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## **Russian Orthodox Missions to the East**

VYACHESLAV MAIYER

Once they had seized power in Russia the Bolsheviks realised that they could retain it only if all existing state institutions were utterly destroyed. The urban masses could be controlled by force, hunger and terror. But what of the peasantry, who were the majority of the population and supported the monarchy? The multilingual population of the empire lived in patriarchal, communal societies that were bonded by Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish (in small settlements in western provinces), pagan (shamanic) and even Zoroastrian beliefs. Pitirim Sorokin, one of the most eminent sociologists of this century and as a Komi a northerner by birth, writes in his autobiography:

With its impressive rituals, church music, colourful processions and mysterious sacraments, the Russian Orthodox Church was an integral component of the aesthetic life of the peasantry. The village church was also their theatre and concert hall. In it they played an active part in the performance of the eternal liturgical tragedy of divine Creation, in the drama of the solemn funeral of the deceased, in the joyful ceremonies of baptism and matrimony, in the sacraments of confession, communion and absolution, in festival processions such as that of the Cross at Easter. In church they enjoyed stirring music, listened to the uplifting poetry that was chanted by those at prayer and took part in other religious activities. One way or another, the church and religion played an important role in the lives of the peasants no less than that of the theatre in the lives of town-dwellers.<sup>1</sup>

Having sealed victory in the Civil War of 1918–22, the Bolsheviks aimed a critical blow at the social fabric of Russia – against Orthodoxy. Why this particular institution? In the first quarter of this century the Russian Orthodox Church was the largest national church on Earth. In Russia alone 90 million believers were under its protection, as well as 54,000 churches and 25,000 choral chapels. It was served by 163 bishops and 51,105 priests; 33,572 monks and nuns lived in 1257 monasteries along with 73,463 novices. This was not a static, paralysed organism as party scholars or atheists portrayed it during the Soviet period. In the two decades prior to the October Revolution alone, 165 new monasteries were founded.<sup>2</sup> According to other data almost identical to these figures, there were in Russia four theological academies, 58 seminaries, 1250 monasteries, 55,173 Orthodox churches and 25,000 chapels; 4200 Catholic churches, 25,000 mosques, 6000 synagogues and 4000 prayer houses.<sup>3</sup> To these impressive statistics should be added 70 datsans (Buddhist temples) in

Buryatia, Kalmykia, St Petersburg and Tuva, which at that time was not part of Russia.<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that the tsarist regime built mosques in areas of the Caucasus and Central Asia at its own expense. Seventy years later, 6794 Orthodox, 1099 Catholic, 751 Muslim, 109 Jewish and 6283 communities of other faiths were recorded in the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> The activity of Russian Orthodoxy sent into exile ('sent on a mission' according to D. S. Merezhkovsky) was so persistent that it continues today and thousands of Russian churches cover the globe. Churches were built wherever a number of Russians lived closely together, as along the Chinese Eastern Railway between 1920 and 1945, when 48 churches were built, 27 between 1930 and 1945.<sup>6</sup> A Russian church, St Nikolai, was built in Frankfurt-am-Main in Germany as recently as 1979.

It is not the task of the author to describe the destruction of the great Russian Orthodox Church in Russia, but only to remark that no other church on Earth has known such persecution. Most requisitioned churches were later destroyed. The word 'destruction' could also be applied to the squandering of resources: church items such as books and icons were sold and used for secular purposes. Indeed, many words such as 'holiness' and 'charity' have begun to return to the Russian language only in the 1990s. Many researchers think that the Second World War saved Orthodoxy in Russia, as thousands of churches were reopened on territory seized by the Germans. Subsequently, the communists left most of these open. Orthodox communities in the West and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in particular helped in the construction of churches on occupied territory.

As they set about suppressing the church, there was no end to the communists' blasphemy. They bombarded the people with antireligious literature. State lecturers constantly gave lectures and held 'discussions'. There were faculties of scientific atheism with which the faculties of the history of the CPSU, scientific communism and historical and dialectical materialism worked in close contact, supplementing one another's courses. The Institute of Scientific Atheism conducted antireligious activity throughout the country, running departments for religious affairs in local executive committees. When people characterise Soviet 'communism' they often draw a parallel with fascism in Germany. There are undoubtedly similarities. There were faculties of 'scientific antisemitism' in German and French universities and on *Kristallnacht*, in November 1938, hundreds of synagogues were destroyed. Nevertheless, fascism did not approach the total destruction of religion which was achieved in the USSR.

One of Pushkin's sayings, 'malicious words are more harmful than a gun', was quoted by the communists when destroying organisations, social classes and institutions which they did not like. Into this category fell the peasantry, who despite the fact that they were theoretically in alliance with the proletariat were considered a bulwark of obscurantism and ignorance. This justified the liquidation of the prosperous peasants, as a class of 'kulaks' and their servants, during the period of collectivisation. A similar operation was carried out earlier with respect to the church, which was accused of 'cultivating ignorance' and 'deliberate stupefaction of the people'. Religion was considered an obstacle to scientific progress and at the same time as an instrument to russify the non-Russian population. The Bolsheviks shamelessly and remorselessly took over the centuries-old missionary work of the church which had been accustoming the peoples of the Volga, the North, Siberia and the Far East to European civilisation. Missionary literature was destroyed; the past was consigned to oblivion and no longer formed part of everyday life or study. The result was that the majority of Soviet citizens believed – and still believe – that Soviet

power alone created literacy and literature and nurtured a national intelligentsia among non-Russian peoples. The modern scholar N. A. Smirnov attacks missionaries thus:

Archbishop Nikodim thought it necessary to challenge historical facts by claiming that the Russian church never had as its aim the russification of non-Russian peoples, but on the contrary, facilitated their national cultural development, including the development of their national literacy. It is not clear what purpose is served by this belated justification of pre-revolutionary missionary activity, which in fact played a significant role in the policy of oppression and russification of peoples, destroying their religions and national cultures.<sup>7</sup>

It would be no bad thing for this scholar – an atheist – to recall Lenin’s own saying that ‘facts are stubborn things’. Let us look at them.

Russian Orthodoxy had already begun to involve itself in missionary work under the Mongol yoke. One Stefan from Veliki Ustyug is regarded as the first Russian missionary. He invented the Zyrian (Komi) written language. According to the historian G. P. Fedorov

He did not wish to connect the act of baptising pagans with their russification or to present them with the Slavonic liturgy explained by a sermon in their own language. He did for the Zyrians what Cyril and Methodius did for the Slavs: he translated the service and Holy Scriptures – in part at least – for them. In order to do so he had first to devise a Zyrian alphabet, and a few samples of old writing from Perm’ which have survived indicate that he probably used neither the Greek nor the Russian alphabet but local runes – symbols notched onto wood. In this respect, then, he did not follow the example of the first teachers of the Slavs.<sup>8</sup>

As well as inventing a written language Stefan built the Church of the Annunciation in Ust’-Vym’, the main Zyrian settlement. Non-baptised also frequented it – not to pray but to marvel at the ‘beauty and goodness of the church building’. It was truly preaching through beauty. After Stefan of Perm’ died in 1396 the missionaries SS Gerasim and Pitirim continued his work. From that time Christianity penetrated deeply into Komi consciousness; in the seventeenth century this people too was to divide itself into faithful supporters of Orthodoxy and adherents of the old faith. Komi Old Believer settlements exist today: ‘The majority of Karelians and roughly one third of Komis have become Old Believers, albeit while preserving elements of the pre-Christian folk religion.’<sup>9</sup>

In 1555 Ivan the Terrible set up a new diocese in conquered Kazan’ led by St Guri. Its main task was missionary work. The tsar and Metropolitan Makari instructed St Guri to forbid ‘all force and coercion when dealing with nonbelievers’ and ordered him to proceed with kindness and gentleness. St Guri founded the Zilantov monastery near Kazan’, where novices taught children and prepared them to be future missionaries. This was the beginning of the first missionary school in Russia, the forerunner of the Kazan’ Academy. SS Varsofoni and German assisted St Guri in the work of Christian preaching. Most Tatars (from Kasimov, Siberia and Astrakhan’) were Orthodox prior to the revolution. There were Tatar Orthodox monasteries where services were held in the Tatar language. Subsequently some Tatar Christians became missionaries among peoples of the Turkic linguistic group – Altaians, Khakas, Shors, Kazakhs, Kirgiz. Many books were translated into the

Siberian languages not from Church Slavonic and Russian but from Tatar.<sup>10</sup> In the Altai services were being conducted in Altaian and Shor by the beginning of the twentieth century and the four Gospels, many hagiographies, Easter hymns, night vigils, books of hours, prayers, calendars and service books had been translated into these languages. Orthodoxy greatly influenced the vocabularies of these languages. For instance, the Tatar language of the Orthodox became known as Kryashchen ('Christian') and a good many books were published in it.<sup>11</sup> There is no mention of this Orthodox Tatar language in even the most thorough encyclopaedias, however.<sup>12</sup>

The Venerable Trifon Pechenegsky (1485–1583) actively preached among the Lapps (Saami) in Lapland, on the Kola peninsula. Many prayers were translated into the Saami language, and at the end of the nineteenth century *The Holy Gospel according to Matthew in the Language of the Lapps, who Live in Russian Lapland which Borders onto Norway next to the Ocean* was published.<sup>13</sup> *Lives of the Saints* recounts the following about St Trifon:

The blessing of the Lord rested on the works and heroic deeds of Trifon; his cloister expanded and grew stronger. It shone in the barren regions of the far north like the heavenly light of the polar night, filling, enlivening and enlightening the land with the light of the true Christian faith. Through the enthusiasm and achievements of its holy founder all Lapp tribes of western Lapland were brought to Christ and took holy baptism in the course of the 20 years from the foundation of the Holy Trinity Monastery and some 40 years since St Trifon's arrival in the north. Their conversion was genuine and simple; for many centuries afterwards there were neither departures from Orthodoxy to another faith nor schisms.<sup>14</sup>

In the history of the Russian church the eighteenth century is noteworthy for the feats of such enlighteners of Siberia as Ioann of Tobol'sk (died 1715), Innokenti of Irkutsk (died 1731), Sofroni of Irkutsk (died 1771) and Pavel of Tobol'sk (died 1770). From the end of the sixteenth century the tsarist regime strove to adopt each of the 32 nations beyond the Urals. The first bishop of Irkutsk was Innokenti, who was sent to China to minister to Russian prisoners there. Refused permission to cross the border by the Chinese authorities, he set up a small icon workshop on the border at Selenginsk: some of the icons he painted survive to this day. Through his efforts in Irkutsk in the Monastery of the Ascension a Mongolian church school was founded in 1725. As a result many books of the Orthodox canon were translated into the Mongolian languages, including Buryat. Before the revolution almost all Buryats of the Angara and Upper Lena regions, as well as some in the Amur region, were Orthodox believers.

In 1824 Archimandrite Veniamin was appointed leader of a mission to convert the Samoyeds (Nentsy) to the Christian faith and two years later on 18 April 1826 the Easter liturgy was conducted in Izhma in the Nenets language.<sup>15</sup> When in the 1870s a Nenets settlement was founded at Malye Karmakuly on the island of Novaya Zemlya a church was soon built there in which services were held in Nenets. This settlement was liquidated and the Nentsy forcibly resettled on Bol'shaya Zemlya in 1959. Soviet militarists soon carried out a huge hydrogen bomb explosion there.

We have already remarked that the first people to devise a national written language for the peoples of the North, Siberia, the Urals, the Volga and the Far East were Orthodox missionaries. They not only invented an alphabet, printed the first primers in it and translated books from the Holy Scriptures, but were the first to understand the need for national dictionaries. In the nineteenth century small

Chukchi, Orochen, Evenk, Gol'd (Nanai), Ostyak-Samoyed (Sel'kup) and many other dictionaries were published. The teacher-priests actively collected national folklore – thus the brother-priests Aleksandr and Prokopi Protod'yakonov compiled a dictionary of Gol'd.<sup>16</sup> The Protod'yakonov brothers translated and published in Kazan' a number of books in the Gol'd language which give an idea of the work done with a nation which came within the boundaries of the Russian state only after 1850.<sup>17</sup> Songs, *byliny* and tales of the Ussurian Gol'ds in Gol'd and Russian were also published by Prokopi Protod'yakonov in Vladivostok in 1896. The priest N. P. Grigorovsky wrote an Ostyak-Samoyed version of the Bible story, and devised an alphabet and primer for this people entitled *Azbuka Syussogoi Gulani* and *Molitvy o Serdechnoi Molitve k Bogu*. At that time books were published in editions of at least 600 copies in sturdy bindings on good-quality paper for small peoples numbering only several thousands.

The translation of sacred literature usually dominated the lives of the enlighteners; for them it had the significance of a holy task. Thus the Okhotsk archpriest Stefan Popov, a Lamut (Even), took three years to translate Matthew's Gospel into Tungus (Evenk) on the instructions of Archbishop Innokenti of Kamchatka and with the assistance of the translator Sheludkov. His translation was used and amended over 26 years before being published in Kazan' in 1880.<sup>18</sup> The text is parallel in Church Slavonic and Tungus. The small Evenk people (Evenks and Evens) occupy the largest area per person in the world (even now that their natural habitat is shrinking): they live from the Ob' to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, from Taimyr' to Lake Hövsgöl Nuur in Mongolia, as well as in Heilongjiang province in China. Right up to the 1940s the most widespread language in the Lena basin was for centuries Yakut. Many service books have been published in this language. Where formerly there were dozens of priests today only one Yakut – a Baptist – preaches in his native language. The Yakut priests who are best known throughout Russia are G. Popov, who printed the Yakut alphabet in that people's first book,<sup>19</sup> and Fr Aleksii, who served as a priest on board the cruiser *Ryurik* during the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>20</sup>

The Bolshevik claim that Russia was a 'prison for the nations' does not correspond with the truth. Certain limits on choosing a place to live and receiving higher education existed only for the Jewish population, and these were gradually eroded: Jewish merchants who were more highly educated received the right to live where they liked. Siberia, for instance, was closed to the Jews, but there was always a variable Jewish population in Siberian towns and large trading centres. In Kainsk Jews made up 15.8 per cent of the population and in Verkhneudinsk (Ulan-Ude) 11.3 per cent; the smallest population – 1 per cent – was in Vladivostok. Jewish criminals were exiled to Siberia, where they founded Jewish agricultural settlements. The tsarist regime 'protected' its support base – that is, the peasantry – from Jewish influence, mainly by trying to keep Jewish trading activity away from them. The Pale of Settlement, introduced by Catherine II for the western provinces in the style of a German ghetto, was certainly nothing to be proud of. But in those places where Russians and indigenous people lived together both Russians and natives were bilingual. Even today Russians are proud of ancestors from native peoples. In Yakutsk at the turn of the century everyone spoke Yakut; Pugachev's proclamation during the peasant uprising was written in Kazakh. I recall from my early childhood that Russians who lived in Buryat settlements only ever spoke Buryat. My ancestors – Volga Germans – spoke better Tatar than Russian because they lived in close contact with the Tatar population.

Several books describe daily life among the ancient populations of Siberia and the

Far East.<sup>21</sup> The diaries of G. T. Murov, the pseudonym used by the first Evenk writer, Gamali Stepanovich Gantimurov (1850–1920), are especially valuable. Today he is not a famous author but is particularly interesting for his descriptions of the everyday life of his people from an insider's perspective: he was well received by Chinese, Koreans and natives of the Amgun', Bureya and Selemdzha river basins, to whom he taught Russian.

In Siberia the international language for Evenks, Evens, Dolgans, Nganasans and Chukchi in the wide river basins from Khatanga in the west to Anadyr' in the east was Yakut; along the lower reaches of the Nadym, Pur, Taz and Yenisei for Kets, Entsy, Nentsy, Khanty and Mansi it was Sel'kup. The divine liturgy was therefore usually published in these languages; but this did not stop prayers being translated even into such minor dialects as Chuvan, Yukaghir, Koryak and Itel'men.

Archimandrite Innokenti was the true apostle of Orthodoxy in the national languages of the peoples of Siberia, the Lower Amur and Alaska. Once he had learnt Aleut Innokenti devised an alphabet for it and translated St Matthew's Gospel and the catechism.<sup>22</sup> He also translated some books into Kolosh – a language of the North American Indians. When he later became metropolitan of Moscow Innokenti supported a mission to Japan in the late 1860s. It set up the Japanese Orthodox Church which today has hundreds of parishes and tens of thousands of followers.

A book published in 1910 by the Translation Committee of the Brotherhood of St Guri contained the following list of books published in Kazan', Simbirsk, Orenburg and Tomsk in indigenous languages since 1862:<sup>23</sup>

- In Avar, two titles in editions of 200–600 copies.
- In Azeri, two titles in editions of 200–600 copies.
- In Altaian and Shor, 12 titles in editions of 800–2000 copies.
- In Arabic and Persian, six titles in editions of 300–2400 copies.
- In Bashkiri, 11 titles in editions of 600–2000 copies.
- In Buryat, nine titles in editions of 600–2400 copies.
- In Votsk (Udmurt), 94 titles in editions of 400–4200 copies.
- In Gol'd (Nanai), seven titles in editions of 800–1200 copies.
- In Kalmyk, 13 titles in editions of 1200 copies.
- In Kirgiz, 51 titles in editions of 600–3000 copies.
- In Korean, four titles in editions of 600 copies.
- In Mordovian, 27 titles in editions of 600–3000 copies.
- In Ostyak-Samoyed (Sel'kup), four titles in editions of 600 copies.
- In Komi, eight titles in editions of 300–1200 copies.
- In Siro-Khaldei, one title in an edition of 1200 copies.
- In Tatar, 198 titles in editions of 600–10,000 copies.
- In Tungus (Evenk), two titles in editions of 600 copies.
- In Cheremis (Mari), 112 titles in editions of 600–5000 copies.
- In Chuvash, 242 titles in editions of 600–21,050 copies.
- In Chukchi, three titles in editions of 200–500 copies.
- In Yakut, 17 titles in editions of 600–1500 copies.<sup>24</sup>

As we have already remarked, Orthodox missionaries initially published literature with a wide appeal with the aim of educating people. While only one school textbook was published in Siro-Khaldei<sup>25</sup> and only dictionaries in Chukchi,<sup>26</sup> a great many books were published in Tatar.<sup>27</sup>

Before me I have the *Azbuka syussogoi gulani*.<sup>28</sup> There are 49 pages in each of Russian and Sel'kup. The table of contents is as follows: 'The alphabet', 'Sayings of

learned people', 'Prayers', 'The Creed', 'Prayer before the Lord's cross', 'Matins, vespers, grace before and after dinner', 'The Ten Commandments', 'Counting', 'How to live as a Christian', 'Ostyak (Sel'kup) tales'. In the commentary the author writes:

In this book and in all the pamphlets I have written for the natives of the Narym region the Russian text could have been expressed far more correctly and eloquently, but I have kept it as it is so that it is a literal translation of the Ostyak-Samoyed text, and because I wrote articles directly in the native language, with due regard to its concepts and expression, and then translated them literally into Russian.

This is the kind of priority that was given to the native language! At the turn of the century the divine liturgy was celebrated in 16 languages of the peoples of the Russian Empire solely thanks to the activities of the Kazan' Church Mission (Kazanskaya dukhovnaya missiya).

The above list does not include books and pamphlets published in Moscow, St Petersburg, Arkhangel'sk, Irkutsk, Chita and other towns where missionaries worked, such as Altai and Biisk, as well as those by translation commissions such as those in Irkutsk and Chita; nor does it include the literature published from the end of the eighteenth century until the mid-nineteenth century. Orthodox books published by the Peking Church Mission are especially interesting. The historian V. P. Petrov writes that 'No fewer than 20 books of translations of the Orthodox liturgy into Chinese were printed by the members of this mission.'<sup>29</sup> One publication by Russian scholars from the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences stands alone: in 1825 Professor Schmidt translated the Old and New Testaments into Mongolian. In Selenginsk members of the English Mission to Lake Baikal (1815–35) translated and published the Scriptures in this language using native printing presses for the first time. There were several Orthodox churches in Mongolia; of which Urga Holy Trinity Church was particularly well known.

The Peking Church Mission was the earliest foreign mission organised by the Russian state. It was founded on 18 June 1700 by Peter the Great and lasted almost 250 years, right up until the communists came to power in China in 1949. Not only did it spread Orthodoxy to China and Mongolia (Mongolia was part of the Chinese Empire until 1912) but it made an important contribution to the establishment of Sino-Russian diplomatic relations. The mission was the first to bring to Russia systematic scientific information about the history and culture of its eastern neighbour as well as the adjoining nations of Tibet, Korea and Japan. Such world-famous scholars as Iakinf Bichurin and Archimandrite Palladi (P. Kafarov) were on the mission team.<sup>30</sup>

Russian missionary organisations were divided into domestic and foreign – the domestic ones within the confines of the Russian Empire, the foreign ones beyond it. Eighteenth-century missions include those to Tobol'sk, Irkutsk, Astrakhan', Ryazan', Vyatka and Mozdok in North Ossetia. This last mission worked until 1860, when 'The Society for the Restoration of Orthodox Christianity in the Caucasus' ('Obshchestvo vosstanovleniya Pravoslavnogo Khristianstva na Kavkaze') was formed in its place. The Kazan' Church Mission was always the most active, and at the turn of the century the Altai Mission did successful work in Tomsk and Biisk. The first new translations into native languages were always presented to the imperial household, the patron of all missionary organisations, in specially-made gift bindings. The Assyrian Mission worked in the Near East right up until the 1920s,

publishing the newspaper *Pravoslavnaya Urmiya* and the journal *Pastyrsкая svirel'*. From 1847 the Russian Church Mission was active in Palestine; later it was transformed into the Palestinian Society (*Palestinskoye obshchestvo*), which is still going today. The North American Mission and the Aleut Mission became the American diocese in 1912.

From the end of the last century all-Russian missionary conferences began to be held: the first in 1887 in Moscow; the second in 1891, also in Moscow; the third in 1897 in Kazan'; the fourth in 1908 in Kiev; and the fifth in the Bizyukovsky monastery (*Kherson guberniya*) in 1917. The Kiev conference attracted 600 delegates.

The seizure of power by the Bolsheviks interrupted the missionary activity of the Russian Orthodox Church. It is true that help sometimes came from charitable organisations in the West, such as the Stockholm Bible Institute, which republished several books between 1970 and 1990 and also translated them into some new languages within the Soviet Union: Crimean-Tatar, Karachai, Uighur, Veps, Gagauz. A small number of these books entered Russia as pocket editions. One shortcoming of 'new publications' by the Bible Institute was that religious literature did not undergo the test of preaching and direct contact. As a result, many of these books are 'academic'; the attempt to publish the Holy Scriptures in all languages of the globe (currently over 1100 languages and dialects have been published) does not always take account of local conditions.

In the past Orthodox missionaries did not see the publication of literature in local languages as an end in itself: everything worked in unison. Schools and libraries set up by missionaries and by parishes all worked together alongside churches and monasteries. In 1917 there were 34,528 schools, 34,497 libraries, 291 church hospitals and 1113 almshouses.<sup>31</sup> Schoolchildren learned literacy in their native tongues and studied the Scriptures at the same time. Government representatives and members of the imperial family would usually visit almshouses, hospitals and schools when they toured the empire.

Today missionary activity is gradually being revived and the Greek Orthodox Church is giving the Moscow Patriarchate a good deal of assistance with it. With the help of its abbot Timotheos the Greek Monastery of the Holy Spirit has produced excellent translations of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles into Kryashchen (2800 copies), of the Gospels into Yakut (3000 copies) and of the shorter catechism into Nanai (2000 copies). The synodal library of the Moscow Patriarchate is acquiring literature in native languages and local national church personnel are starting to be trained in Sunday schools. However, the publication of Holy Scripture in national languages does not always receive support from local church leaders: Bishop German of Yakutsk and Vilyuisk, for example, was not aware that in the past literature had been produced in both Yakut and Evenk. Opposition from nationalists who want to found their own 'national religion' (in Yakutia, on the basis of shamanism) has also made itself felt. At the same time support is frequently found among the higher echelons of power, which are often made up of nationalists in republics where the majority of the population is Russian. In Yakutia (Sakha), where Russians account for over 60 per cent of the population and Yakuts only 33.4 per cent, 67.6 per cent of the government and 80 per cent of the heads of the administration are Yakuts.<sup>32</sup> The picture is similar in many other national regions such as Kalmykia, Buryatia and Tatarstan.

For several peoples of the Far East and Siberia contact with their kinsmen in China is a sobering experience. Where a significant proportion of a national group within the Russian Federation has preserved its native language, there are national schools

and philological faculties in educational institutions, national literature (text books, poetry, newspapers) is published and radio and television programmes are broadcast. This is not so in China. There minority peoples do not receive central support and the language of the Songhua Nanai, for example, has all but disappeared. Only the elderly somehow manage to preserve it. In 1994 some Nanai from the village of Troitskoye told me how fortunate they seem when they meet their compatriots from China. According to a 1989 census there are 12,017 Nanai in Russia and 4000 in China.

We showed our kinsmen our national museum and books that have been published, including the academic dictionaries by our native Sulungu Onenko.<sup>33</sup> All our Chinese kinsmen from the twin town of Jiamusi were able to show us was a small Chinese–Nanai dictionary<sup>34</sup> printed on poor paper. The Nanai have it bad in China. Soon there won't be any of them left.

Russia is also going through a bad time at the moment. Central support has almost dried up and resources for 'national' publications for minority peoples have to be sought locally.

My account would not be complete if I did not mention the preaching tours which missionaries from the Baptist organisation Friedensstimme, in Gummersbach in Germany, regularly carry out among the peoples of the North, Siberia and the Altai. They also publish a small, attractive journal in German, *Nachrichten*, for people in the East. This is probably the only organisation spreading God's light to the Roma population in Russia.

Our own limited experience in reprinting books of the Holy Scriptures in the languages of the peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East illustrates the great social significance of this work. Firstly, these peoples become aware once again of the original literature in their mother tongue in which their ancestors were taught: their first alphabets and primers. Secondly, the contemporary language of minority peoples is enriched and a return to the Christian fold takes place. Thirdly, previously unavailable publications in the languages of these peoples undergo a similar boom to those of the Russian people in recent years and hundreds of books (formerly banned or unobtainable) are reprinted.

For most people – the peoples of Siberia as well as the Russian population – the appearance of old national Christian books is a real revelation, a surprise met with joyful tears. With it comes the highest wisdom on Earth, which the great Goethe considered was contained in the teachings of Christ.

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- P. Smirnov, *Istoriya Khristianskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi* (Teleks, New York, 1991), pp. 174–77 (Reprint of 1903 edition).
- <sup>9</sup> Yu. Pentikainen, ‘Starovery v Komi ASSR’, in *Traditsionnaya dukhovnaya i material'naya kul'tura russkikh staroobryadcheskikh poselenii v stranakh Yevropy, Azii i Ameriki* (Nauka Siberian branch, Novosibirsk, 1992), p. 189.
- <sup>10</sup> See: *Svyashchennaya Istoriya Vetkhogo i Novogo Zaveta perelozhena s tatarskogo na altaisky yazyk vospitannikami Missionerskogo Ulaninskogo Uchilishcha na Altaye* (Kazan', 1879).
- <sup>11</sup> See: *Svyatoye Yevangeliye Gospoda nashego Iisusa Khrista na kryashchenskom yazyke* (Kazan', 1891); *Apostol na kryashchenskom yazyke: Voskresnyye i prazdnichnyye apostol'skiye chteniya* (Kazan', 1907).
- <sup>12</sup> See: *Lingvistichesky entsiklopedichesky slovar'* (Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, Moscow, 1990).
- <sup>13</sup> *Svyatoye Yevangeliye ot Matfeya na yazyke loparei, zhivushchikh v russkoi Laplandii, pogrannichnoi s Norvegiie, bliz okeana* (Arkhangel'sk, 1894), 97 pages.
- <sup>14</sup> *Zhitiye Svyatykh* (Obitel' Iova Pochayevskogo, Munich), no. 7, 1–15 December 1954, p. 155.
- <sup>15</sup> ‘Yevangeliye chitayemoye na Liturgii v Sv. Paskhu na samoyedskom yazyke. Chitano 18 aprelya 1826 goda v Izhme v pervy raz v svete’, in *Otechestvennyye zapiski* (St Petersburg, 1847).
- <sup>16</sup> First published up to the letter ‘Z’ in *Irkutskiyeyeparkhial'nyye vedomosti*, after 1869, and then published as *Gol'dsko-russky slovar' svyashch. o. Prokopiya Protod'yakonova* (Vladivostok, 1901), 52 pages.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ob'yasneniye glavneishikh prazdnikov Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi* (Kazan', 1881), 110 pages; *Khongkul' pich'kha Matfeiddi: Ot Matveya svyatoye blagovestvovaniye* (Kazan', 1884); *Tolkovy molitvennik* (Kazan', 1884); *Kratki katikhizis slova Iisusa Khrista, Yevangeliye v pervy den' Paskhi i paskhal'nyye irmosy* (Kazan', 1885); *Mery protiv difterita* (Kazan', 1885); *Gol'dskaya azbuka dlya obucheniya gol'dskikh i gilyakskikh detei po slukhovomu sposobu* (Kazan', 1884); *Oglasitel'noye poucheniya, gotovyashchimsya k Svyatomu Kreshcheniyu yazychnikam na gol'dskom yazyke* (Kazan', 1889).
- <sup>18</sup> *Yevangeliye ot Matfeya na tunguzskom yazyke* (Kazan', 1880).
- <sup>19</sup> *Sokrashchenny katikhizis dlya obucheniya yunoshstva pravoslavnomu zakonu khristianskomu perevedenny na yakutsky yazyk* (Irkutsk, 1819).
- <sup>20</sup> See: Ye. S. Shishigin, *Rasprostraneniye Khristianstva v Yakutii* (Yakutsk State Museum of the History and Culture of Northern Peoples, Yakutsk, 1991); V. Martin, ‘V plenu u Yapontsev’, *Polyarnaya Zvezda*, Yakutsk, no. 6, 1990, pp. 102–5.
- <sup>21</sup> See: G. T. Murov, *Po russkomu Dal'nemu Vostoku. Lyudi, ikh zhizn' i nravy. Dnevnik strannika*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1909); vol. 2 (Moscow, 1911); N. Zadornov, *Amur-batyushka* (Moscow, 1993 onwards) (vol. 1; vol. 2; vol. 3), tells how most Russians, and especially priests, could speak local languages.
- <sup>22</sup> Archimandrite Innokenti also published *Ukazaniye puti v tsarstviye nebesnoye: poucheniya na aleutsko-lis'yevskom yazyke, sochinennoye svyashchennikom loannom Veniaminovym 1833 goda* (Moscow, 1840).
- <sup>23</sup> *Khronologichesky katalog izdaniy Pravoslavnogo Missionerskogo Obshchestva na russkom i na yazykakh inorodtsev Privolzhskikh, Sibirskikh i Kavkazskikh s 1862 goda po mai mesyats 1910 goda* (Kazan', 1910), 42 pages.
- <sup>24</sup> In ‘Perevody Biblii na yazyki narodov SSSR’, the appendix (pp. 168–70) to the fourth edition of *Biblii pastora B. Getse* (Stockholm, 1987), many languages into which the Gospels and other books were translated by Orthodox missionaries are not included.
- <sup>25</sup> *Opyt pervonachal'nogo uchebnika russkogo yazyka dlya siro-khaldeitsev* (Kazan', 1901).
- <sup>26</sup> *Kratki russko-orochensky slovar'* (Kazan', 1888); *Chukotsky slovar'* (Kazan', 1898); *Russko-chukotsky slovar'* (Kazan', 1889).
- <sup>27</sup> Amongst the many books in Tatar we might mention: *Khorovoye tserkovnoye peniye* (Kazan', 1889); *Rasskaz o bolezni i smerti Gosudarya Imperatora Aleksandra III i o vstu-*

*plenii na prestol Gosudarya Imperatora Nikolaya II-go* (Kazan', 1894); *Do chego dovo dit p'yanstvo* (Kazan', 1898); *O kholere* (Kazan', 1905).

<sup>23</sup> N. P. Grigorovsky, *Azbuka syussogoi gulani* (Kazan', 1879), compiled for the natives of Narym krai.

<sup>29</sup> V. P. Petrov, *Rossiiskaya dukhovnaya missiya v Kitaye* (Viktor Kamkin Inc., Washington, 1968), p. 83.

<sup>30</sup> Four volumes on the mission were published in the nineteenth century in St Petersburg: *Trudy chlenov Rossiiskoi Dukhovnoi Missii v Pekine*, vol. 1 (1852), vol. 2 (1855), vol. 3 (1857), vol. 4 (1861).

<sup>31</sup> *1000-letnye kreshcheniya Rusi: vystavka pri khrame Sv. Aleksandra Nevskogo v g. Kopengagene* (Kloster des Heiligen Hiob von Počaev, Munich, 1988), p. 50.

<sup>32</sup> A. M. Ivanov, *Etnopoliticheskaya situatsiya v Respublike Sakha (Yakutiya)* (Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Ethnology and Anthropology, Moscow, 1994), p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> *Russko-nanaisky slovar'* (Russky Yazyk, Moscow, 1986); *Nanaisko-russky slovar'* (Russky Yazyk, Moscow, 1986).

<sup>34</sup> *Kitaisko-nanaisky slovarik* (Harbin, 1987).

(Translated from the Russian by Geraldine Fagan)