

Samizdat Today — a Review

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'I write it myself, censor it myself, print and disseminate it myself, and then I do time in prison for it myself!' Vladimir Bukovsky.

A little less than 200 years ago, a respectable and well-placed Russian gentleman named Aleksandr Radishchev was condemned to death for treason and incitement to rebellion against the Imperial state. His offence had been to write, print and circulate 31 copies of a book entitled *A Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow* — a stinging, if rather pretentious, attack on the social injustices of his day. This draconian sentence was later commuted to 10 years' exile, but it had the desired result of smothering a subversive voice when it mattered. Effectively so, because within two years of his return from Siberia Radishchev had committed suicide.¹

Radishchev's story has an emblematic quality. It could represent the fortune which has befallen countless other Russian writers and publishers who tried to go their own way, and were treated by the state with a similar harshness. Illicit publishing in Russia has long been a tool for the promotion of innovative political ideas, as well as of national and religious views. Unofficial literature has resisted arbitrary governments, and a tradition of censorship which goes back to the early 18th century, and has provided outlets for an apparently irrepressible stream of independent thought: literary, political, philosophical and religious. And in the late 19th century it supported and nurtured movements which later led to social and political transformations of astonishing and terrifying proportions.

The Soviet system of censorship, established after the Revolution, has been more pervasive and efficient than its predecessor in Tsarist Russia ever was. When the state body for censorship *Glavlit* was set up in 1922, it took a firm hold on the activities of writers, to a degree

¹ James Billington, *The Icon and the Axe* (London, 1966), pp. 240-41; Charles A. Rudd, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906* (Toronto-Buffalo-London, 1982), pp. 19-21.

which virtually ruled out the circulation of private manuscripts until after Stalin's death in 1953. It was only in the mid-sixties that unsanctioned publishing again assumed a wider scale, and acquired the curious name by which it has since been known all over the world. *Samizdat* means 'do-it-yourself publishing'; it is a playful and challenging dig at the acronym *Gosizdat*, short for State Publishing House. The term caught on with a spontaneity which brought the real need it reflected sharply into the public eye. Within a few years it had perforce gained official recognition: 'This so-called *samizdat*', General Malygin of the KGB said in 1969, 'is composed at the direct instigation of western intelligence and is actively supported by it.'² The official Soviet press has found it expedient since to reintroduce this line at intervals, even (to a lesser degree) under *glasnost*'.

Since the spring of 1987, a flurry of relatively unimpeded *samizdat* activity has offered an apparently insatiable readership unprecedented variety of uncensored pamphlets, newspapers and journals. There are thought to be over 200 unofficial publications circulating in the Soviet Union at present,³ about 70 of them in major cities (Moscow, Leningrad, Riga, Kiev, Sverdlovsk and L'viv).⁴ The range of views and persuasions expressed in them points to the concerns of a whole spectrum of national, political and religious groups which have surfaced over the past two years in all parts of the Soviet Union. Journals are being produced by the Ukrainians, the Armenians, the Crimean Tatars and the Latvians no less eagerly than by the Russians. Secessionists, Russian Nationalists and oppositionist Marxists vie for the attention of an ever increasing readership.

All this is the unexpected issue of labours undertaken ten and 20 years ago by small groups of human rights activists for which 12 years imprisonment or a spell of punitive psychiatric treatment was the likely reward.⁵ It seems particularly ironic that the ideas expressed by so many underground writers in the 1960s and 1970s should now be splashed over the pages of party newspapers with scarcely a nod in the direction from which they originated. The more so since those who undertook the dangerous task of laying the foundations for *glasnost*' and *perestroika* are still sitting over their ancient typewriters in cramped flats, carrying on much as before — if, that is, they have recovered enough from their experience of prison camp or exile so to do.

²Peter Reddaway (Ed.) *Uncensored Russia* (London, 1972), p. 19.

³'Shackled Existence for Unofficial Soviet Press', *The Times*, 4 July 1988. This report indicates that there are at least 220 unofficial publications in circulation in the USSR. Vitali Abramkin, 'The Soviet Unofficial Press', *Soviet Analyst*, 12 October 1988, quotes a figure of over 300.

⁴*Help and Action Newsletter*, autumn 1988, p. 15.

⁵See Lyudmilla Alexeyeva *Soviet Dissent* (Connecticut, 1985) for a full survey.

One of the most readable and authoritative *samizdat* journals currently available, *Referendum*, made this point in an editorial published shortly after its launch in December 1987. The most venerated heroes of our time — the Yevtushenkos, the Klimovs and, yes, Mr Gorbachev himself — should surely be doing time for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, *Referendum* suggested. What kind of logic is it that keeps people imprisoned who said and wrote under Brezhnev what official Soviet poets, film directors and the First Secretary of the Communist Party are publicly saying today? It makes a mockery of liberalisation.⁶

Referendum is one of the more sophisticated unofficial journals in circulation. It is produced on a computer (much *samizdat* is still typed and photocopied), and this makes for greater legibility and accuracy. It also aims to analyse, as well as report, facts. The editor, Lev Timofeyev, talks of helping to 'create and develop public opinion' and puts an emphasis on providing competent commentary to supplement information.⁷

This approach is still unusual and innovative. Most of the other journals which have appeared since 1987 are bulletins along the lines of the *Khronika tekushchikh sobyti* (*Chronicle of Current Events*), a Moscow human rights publication which came out in the 1970s. They carry news reports, letters and appeals rather than objective comment. In that sense Timofeyev's journal has helped to break new ground. It has taken unofficial Soviet journalism further towards the establishment of a properly independent public forum in which the most important issues of the day may be seriously and intelligently debated, without prejudice and without the token ideological genuflections which still litter the pages of official newspapers.

Referendum has a print-run of about 100 copies, which is average; its readership is considerably wider. It appears in Moscow, yet photocopies are known to reach Leningrad and Riga.⁸ The mechanism of spreading *samizdat* has changed little over the years. Once the initial number of copies has been produced, it is still a question of passing them around to friends, who make copies and distribute them in their own circles. Sergei Grigoryants, the editor of another well-known independent journal, *Glasnost'*, has described the conditions in which he endeavours to work:

Every day people from across the country come to the apartment of a friend of ours where we do our editorial work. Telephone calls start at 7 o'clock in the morning and do not always end at one o'clock in the morning. We have no basic office equipment,

⁶ *Referendum* No. 3, p. 1.

⁷ Lev Timofeyev interviewed in *Index on Censorship*, May 1988, p. 8.

⁸ *Ibid.*

no xerox machines, or even decent carbon paper for the typewriters. We experience constant interference from the authorities. . . .⁹

Journals produced in similar circumstances vary considerably in shape and size. Some come as thick tomes bound in hardback, others are flimsy looking affairs printed on wafer-thin paper with a scarcely decipherable text. But it is the slimmer volumes which tend to go furthest. Two reach the West on a regular basis. *Ekspress khronika* (*Express Chronicle*) — a weekly newspaper distributed free of charge in 30 towns in the Soviet Union — is regularly telephoned through to Paris and London where parts of it are reproduced or translated. *Glasnost'*, which carries longer features and appears less regularly, is published in English by the New York based Centre for Democracy in the USSR; translations also appear in Paris and Warsaw, a special edition is available in Armenian and plans have been put forward for selected articles to be published in Norway and Sweden.¹⁰

The editors of journals with regular western contacts seem to be particularly, though by no means exclusively, vulnerable to harassment by the authorities, despite their repeated but unsuccessful efforts to secure registration. Police raids, brief periods of detention, job losses, the confiscation of equipment and manuscripts, and abuse from the official press are frequently reported. There have also been incidents of beatings and death threats from anonymous callers.¹¹

There are other indications too that the authorities may be making concerted efforts to create disarray in the ranks of the unofficial press. Forged imitations of *samizdat* journals have been known to turn up on people's doormats with the post. *Ekspress khronika* is a favourite subject, and the imitation can be quite hard to distinguish from the original. The form and style of the paper are successfully maintained; though the content is likely to be different.¹² In Leningrad, official organisations have reportedly offered support and photocopying facilities to unofficial publishers, through advertisements in the state press. Newspapers have also published articles pointing at dark areas in the biographies of some opposition activists and, predictably enough, associated them with foreign intelligence services.¹³

Probably the best publicised of these attacks appeared in the official newspaper *Literaturnaya gazeta* in March 1988.¹⁴ It accused Sergei

⁹ 'On the Hardships of Glasnost', *Glasnost'* No. 7, p. 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ See for example 'Shackled Existence. . .', *The Times*, 4 July 1988 and 'Index/index (USSR)', *Index on Censorship*, June-July 1988.

¹² Abramkin, 'Soviet Unofficial Press', *Soviet Analyst*, 20 October 1988.

¹³ V. Trubitsyn, 'Ofitsialnaya pechat' o neformalakh i nezavisimoi presse', *Vestnik Kluba nezavisimoi pechati*, No. 1 (RFE/RL, Materialy samizdata, AC No. 6286).

¹⁴ Iona Andconov, 'Peshki v chuzhoi igre', *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 23 March 1988.

Grigoryants of publishing *Glasnost'* with the help of funds provided by an intelligence network sponsored by the US government. The allegations were supported by material drawn from an ill-fated article published in *The Nation* shortly before, which suggested that the funding of the Centre for Democracy in the USSR could provoke accusations from the Soviet authorities that it, and the American version of *Glasnost'*, were tools of the US government.¹⁵ The article was reprinted by three Soviet publications and supplied ammunition for *Literaturnaya gazeta* to strike a blow from which *Glasnost'* had not recovered at the time of writing (November 1988).¹⁶

Of course, this kind of harassment may seem a small price to pay once one has spent a few years cooling one's heels in a labour camp, as have Grigoryants, and the editors of *Ekspress khronika*, *Referendum* and two well known Christian journals *Byulleten' khristianskoi obshchestvennosti* (*The Christian Community Bulletin*) and *Zemlya* (*The Land*).¹⁷ It could be that they see the scale of their present activities as a vindication of the years of enforced silence they spent in camps or in exile.

Perhaps because of this memory or 'tradition' of suffering and oppression which *samizdat* evokes, many journals have been keen to draw attention to their association with other unofficial journals published in the past, and with the independent movements of the 1960s and '70s. And although the predisposition to look back may not be as keen among opposition activists who are too young to have been involved in the dissident movement proper, it certainly affects those well-known figures for whom dissent, and all that it implies, has become a way of life.

This awareness of a 'tradition' which is by any standards deeply tragic, gives Soviet *samizdat* a character which remains overwhelmingly solemn. Of the 64 known publications listed in an information bulletin issued by SMOT (*Svobodnoye mezhproufessional'noye ob'yedineniye trudyashchikysya* — Interprofessional Union of Workers) in July 1988, 43 were categorised as social or political and 17 were religious. Just two were said to be humorous. It is society, politics and religion rather than irreverent anti-ideological word-play which now, as ever, absorb the free-thinking Russian intelligentsia.

¹⁵ Katrine van den Heuvel and Kevin Coogan, 'US Funds for Soviet Dissidents', *The Nation*, 19 March 1988, front cover and p. 378.

¹⁶ 'Soviet Dissidents', *Commentary*, November 1988, pp. 16-21.

¹⁷ Sergei Grigoryants (*Glasnost'*): arrested 1983, released 1987. Aleksandr Podrabinek (*Ekspress khronika*): arrested 1978, released 1983. Lev Timofeyev (*Referendum*): arrested 1985, released 1987. Aleksandr Ogorodnikov (*Byulleten' khristianskoi obshchestvennosti*): arrested 1978, released 1987. Vladimir Osipov (*Zemlya*): arrested 1961, released 1968, rearrested 1974, released 1982.

Of course there are fierce differences between journals and tensions can run high,¹⁸ but, to their credit, many publications include objective reports and assessments of other *samizdat* journals, disagreements notwithstanding. In May 1988, 18 independent journals signed a communique agreeing to establish a *Klub nezavisimoi pechati* (Independent Publications Club) which would act as a platform to encourage mutual assistance and a freer exchange of information between editorial groups. It would also help to resist any attempts by the authorities to provoke further divisions among the opposition. The Club, which is convened by the editor of *Ekspress khronika*, Aleksandr Podrabinek, sets out to issue a monthly bulletin which gives an overview of current *samizdat* and of the topics which are being raised in it.¹⁹

Principal Trends in Samizdat

It would be inappropriate and impossible at this early stage to attempt a full survey of the range of *samizdat* which has appeared in the RSFSR, let alone in the Soviet Union as a whole, since independent publishing began to boom only in the early months of 1987. So far, only a small proportion of the material available has reached the West; but even that gives some indication of the directions Soviet public opinion and public interest have been taking. A selective glance at some of the journals covering social and political, or religious and philosophical, issues may help to outline the main trends.

The immediate aims of most groups producing journals with a social or political emphasis are with the defence or extension of individual rights and the conservation of the natural and cultural environment. Their long-term intentions are more difficult to identify, and vary considerably according to the extent of their willingness to support or tolerate the maintenance of the one-party system. At the more 'loyalist' end of the spectrum for instance is the journal *Obshchina* (Community), produced by the *Federatsiya obshchestvennykh klubov* (Federation of Socialist Clubs), and edited by the well-known, young socialist activist Boris Kagarlitsky. His group is dedicated to the development of alternative socialist policies for the Soviet Union, but he makes a very clear distinction between his efforts to mobilise a grass-roots commitment to restructuring in a way which is essentially in line with the course adopted by the CPSU, and the

¹⁸The *samizdat* journal *Khronograf* No. 1 (Moscow, 28 April 1988), records an attack by Boris Kagarlitsky of the Club of Social Initiatives on *Glasnost'* at a seminar of the Socialist Initiatives Group in April 1988.

¹⁹The bulletin is *Vestnik Kluba nezavisimoi pechati*, first issued in June 1988 in Moscow, and edited by Aleksandr Podrabinek.

objectives of dissidents who reject the principle of single party rule outright.

Another socialist journal, *Rubikon*, edited in Leningrad by Igor' Dashkevich, is similarly critical of the bureaucracy and the leadership, but particularly promotes the establishment of democratic and independent trade unions. Its declared aim is to help build socialism in the form of a 'self-governing society with communal modes of production'.²⁰

Treading on slightly more delicate ground, the pacifist journal *Doveriye (Trust)* is pressing for the right of conscientious objection and alternatives to military service. It has published reports on Afghanistan and Armenia, and commented on chronically low morale in the army. It has also drawn attention to ways in which sectors of the official press have recently appeared to condone the system of punitive psychiatric treatment.²¹

The Leningrad journal *Merkurii (Mercury)* looks to a more forceful representation of public views and puts particular emphasis on issues connected with conservation and ecology. It is produced by the *Kul'turnoye demokraticeskoye dvizheniye* (Cultural Democratic Movement), known also as *Epitsentr* (Epicentre), an umbrella organisation representing a variety of groups campaigning for the preservation of the environment and of cultural monuments. The seriousness with which its members regard their watchdog role is reflected in their watchword 'Claws and teeth for public opinion'.²²

The movement seems to have developed naturally from the widespread interest in conservation which grew up in the 1970s, and — like a number of other oppositionist publications — *Merkurii* has looked to its origins. A special article on the subject appeared in the third issue drawing together some of the historical strands which led to the establishment of the movement: 'The cultural movement in Leningrad matured with the forces that launched revolutionary *perestroika* and are now putting it into practice. . .' The author comments, 'Today it has fallen in with the national process of democratisation and social renewal. It has been enriched by new objects and aims which makes it appropriate to adapt its name to the cultural-democratic movement.'²³

The main human rights journals orientated towards full political democratisation, are *Ekspress khronika*, *Glasnost'* and *Referendum*. *Ekspress khronika* was conceived in May 1987, when its editor, Aleksandr Podrabinek requested permission to set up a weekly

²⁰ *Rubikon*, February 1988 No. 1, p. 14.

²¹ *Doveriye*, Moscow, September 1988.

²² Geoffrey Hosking, 'Informal Groups in the USSR', *Slovo*, 1988 No. 1.

²³ 'Vremya ne zhdet', *Merkurii*, 1987 No. 3.

newspaper on a cooperative basis, dependent on public demand. The application was rejected on the grounds that it was not Leninist enough, whereupon *Express khronika* was launched. In the main it carries short reports gathered from about 200 correspondents throughout the Soviet Union, covering subjects such as the activities of unofficial groups, harassment and persecution by the authorities, public meetings, conferences and demonstrations. *Glasnost'* began along the same lines, but has increasingly carried longer features covering economic issues, the nationalities' problem, ecology, religion and literature — although later issues also include documents, reports from meetings, open letters and straightforward news. The intention is to encourage in readers the habit of democratic thinking; to assist, as the editors see it, in 'the development of democratic practices in society's consciousness'.²⁴ This is an object which the editor of *Referendum*, Lev Timofeyev, no doubt shares, although he has also given a list of more immediate aims to be pursued: the release of political prisoners, the reform of the criminal code and the right for independent groups to operate with impunity.²⁵

One of the most intriguing bodies of underground literature circulating in Russian at present is philosophical and religious. Religious journals are predominantly Christian, but the character of each is very different, as are the assessments they make of the Orthodox Church hierarchy, of Mr Gorbachev and of other religious denominations. Their coverage of wider contemporary issues tends to be limited and peripheral. Instead, the focus is directed at the religious or often, the national, community as a unit apart from Soviet society as a whole, and on the need to redefine the position of that community towards what is still a predominantly uncomprehending world outside.

Christian journals are an important source of information on the difficulties faced by religious groups or individuals even under *perestroika*. They report on the quality and availability of church premises, on statements made by ecclesiastical leaders and by representatives of the lay community, and those with a more philosophical or cultural emphasis also cover the preservation of the Russian cultural heritage, and the complex area of Russian national and religious thought.

The journals which were accessible to me for the purposes of this paper seemed to fall naturally into three categories: those concerned with Orthodox Church life, those which treat religious questions as an offshoot of the Russian national problem, and those with a predominantly ecumenical slant. The most 'institutionally' orientated

²⁴ *Glasnost'*, June 1987 (English language edition) No. 1, p. 1.

²⁵ Lev Timofeyev, interviewed in *Index on Censorship*, May 1988, p. 8.

were *Nevsky dukhovny vestnik* (*The Neva Spiritual Herald*) and *Blagovest* (*A Peal of Bells*). The first of these appears monthly in Leningrad and, like the pre-revolutionary *Sankt Peterburgskiy dukhovny vestnik* (*St Petersburg Spiritual Herald*) to which its name refers, it offers an overview of current events in the life of the diocese and includes material of historical interest about it. This journal has given coverage to the problems connected with registering Orthodox communities in the Leningrad area, has commented critically on liturgical presentation in churches today, and reported on theological conferences. Sermons, short biographies of eminent church figures, and reviews of other *samizdat* publications (religious and non-religious) have also appeared.

Uncharacteristic, but no less prominent for that, was one vitriolic article in the second issue about the subversive activities of heretical sectarians. The Baptists were said particularly, to be sowing confusion among Orthodox Christians by trying to recruit them, so exposing their souls to eternal damnation. The silence of the church on the matter was politically motivated, the author went on, by fear of causing offence to 'western sectarians in high office.'²⁶ A curious piece, encouraged perhaps by the sense that Orthodoxy may be losing its faithful to other religious groups which offer more solid community support and are less closely associated with the state. The Baptists may be the most influential religious group in Russia, after the Orthodox,²⁷ and they present a particular attraction because they have sustained the communal spirit traditional to Russian rural life, which has been lost in modern Soviet cities, but remains a nostalgic memory to many urban inhabitants.

Blagovest, another 'church-orientated' almanac, has appeared monthly since April 1988, reportedly published by a branch of the left-wing grouping *Sovet po ekologii kultury* (The Council for Cultural Ecology).²⁸ The review which its competitor *Nevsky dukhovny vestnik* gave *Blagovest* when it first appeared was none too flattering. Its language was dismissed as 'unctuously pompous', unnatural and reminiscent of the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*; the almanac was said to be aimed at youthful converts associated with the Council, but the review criticised the way it assumed a depth of knowledge about the Orthodox faith which newly received converts were unlikely to possess.²⁹ The material in *Blagovest* is indeed mostly reproduced from other journals and books which it would be comparatively easy for readers to acquire, and includes similarly uncontroversial

²⁶ A. B-n, 'Zametki na pamyat', *Nevsky dukhovny vestnik*, February 1988 No. 2, p. 22.

²⁷ Yevgeni Pazukhin, *Zerkalo slavy*, Leningrad 1988, p. 6 (published in *samizdat*).

²⁸ 'Obzor pechati', *Nevsky dukhovny vestnik*, 1988 No. 4, p. 20.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

conference reports, speeches and sermons. But unoriginality or unreadability notwithstanding, it is said to be issued in 300 copies — a strikingly large first printing for an unofficial religious journal — which may indicate that *Blagovest* has outside assistance, probably thanks to its uncritical stance vis-à-vis the church hierarchy.

There were three journals with a markedly nationalistic emphasis: *Zemlya*, *Russkiye vedomosti* and *Vybor*. *Zemlya* (*The Land*) is edited by the historian Vladimir Osipov, well-known for his nationalist and religious activism since the 1960s. Osipov has served a total of 15 years in prison camps, and *Zemlya* is the continuation of a journal he began to publish before his arrest in 1974, just after the appearance of the second issue. The third issue came out 13 years later, in October 1987. *Zemlya* is an Orthodox Christian publication in the vein of the 19th century 'back to the soil' movement, giving emphasis to the dual notion of Orthodox Rus' as the Russian people's natural spiritual home, and the Russian land as its earthly counterpart to be wisely cherished and defended. Questions relating to national identity, its protection and its corruption, carry strong priority. The third issue includes an address by the officially recognised writer Valentin Rasputin describing the corrupting consequences of a forgotten national past and criticising the hedonism which, he says, has filtered into Russia from the West.³⁰

The firmness with which *Zemlya* has affirmed its nationalist stance is bound to beg questions about its relationship with the now notorious anti-Semitic nationalist organisation *Pamyat'*. Indeed *Glasnost'* demanded that this be clarified in its review of *Zemlya*,³¹ and a response of sorts appeared in issue No. 4, in an editorial article entitled 'The Position of *Pamyat'* on the Religious Question'. The author points to the organisation's defence of believers' rights and its support of *perestroika*. He supports the *Pamyat'* conspiracy theory which holds that the party, the Soviet press and other spheres of national and economic life in the Soviet Union today are controlled by 'a mafia which has adopted the ideology of internationalism to its own immediate needs, so preying upon the needs of the Russian people as a nation'.³² The article also draws a curious comparison between *Pamyat'* (whose members reportedly sent threatening letters to the editors of a number of Moscow's more liberal official journals),³³ and

³⁰ V. Rasputin, 'Address to 12th Congress of the All Union Organisation of the Memory and Culture Society', *Zemlya* No. 3, as noted in *Glasnost'* No. 15, p. 69 (English language edition).

³¹ 'Press Reviews', *Glasnost'*, No. 15, p. 69 (English language edition).

³² 'Pozitsiya Pamyati v religioznom voprose', *Zemlya* No. 4, 19 January 1988.

³³ A threatening letter from *Pamyat'* was received by the chief editor of *Znaniya*, Georgii Baklanov and other editors of Soviet journals. See Index/index, *Index on Censorship* 1989 No. 1.

the Polish Independent Trade Union Solidarity drawing a parallel between Solidarity's leader Lech Walesa, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983 and the leader of *Pamyat'* Dmitri Vasiliev, who has given no indication of being anything more distinguished than a ranting anti-Zionist.³⁴ The dubious conclusion drawn is that the non-violent methods applied by *Pamyat'* and its aim of liberating the church from the mafia's grip will ensure the movement support not only from the workers but from Orthodox Christians in the Soviet Union and abroad.

A more recent addition to the range of Russian nationalist *samizdat* is the journal *Rossiiskkiye vedomosti* (*The Russian Gazette*), which began to appear in mid-1988, carrying the Russian tricolour flag spread over a map of the Soviet Union on the front cover. Its place of publication is noted as 'St Petersburg-Moscow', and the title refers back to the first Russian newspaper, founded in 1725 by Tsar Peter the Great.

The journal seems to share some of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's ideas on the historical role of the Russian people, and proposes a new pattern of relations between the Soviet republics including greater regional autonomy. There is also an emphasis on the importance of religion for the proper organic development of the national group, and the ninth issue carries an article on the early Christian apocrypha by Vladimir Rusak, an Orthodox deacon recently released from a prison sentence, which he served for writing an unauthorised history of the Russian Church.³⁵

Vybor (*Choice*) has a more philosophical and literary emphasis and has attracted attention in other *samizdat* journals, and the Russian emigre press, for the quality and originality of its writing. It publishes theological essays, analyses of the condition of the Russian Church, religious prose, poetry and literary criticism; and its editor Viktor Aksyuchits has drawn a direct line between his thinking on Russia's spiritual vocation and that of the early 20th century Russian philosophers Nikolai Berdyayev and Vladimir Solov'ev.³⁶ The editors (Aksyuchits and Gleb Anishchenko) have also specifically emphasised that their object is to restore the link between Russian spiritual culture and the Orthodox tradition.

Vybor invites contributions from a wide range of people including those of different denominations, non-Russians and emigres. But the

³⁴In December 1985 *Pamyat'* was reportedly ejected from Moscow's Palace of Culture after a meeting at which Dmitri Vasiliev read from the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' (forged in the 1890s by the Tsarist secret police to discredit the Jews) calling them 'the still active programme of contemporary Zionism'. Geoffrey Hosking, 'Informal Groups in the USSR', *Slovo*, 1988 No. 1.

³⁵'Rossiiskkiye vedomosti', *Posev*, June 1988, p. 11.

³⁶Viktor Aksyuchits, 'Russkaya idea', *Vybor*, 1988 No. 3.

national question receives special prominence, and the first issue sets out to open a discussion on the extreme positions recently stimulated by national and messianic feeling or its absolute rejection.³⁷ The section on theology and philosophy includes thoughts on some of the most basic and unanswerable questions raised by religious belief: creation, sin, evil and the nature of religious myth, as well as a lecture from Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, the Bishop of the Moscow Patriarchate in London (whose work enjoys a special popularity in the underground press) and a sermon from the dissident priest Fr Dmitri Dudko whose teaching in the 1970s attracted a huge following. Fr Dudko later recanted on television after spending five months in prison in 1980, and his own explanation of that humiliating decision also appears in *Vybor*.³⁸

The broader and more ecumenical stance adopted by *Vybor* has been taken further by other groupings, which have gone out of their way to give priority to the cause of inter-denominational understanding. *Vestnik bratstva dialoga (Herald of the Brotherhood of Dialogue)*, published in Moscow, is the outlet for an independent ecumenical peace group which aims to promote religious education — especially among the young — spread missionary activity and contribute to the protection of believers' rights. Another journal *Chasha (Chalice)* writes in an editorial introduction that it decisively rejects the spirit of confessional narrowness which leads 'to the loss of a living link between God and man', and aims to develop the tradition of an earlier religious and philosophical journal *Prizyv (The Call)* to expand the horizons of ecumenism. *Chasha* first appeared in January 1988, giving its place of publication as 'Moscow-Leningrad-Riga' and unexpectedly 'Milan'. It aims to reflect issues and problems raised by the ecumenical movement both in the Soviet Union and abroad. Poetry, a definition of Quakerism and an article on rock and roll also get a look in from the start.

One of the first (and most strident) Christian journals to be published since *glasnost*' came into its own, was *Byulleten' khristianskoi obshchestvennosti (The Christian Community Bulletin)*. This was launched in July 1987, four months after its editor, the Orthodox Christian activist Aleksandr Ogorodnikov, had been released from prison. Although the emphasis is predominantly Orthodox, Ogorodnikov has been keen to emphasise his readiness to accept contributions from other Christian denominations and to encourage dialogue with non-Orthodox religious groups. The early issues of the journal are probably some of the least well presented

³⁷ 'Vybor Publication Programme', *Glasnost*' No. 9 (English language edition), pp. 71-2.

³⁸ 'Vybor', *Byulleten' khristianskoi obshchestvennosti*, No. 5, p. 164.

examples of *samizdat* available. They offer an enormous and apparently miscellaneous collection of documents (news items, letters, petitions, conference reports, biographies, lectures, sermons, and articles on religious subjects). A declaration from the editorial side that the journal's criteria for selection are only 'truth and authenticity' has left critics unmoved. Writing in *Glasnost'*, F. V. Karelin was offended by the quantity of space Ogorodnikov devotes to material about himself, by his hyperbolic style and the attention he gives to western leaders (the first issue includes letters from Ogorodnikov to Mrs Thatcher, M. Chirac and the Russian Orthodox Church in the United States).³⁹ Another review in *Nevsky dukhovny vestnik* also indicated little sympathy either for Ogorodnikov himself, or for his willingness to give space to non-Orthodox matters in a journal which was unselective, confused and confusing.⁴⁰

Byulleten' khristianskoi obshchestvennosti has set itself a gargantuan task. Its purpose, Ogorodnikov has said, is to make public the problems raised by religious groups throughout the country (including Eastern-rite Catholics in Ukraine, Catholics in Lithuania, Lutherans in Latvia and smaller sects in other parts of the Soviet Union); to bridge the gaps between them, and to draw them and ultimately the church hierarchy itself into the restructuring process. The gulf between authority and its subjects which *perestroika* is just beginning to span, is still very much in evidence where the Orthodox Church is concerned. The efforts Ogorodnikov has made to embarrass the church hierarchy into a public recognition of the real needs of believers merit considerable respect, as does the attention his journal has paid to the need for proper legal foundations on which an independent church may finally be built.

Ogorodnikov's irreverent attitude to the present church hierarchy has a lot in common with that of some less avidly religious underground journals. *Glasnost'* has devoted an entire issue (No. 9) to the religious question, beginning with an article by Vladimir Poresh on the legal status of the church which also comments on the discrepancy between increasing openness in Soviet society and the continuing lack of it in church life. Poresh also complains that any attempt by believers to draw public attention to the church's difficulties (the religious upbringing of children, for instance, or the continuing persecution of some priests) has been resisted on occasion less by the authorities than by bishops who refuse to recognise the existence of such problems.⁴¹

³⁹ F. V. Karelin, *Glasnost'*, No. 10, p. 156.

⁴⁰ 'Byulleten' khristianskoi obshchestvennosti', *Nevsky dukhovnyi vestnik* No. 4, p. 21.

⁴¹ Vladimir Poresh, 'A Few Words about the Status of the Russian Orthodox Church', *Glasnost'*, No. 9, p. 56 (English language edition).

Bringing the extent of corruption within the hierarchy into full relief *Glasnost'* (No. 13) published a series of graceless secret documents of unconfirmed authenticity which, the editors say, reveal 'the key mechanisms' of relations between the ruling church hierarchs and their atheist superiors. They include reports from the Council for Religious Affairs which indicate that in his youth Patriarch Pimen was twice convicted and imprisoned for desertion from the army, and that later, he lived using forged papers. Recorded conversations (presumably from KGB archives) reveal that Archbishop Alexi (now Metropolitan of Leningrad and Tallinn) informed upon the Patriarch's colourful private life.⁴² Ambition, intrigue and tale-bearing abound.

True or not, the message behind the scandal is an urgent one. Underground writers feel that the church hierarchy is no less corrupt than the *nomenklatura* and that its behaviour should be made subject to public scrutiny like that of recently exposed Brezhnevite officials. The fact that a journal as institutionally and dogmatically orientated as *Nevsky dukhovny vestnik* has not condemned this view indicates how widely it is shared; 'the Church is in fact ruled by godless men', a reviewer comments, 'and the hierarchs play up to them as much as they can, each in his own way.'

All this suggests an awful muddle of loyalties and feelings among lay believers, much as in the higher echelons of the church itself. The need to reaffirm a strong religious identity is being frustrated by a distrust of church leaders and at times confused by the compulsion to revive a sense of national and cultural community. Yet it may be a sign of increasing self-awareness in Russian society that any tendency towards jingoism is being countered by groups which have taken a step back from the burning issue of national and religious identity, to try and clean up a very messy back yard and air it enough for the outside world to take a better look.

There is something very encouraging about this variety of outlook. It was with considerable fascination, too, that I read an article by Grigori Pomerants in *Glasnost'* (No. 10) on the dangers posed by the resurgence of ethnic and religious divisions in the Soviet Union, which asked whether the religions of the Soviet people, freed from the restraint of government, would be able to rise to a genuinely ecumenical feeling.⁴³ Despite all evidence to the contrary, if the underground press is any indicator of public mood (and it might be),

⁴²'On the 70th Anniversary of the Law on the Separation of Church and State', *Glasnost'*, No. 13, pp. 2-9 (English language edition).

⁴³Grigori Pomerants, 'Through the Whirlpools', *Glasnost'* No. 10, pp. 2-4 (English language edition).

the answer would have to be yes. For even with extremist factions waiting in the wings, it seems to me that in the range of political philosophical and religious attitudes which Russian language *samizdat* now offers there may be signs of a more deeply assimilated lesson in democratic conduct than the Russian people have ever known before.

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