachers who for years declared that they would never emigrate to Germany nevertheless decide to do so when they receive visas. One consequence of the continuing exodus is that no inner stability can be reached in the congregations, which are constantly aware of their provisional character. The mass exodus has led to dramatic falls in numbers, especially in Central Asia, where there is also growing fear of pressure from the Muslim popula-



tion: prayer houses where ten years ago there was hardly space for all the worshippers have now closed and been sold.

*On the Way to a Russian-speaking Church*

In the 1980s the language problem became salient. Most 'Soviet-German' young people could neither speak nor understand German. Because of the brotherhoods' uncompromising insistence on German in the church setting, young people have tended to join Mennonite<sup>19</sup> Baptist parishes and have thus ended up as Baptists. The mass exodus has made the problem so acute that it cannot be ignored any longer. If the congregations of ethnic Germans in the postsoviet states are to have a future they will have to adopt Russian as the language for church services. This is now the position of the ELCROS leadership, which while promoting knowledge of German in every conceivable way is accepting that Russian will become the principal church language. This is also motivated by the aspiration that the Lutheran Church shall offer a spiritual home not only to people of German extraction but also to people of other nationalities, above all Russians. Against this background, sending pastors from Germany can represent only a provisional solution. Today where church services are held in German this is often only because the minister comes from Germany; the German is usually simultaneously translated.

The transition to Russian as the church language has farreaching significance. There exists practically no Lutheran theological or religious literature in Russian. This means that the study of German will continue to be obligatory in the seminary. Two main problems arise. First there is the question of where the money is to be found for all the necessary translation work. Even if this problem is solved another even more serious problem presents itself. There are hardly any native Russian speakers who are fluent enough in German and also have the thorough Lutheran theological competence to be able to be entrusted with the translation of theological works. There is also the time factor: as much basic Lutheran theological literature must be translated in the shortest possible time.

At the beginning of the 1990s Protestant churches in Germany started working on behalf of the (often elderly) Russian Germans remaining in the former Soviet Union in order to provide them with pastoral care and to accompany them spiritually during their last years on Russian soil. However, the situation in Russia began to develop in unexpected ways. Over the last ten years interest in Russia in the Lutheran Church has grown enormously, and not least because it no longer presents itself as a German-speaking church, but at the same time comes with a German cultural background in which Russians are showing an astonishingly keen interest. Thus it is no longer just russianised Germans who are again turning to the ELCROS as the church of their fathers but also numerous ethnic Russians who for the most varied reasons do not feel at home in the Russian Orthodox Church. In fact Lutheran congregations in the cities of the former Soviet Union consist today predominantly of ethnic Russians.

As a result of the new influx of Russian-German and ethnic Russian groups previously uninterested in the church, the mass exodus of Russian Germans has not led to the feared death of their congregations. The number of members in many congregations has probably declined, but the number of the congregations themselves has grown despite the mass exodus of recent years.

### *Old and New Congregations – Theological Problems*

The foundation of new congregations within the ELCROS has led to considerable tensions and theological problems. After the destruction of the Lutheran Church in the 1930s, accompanied by the arrest of all the pastors, this 'church of pastors and bishops' survived only as an underground church based on the radical pietistic–conservative principles of the brotherhoods of 'reborn' and 'awakened' lay brothers and sisters. Those 'church Christians' who remained true to their faith after the death of their church joined the brotherhoods and remained faithful to their narrow fundamentalist, legalistic, often antiecclesiastical, antiseular and antiecumenical positions, and even after the easing of tensions in the 1970s holding fast uncompromisingly to the language of Luther.

The revival of Lutheranism after *perestroika*, with all the traditional ecclesiastical trappings (bishops, pastors, links to the Lutheran World Federation), irritated the brotherhoods. How were they supposed to define their place in the resurrected 'bishops' church', into which they had been automatically integrated?

It is not only the 'bishops' church' and its liberal positions which are causing problems for the traditional brotherhoods, however. Tensions have also increased through the circumstance that most of the newly-founded congregations, which today make up more than half the total number of ELCROS parishes, have an entirely different spiritual basis from that of the devout brotherhoods.

The new congregations are generally made up of people from the urban intelligentsia, of whom a large percentage are ethnic Russians. The members of these new congregations do not have the deep, almost childishly naïve basic piety of the 'reborn brothers and sisters'. Many in the new congregations have been members of German clubs and are primarily interested in German culture: concerts, literary events and social activities are more important to them than the question of when the Lord Jesus will return to punish sinful mankind. The new congregations affirm a liberal theology, support the ordination of women and consider ecumenical relations with other confessions to be extremely important; they tend to regard the baptismal act as a formality.

It is not surprising that the conservative brotherhoods are mistrustful of the new congregations. Some brotherhoods, though not a very large number, have left the ELCROS for these reasons in recent years. The St Petersburg church leadership is working intensively at neutralising the potential tension between these extreme types of congregation and endeavouring to give the brotherhoods a real home (*'Heimat'*) in the ELCROS. These efforts have had some success, because of the personal commitment of Archbishop Georg Kretschmar.

### *Competing Structures*

Relations between the ELCROS and the Lutheran Church in Germany are naturally very close. At the same time, however, the Lutheran churches in America, especially the conservative Missouri and Wisconsin Synods, have also shown from the beginning an interest in the Lutheran congregations of German heritage in the former Soviet Union, especially since the Lutherans in America mostly have German roots too.

Cooperation between the ELCROS and the Missouri Synod was at first good, the latter supplying the ELCROS with financial assistance. It is apparent, however, that the ELCROS, which is theologically orientated towards the Protestant Church in

Germany, is gradually moving towards conflict with the conservative Missouri Synod. The Missouri Synod promotes a 'historically true Lutheran theology' while alleging that the ELCROS and most other Lutheran churches including the LWF have distanced themselves from true Lutheran teaching. It decisively rejects the ordination of women, church blessing for homosexual partners, ecumenism and the liberal theology of the European Lutherans. It also has a strong commitment to mission, in contrast to the ELCROS, which disapproves of active missionary work in Russia out of consideration for the Russian Orthodox Church: the primary mission goal of the ELCROS is to win back the ethnic Germans in the CIS states.

It is necessary to distinguish between the leadership of the Missouri Synod in St Louis Missouri and a group within the Synod, the friends and supporters of one of the Synod's seminaries, at Fort Wayne in Indiana. In the mid-1990s this group began to promote its own projects, for example an ecclesiastical centre with a theological and missionary seminary in Novosibirsk from which congregations are being founded, in the first instance among ethnic minorities in Russia, for instance in Khakassia and Buryatia. With immense financial resources, this group has started missionary work and since 1998 has been actively building up parish structures in competition with the ELCROS network. Meanwhile the Lutheran Church in Lithuania under Bishop Jonas Kalvanas Jr is on its way to a kind of union with the Missouri Synod. In Belarus' the founding of an ELCROS-orientated 'Independent Belarusian Lutheran Church' (*'Unabhängige Weissrussische lutherische Kirche'*) did not take place because Fort Wayne missionaries had secretly prepared parish leaders and pastors to form a church of a highly conservative Lutheran spirit and strong Fort Wayne orientation. Gifted Lutheran theology students are sent to the Fort Wayne seminary and return to Russia with a very conservative theological outlook. There is now a growing danger of schism among the few Lutherans in Russia and the other CIS states. We thus have in Belarus' the unedifying spectacle of two very small Lutheran church organisations competing with each other, a poor witness to Protestantism in this predominantly Orthodox country.<sup>20</sup>

Neo-Protestant churches are also in competition with the ELCROS. Baptists, Adventists and Pentecostals have traditionally taken into their congregations great numbers of Russian Germans of Lutheran heritage, especially in the difficult years of deportation and in the subsequent decades when a Lutheran church organisation was forbidden by the Soviet authorities. Since *perestroika* the New Apostolic Church has been luring nonbelieving Russian Germans whose ancestors were Lutherans into their new congregations with the false assertion that they represent Luther's true church. With its huge financial resources and supply of personnel, the New Apostolic Church is doing very successful missionary work among the Russian Germans; with its careful mission strategy and its restricted financial means the ELCROS has little chance of prevailing against it.

### **Ingria–Ingermanland**

In the Russian Empire and between the two world wars 22 Finnish-speaking parishes (comprising some 70 affiliated villages with 147,000 members) in Ingria, between Karelia and the Estonian border, belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia. Between 1920 and 1938 they established within the Evangelical Church in Russia an Ingrian-Finnish '*Oberkirchenrat*' (diocese) with a bishop, a few pastors and some lay preachers. From 1939 to 1941 tens of thousands of Ingrians were deported to Asia, and the rest of them after the Second World War: in Stalin's view

the Finnish-speaking Ingrians were an unreliable ethnic group. Thousands of them died in the deportation settlements. After Stalin's death, however, in contrast to the Russian Germans, most of them were able to return to their native region. They too had been russianised in the deportation era. After returning to their homeland, they began to form secret prayer groups, but they did not succeed in reviving their ancestral Finnish language.

In the late 1970s the first Ingrian congregation was registered and cared for by the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church. In 1990 this church even formed an Ingrian deanery with 15 congregations in Ingria. The year 1992 saw the official founding of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria, which now has 45 congregations with about 20,000 members and whose bishop has his seat in St Mary's Church in St Petersburg near Nevsky Prospekt. The Lutheran Church in Finland supports this church spiritually and financially, and with a supply of personnel: it sent pastors to lead the rebuilding of the church, and its first bishop was a Finn. In 1995, however, an Ingrian succeeded to this position. The language of the worship service and of the church as a whole, like that of most other small ethnic groups, is nowadays principally Russian. Only the elderly still speak Finnish.<sup>21</sup>

With the help of the Finnish Lutherans, the church has built a seminary in Keltto/Kaltushi, some kilometres from St Petersburg; over the next five years this will supply the Ingrian congregations with pastors who will have received a two-year theological training.<sup>22</sup> The Ingrian Lutheran Church is in intercommunion with the Missouri Synod.

### Ukrainian Lutherans

In the South of Ukraine, with its centre in Odessa, there is the 'German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ukraine' (*'Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in der Ukraine'*), an affiliate church of the ELCROS. At present it has 50–55 congregations, supported especially by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria. In addition to this Lutheran church with a German background, in southwest Ukraine (Galicia) a small Lutheran church of ethnic Ukrainians has been operating since the mid-1990s. They trace their existence back to 23 Lutheran congregations which in 1923, in what was then Polish Galicia, separated from the Ukrainian Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church. Their worship service follows the pattern of the Orthodox liturgy of St John Chrysostom.<sup>23</sup> Today this church numbers 18 congregations and is led by a bishop with his seat in Ternopil'. A small theological seminary has also been set up there: like this entire little church it owes its existence to a great extent to the support of the American Wisconsin Synod.<sup>24</sup>

### Notes and References

- <sup>1</sup> On the whole problem of the German minority in Russia see Gerd Stricker, 'Ethnic Germans in Russia and the former Soviet Union', in Stefan Wolff (ed.), *Ethnic Identity and Cultural Belonging* (Berghahn, London, 2001); on the beginnings of German immigration to the Muscovite lands see Detlef Brandes, 'Von der Einwanderung bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg', in Gerd Stricker (ed.), *Russland*, vol. 10, *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas*, pp. 35–111.
- <sup>2</sup> 'Gesetz für die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche in Russland (1832)', in Robert Stupperich (ed.), *Kirchenordnungen der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche in Russland (Quellenhefte zur Ostdeutschen und Osteuropäischen Kirchengeschichte*, nos. 1–2, Ulm, 1959), pp. 38–199.

- <sup>3</sup> Gerd Stricker, 'Deutsches Kirchenwesen von der Ansiedlungen bis zur Oktoberrevolution', in Stricker, *Russland*, pp. 324–78.
- <sup>4</sup> On the fate of the Russian Germans in Soviet Russia 1917–41, see Detlef Brandes, 'Von der Verfolgung im Ersten Weltkrieg bis zur Deportation', in Stricker, *Russland*, pp. 131–213.
- <sup>5</sup> Wilhelm Kahle, *Geschichte der Evangelisch-lutherischen Gemeinden in der Sowjetunion 1917–1938* (Leiden, 1974); Gerd Stricker, 'Deutsches Kirchenwesen zwischen Revolution und Deportation', in Stricker, *Russland*, pp. 379–91.
- <sup>6</sup> Wilhelm Kahle, 'Die Bedeutung der pietistischen Brüderkreise des Separatismus im Gefüge der evangelischen Gemeinden', in Wilhelm Kahle, *Aufsätze zur Entwicklung der evangelischen Gemeinden in Russland* (Leiden–Köln, 1962), pp. 155–76.
- <sup>7</sup> Peter Schellenberg, 'Die Kirche der Überlebenden', in J. Schleuning, E. Bachmann and P. Schellenberg (eds), *Und Siehe, Wir Leben!*, 2nd edn (Erlangen, 1982), pp. 155–204.
- <sup>8</sup> Gerd Stricker, 'Die Kirchen der Russlanddeutschen und ihre Position gegenüber dem Dritten Reich', in Peter Maser (ed.), *Der Kirchenkampf im deutschen Osten und in den deutschsprachigen Kirchen Osteuropas* (Göttingen, 1992), pp. 180–205.
- <sup>9</sup> Gerd Stricker, 'Skizzen zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Russland', in *Babuschkas Enkelinnen brechen auf: Porträts und Berichte* (Leipzig, 2000), pp. 211–43.
- <sup>10</sup> Peter Hilkes, 'Von der Deportation zum Massenexodus', in Stricker, *Russland*, pp. 482–91. (The article deals with the German school system in Russia.)
- <sup>11</sup> Gerd Stricker, 'German Protestants in tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union', *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 15, 1987, pp. 30–53.
- <sup>12</sup> Gerd Stricker, 'A visit to German congregations in Central Asia', *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 17, 1989, pp. 19–35; Gerd Stricker, 'Zu Besuch bei deutschen Gemeinden in Mittelasien', *G2W/Glaube in der 2. Welt*, no. 9, 1988, pp. 22–30.
- <sup>13</sup> Gerd Stricker, 'Russlanddeutsche Kirchen nach der Deportation', in Stricker, *Russland*, pp. 392–419.
- <sup>14</sup> Gerd Stricker, 'Die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche in der Sowjetunion – Entwicklungen und Probleme des Neuanfangs', *Lutherische Kirche in der Welt*, no. 37 (1990), pp. 129–50.
- <sup>15</sup> Georg Kretschmar [Kretschmar], *Yevangelicheskoye lyuteranskaya tserkov' v Rossii, na Ukraine, v Kazakhstane i v Tsentral'noi Azii 1994–1999* (St Petersburg, 2000).
- <sup>16</sup> Georg Kretschmar and Heinrich Rathke, *Evangelisch-lutherische Kirche in Russland, der Ukraine, Kasachstan und Mittelasien* (St Petersburg, 1995).
- <sup>17</sup> 'Yevangelicheskoye lyuteranskaya tserkov' v Rossii i drugikh stranakh', in Hans-Christian Dietrich, Gerd Stricker and Helmut Tschöerner (eds), *Khoroshego derzhites'!*, 2nd edn (Khar'kov, 1999).
- <sup>18</sup> Gerd Stricker, 'Probleme theologischer und kirchlicher Ausbildung', *G2W/Glaube in der 2. Welt*, no. 1, 2000, pp. 25–31. (The article deals specifically with Lutheran church bodies in the former Soviet Union and the CIS.) English version in *Religion in Eastern Europe* (Princeton, NJ), June 2000.
- <sup>19</sup> Gerd Stricker, 'Mennonites in Russia and the Soviet Union: an aspect of the history of the Germans in Russia', *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 12, 1984, pp. 293–314.
- <sup>20</sup> Gerd Stricker, 'Missouri-Synode im Anmarsch', *G2W/Glaube in der 2. Welt*, no. 12, 2000, pp. 5f.; Gerd Stricker, 'Missouri-Synode contra ELKRAS?', *G2W/Glaube in der 2. Welt*, no. 12, 2000, pp. 7f.; 'Wilhelm Torgerson contra Gerd Stricker: "Missouri" und ELKRAS', *G2W/Glaube in der 2. Welt*, no. 1, 2001, pp. 3f.; Hans-Christian Dietrich, 'Fort Wayne mischt mit', *G2W/Glaube in der 2. Welt*, no. 1, 2001, pp. 26f.; Bischof Diethardt Roth, Erzbischof Georg Kretschmar, 'Lutherische Kirchen im Zwist? Unterschiedliche Sichtweisen eines umstrittenen Vorgangs', *G2W/Glaube in der 2. Welt*, no. 4, 2001, pp. 10–12.
- <sup>21</sup> In the monthly of the Ingrian Lutheran Church (*Inkerin Kirkko/Tserkov' Ingrii*, since 1997) all articles are published in both Finnish and Russian.
- <sup>22</sup> Helmut Tschöerner, 'Yevangelicheskoye lyuteranskaya tserkov' Ingermanlandii (Ingrii) in Dietrich et al. (eds.), *Khoroshego derzhites'!*, pp. 123–26.

- <sup>23</sup> Oskar Wagner, *Ukrainische Evangelische Kirchen des byzantinischen Ritus* (Erlangen, 1991).
- <sup>24</sup> Stricker, 'Probleme theologischer und kirchlicher Ausbildung' includes some paragraphs about the situation of this church today (p. 31).