

REVOLUTIONS IN EUROPEAN MISSION: ‘WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED IN 25 YEARS OF EAST EUROPEAN MISSION?’¹

Anne-Marie Kool

Introduction

Thirty years ago, Václav Havel’s book *The Power of the Powerless* (*Versuch, in der Wahrheit zu leben*) made a great impact on me.² He described life under communism as living in lying, and his alternative and courageous attitude to stand for truth made me wonder whether I would have been so courageous. It was a situation he referred to as ‘the people pretended to follow the party, and the party pretended to lead’.³ Although Havel did not write from a Christian perspective, he still teaches us very much what mission is all about: it is sharing biblical Truth as embodied in Jesus Christ, and living out that Truth in everyday life, whatever the consequences. Havel was willing to suffer for it, and as a consequence of his courageous attitude, he was imprisoned several times. Following the events of 1989, he was chosen as the first president of the Czech Republic, and three times re-elected. Early 1989, he had been sentenced to eight months of prison for ‘hooliganism’, but was freed early.⁴

The apostle Paul suffered for different reasons. He was not afraid to witness to Jesus Christ. When in Acts 20 he looks back on his life as a missionary, he remembers his ministry, not in terms of numbers, how many people were converted, or how many churches he planted, or how many cities he had visited. He summarized his ministry, not in terms of success but in terms of suffering as a ministry of tears. The secret of his life was God!

In this paper I will explore the question: ‘What has been achieved in 25 years of East European mission?’ in two parts. In the first part, I will deal with four different periods: 1) Pre-1989; 2) 1989-1998: Euphoria; 3) 1998-

¹ This chapter was first presented as a keynote address at a conference with the theme: ‘Revolutions in European Mission’, organized by the European Evangelical Mission Association held in Bucharest, 18th-21st November 2014.

² Václav Havel and Gabriel Laub, *Versuch, in der Wahrheit zu leben* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990); Václav Havel and John Keane, *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Eastern Europe* (London: Hutchinson, 1985).

³ ‘Václav Havel 1936-2011: Living in Truth: The unassuming man who taught, through plays and politics, how tyranny may be defied and overcome’, in *The Economist* (2011): www.economist.com/node/21542169

⁴ ‘Václav Havel 1936-2011’.

2008: Disillusionment; 4) 2009-2014: Towards an innovative new paradigm. In the second part, I will focus on the challenges as we look to the future. I will start with introducing my personal perspective and the context of mission in Eastern Europe, using the image of mission as bridge-building, inspired by the city I have called my home for almost three decades: Budapest. The mission paradigm dominant in this period was rather individualistic in character, doing mission the Frank Sinatra way – ‘my way’ – with a strong focus on success. It was a paradigm strongly influenced by ‘the West’. In this paper, it will be argued that the paradigm for mission in this region can be better captured as mission through suffering, both before and after 1989, also taking a community perspective into consideration.⁵

‘What has been achieved?’

The given title for the keynote address on which this chapter is based was ‘What has been achieved in 25 years of East European mission?’ The online Oxford Dictionary defines ‘achieve’ as ‘successfully bring about or reach (a desired objective or result) by effort, skill, or courage’, as in: ‘He achieved his ambition to become a press photographer.’⁶ It is a similar question that motivated mission leaders in 1910 and in 2010 to convene the world mission conferences in Edinburgh with the purpose of ‘taking stock’, sitting down, looking back and drawing lessons. The past 25 years have been marked more by activism than by reflection, so it is important to assess and evaluate what has been done in terms of mission in (Central and) Eastern Europe, and to draw lessons for the future.

The question is what criteria should be used in evaluating what is referred to by many as an ‘emerging missionary movement’, as if before 1989 no mission work took place.⁷ The question could be understood as evaluating a business plan. Money has been invested, and now it is time to look at the revenues – whether the investment yielded enough value for money. This approach would be based on a secular worldview, focusing on numbers, and would be a peculiar way of evaluating a missionary movement with a strong evangelical stance. Such an approach would be more interested in the successes, in what has been accomplished, than in quality – like counting how many people are converted or how many missionaries are sent ‘overseas’ from Eastern Europe. Although such

⁵ Recently Scott Sunquist published a new introduction to world mission informed by his experience in South East Asia, with a similar emphasis: *Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013). His main thesis is: ‘Mission is from the heart of God, to each context, and it is carried out in suffering in this world for God’s eternal glory’ (xii). Sunquist calls us to participate in the suffering and glory of Christ.

⁶ www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/achieve

⁷ See e.g. Anne-Marie Kool, *God Moves in a Mysterious Way: The Hungarian Protestant Foreign Mission Movement (1756-1951)* (Mission: Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1993).

criteria give the impression of being biblical, still the main focus is on numbers and ‘output’. Another approach could be to assess and evaluate the impact of the gospel on the societies of Eastern Europe and wherever missionaries are working. How did mission in Eastern Europe result in transformed Christian lives and transformed societies, showing less corruption, less broken families, less addiction to alcohol and drugs, less exclusion of e.g. Roma, less conflict and more co-operation? In short, would it be possible to look at the fruit of the Spirit?

This chapter rather seeks to analyze what has happened in what was till recently referred to politically as ‘Eastern Europe’, rather than dealing with the issue of ‘criteria’ to assess what has been ‘achieved’. Many different people have in one sense or another been part of this mission movement: as missionaries, mission agencies, churches, donors, or as those that have been praying. It is important to continue the conversation with each one of these actors in a process of mission as learning and listening. These players are all ‘disciples’ and learners, but also people who have something to contribute! This volume brings together some of these contributions to enrich this learning experience, showing that Eastern Europe is a laboratory for mission worldwide, and as such there are lessons to be learned for ‘East’ and for ‘West’, in how we do mission ‘our way’.

My Personal Perspective

This article is semi-autobiographical, as I started out as a literature smuggler in 1978, and have since 1987 been actively participating in this ‘emerging’ mission movement, researching the history of the Hungarian Protestant foreign mission movement during the last two centuries. Through my research I gained insight into mission under communism and earlier times. I am greatly indebted to the Hungarian pioneers in mission, as I gained much from their writings, and from personal encounters. Their godly lives, often grown out of religious oppression and suffering have been and still are a rich source of inspiration. They have shown me God’s faithfulness in difficult times.⁸

Many of those involved in this chapter of mission history in Eastern Europe have gone through difficult times as they pioneered their organizations, or were sent as one of the first missionaries to ‘faraway-istan’, with recently established mission organizations that were still in the process of learning by doing. For not a few people, it was not success but suffering that characterized their mission work, and still there was fruit! There is much reason for celebrating God’s faithfulness as, despite our lack of experience, and despite our struggles, he has worked out far more than we dared to imagine in the early 1990s.

⁸ See also: Anne-Marie Kool, ‘Behind the Former Iron Curtain: Teaching Missiology in Central and Eastern Europe’, in Grace Barnes and Gwen Dewey (eds), *Wild: Women in Leadership Development* (Woodinville, WA: Harmon Press, 2013).

This article is a work in progress. I do not pretend to have the final word, but rather consider it as a starter for discussion. Much more research needs to be done into what has been ‘accomplished’, by whom, where, and why. It is based on numerous conversations with friends as well as on some of my earlier publications.⁹ I also owe very much to the publications and conversations with colleagues like Peter F. Penner¹⁰ and Scott Klingsmith.¹¹ Also the East West Christian Ministry Report, since its beginning in 1993, edited by Mark Elliott, offers a rich source for mission in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989.¹²

Mission as Bridge-Building between East and West¹³

The churches in the ‘post-communist’ societies of Eastern Europe are facing complex challenges in their efforts to be witnesses for Jesus Christ in word and deed, both in local and global contexts, resulting in a need for a greater emphasis on building bridges. Not only bridges between the church and the secularized or nominal Christian world, also between generations, between denominations, between different ethnic groups, and between

⁹ ‘Leadership Issues in Central and Eastern Europe: Continuing Trends and Challenges in Mission and Missiology,’ in *Acta Missiologicae* 1.1 (2008); ‘Trends and Challenges in Mission and Missiology in “Post-Communist” Europe’, in *Mission Studies* 25 (2008); ‘The Church in Hungary and Central and Eastern Europe: Trends and Challenges’, in *Princeton Theological Seminary Bulletin* 28.2 (2007); ‘Die Eu – Osterweiterung – Eine Herausforderung Für Die Kirchen: Die Antwort Der Kirchen in Mittel- Und Osteuropa Auf Die Herausforderung Des Post-Kommunismus’ (Frenswegen, Germany: Leuenberg Nord-West Gruppe, 2004); ‘A Protestant Perspective on Mission in Eastern and Central Europe’, in *Religion in Eastern Europe* 20.6 (2000).

¹⁰ Mary Raber and Peter F. Penner (eds), *History and Mission in Europe: Continuing the Conversation* (Schwarzenfeld, Germany: Neufeld Verlag, 2011); Anne-Marie Kool and Peter Penner, ‘Theological Education in Eastern and Central Europe: Major Developments and Challenges since 1910’, in David Esterline, Dietrich Werner, Namsoon Kang and Joshva Raja (eds), *The Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010); Peter F. Penner, ‘Western Missionaries in Central and Eastern Europe’, in *Acta Missiologicae* 1.1 (2008); Peter F. Penner (ed), *Ethnic Churches in Europe: A Baptist Response*, Occasional Publications (Schwarzenfeld, Germany: Neufeld, 2006); Walter W. Sawatsky and Peter F. Penner (eds), *Mission in the Former Soviet Union* (Schwarzenfeld, Germany: Neufeld Verlag, 2005); Peter F. Penner, *Christian Presence and Witness among Muslims* (Schwarzenfeld, Germany: Neufeld Verlag, 2005); Peter F. Penner (ed), *Theological Education as Mission – Mission in Theological Education* (Schwarzenfeld, Germany: Neufeld Verlag, 2005).

¹¹ Scott Klingsmith, ‘The Romanian International Mission: A Case Study’, in *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 13.2 (2005); ‘Missionary Sending Movements: A Polish Case Study’, in *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, 13.1 (2005); ‘Advantages Romanians Bring to Missions’, in *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, 13.2 (2004); ‘Missionary Sending Movements in East-Central Europe: A Romanian-Albanian Case Study’, in *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, 12.4 (2004); ‘Hungarian Missionary Sending Efforts: A Case Study’, in *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, 12.3 (2004); *Missions beyond the Wall: Factors in the Rise of Missionary Sending Movements in East-Central Europe* (Nürnberg, Germany: VTR Verlag, 2012).

¹² www.eastwestreport.org (accessed 28th November 2014).

¹³ Kool, ‘The Church in Hungary and Central and Eastern Europe’.

nationals and foreign missionaries. These bridges can be compared with the many bridges that cross the River Danube, the second largest river in Europe after the Volga. Extending for 2860 km on its way from the Black Forest to the Black Sea, the Danube flows through or forms a border with nine countries.

The oldest bridge in Budapest, the Chain Bridge, named after Count István Széchenyi, offers interested insights in the nature of mission in Eastern Europe.¹⁴ Three elements could be identified: the first element has to do with the company that built the bridge. Széchenyi was an ardent Anglophile and introduced several modern British inventions to Hungary. The bridge was completed with Scottish help in 1849, thus helping the flow of traffic between Buda and Pest. The bridge was a good example of nationals and foreigners working together to improve the life of the city and make mutual engagement easier. The co-operation between nationals and foreigners in missions in Central and Eastern Europe has been a learning curve, full of misunderstandings and tensions. Individualistic, self-sufficient mindsets clashed with community-oriented, 'dependent' mindsets, learning to understand each other, seeking to bridge the differences, with the ultimate goal of easing the flow of the gospel out of the ghetto into the world and improving the life of cities.

A second important element is that a bridge makes it possible for traffic to flow in both directions. The mighty Danube is a formidable obstacle for the city of Budapest, but the many bridges allow the two parts of the city to engage with each other. There seem to be unbridgeable gaps between the various ethnic groups in the post-communist world, especially between the Roma and the majority society. Church communities are deeply divided over ethnic and denominational issues, and on whether to hold more traditional or more open views. Reconciliation as a theological concept is accepted, as it relates to the good news of the Kingdom that the gap between God and men has been bridged in Jesus Christ, but there is a long way to go in translating that into social reconciliation – practice often seems to lag behind belief.

Finally, it is important that bridges link two different banks of the city. The Chain Bridge may have quickly improved the flow of traffic but it has taken a much longer period for the mindsets in the two parts of the city to change. One travel guide records that both parts of the city still retain their own distinct identity. Buda, the guide states, is old, proud, quiet and a bit dotty, like an old aunt you only visit at weekends. Pest, on the other hand, is beautiful, confusing, often loud and incomprehensible, and quite likely to keep you awake far into the night. Yet both cities work together and provide the necessary components that make this vibrant city what it is – perhaps a model for the mission of the church in the Conference of European Churches! Uniformity is not a precondition for unity, and bridge-

¹⁴ I owe some of these insights to the Very Revd Dr Ivan Patterson, in a paper on 'Mission in Hungary', May 2006.

building does not mean that an individual's identity is dissolved. 'West' is not always 'best'.

In the following part, an historical overview will be given of the missionary movement in Central and Eastern Europe in three different periods, starting with a brief summary of mission under communism.

Pre-1989: Mission under Communism

This period can be characterized by a moral vacuum. Under communism, not only the social, economic and political structures of a given society were forcefully rearranged, but individuals and societies were required to undergo re-education in order to conform to a certain ideological mould. Attempts were made to ensure a collective 'value replacement' surgery in which the Judeo-Christian ethical norms of the past were 'declared obsolete and useless' in building the future of communism.¹⁵ As it turned out, the first part of the surgery, calling for the destruction of the old values in the individual or in society, was much easier to accomplish than the second, that of implanting the new Marxist values. It left many individuals, especially young people in an unprecedented moral vacuum – in national, family and individual life – representing to this day the greatest challenge to the churches in filling such existential emptiness. Although communism did immense harm to faith communities, we can also see that, through persecution, the faith of the community was strengthened, as was apparent in the case of Catholic Poland or different Baptist communities in Russia.

Mission work under communism was characterized by many people in the 'West' praying for the 'East'. It consisted of smuggling Bibles and literature. Leaders of churches were trained – underground – by co-workers of organizations like Biblical Education by Extension, travelling under another name, who made regular trips. Churches in the East were forced to live in a ghetto, but pastors were very creative in organising youth camps and outings during which they evangelized the young people. In a remarkable book, *Holy Spy: Student Ministry in Eastern Europe*,¹⁶ Alex Williams tells the story of what mission under communism look liked. African students were given opportunities to study in closed countries like Romania, Bulgaria and Russia. Some of them were very active missionaries.¹⁷ So much more happened than we know of. The story needs to be written down and shared!

¹⁵ László Medgyessy, 'Mission or Proselytism? Temptations, Tensions and Missiological Perspectives in Eastern European Christianity: A Case Study of Hungary', in Christine Liennemann-Perrin, H.M. Vroom and Michael Weinrich (eds), *Contextuality in Reformed Europe : The Mission of the Church in the Transformation of European Culture, Currents of Encounter* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004), 105.

¹⁶ Alex Williams, *Holy Spy: Stories from Eastern Europe* (Fearn: Christian Focus/Budapest: Harmat, 2003).

¹⁷ Williams, *Holy Spy*, 148ff.

Mission under communism was not a success story. It was a story of suffering. Many informers were active in society, but also within the churches. And many of them are still alive. The past is still with us. Recently I was told the following story. A woman, when only 16 years old, was asked by her aunt to enlist with the authorities to help register people that were considered dangerous to communism. For the next five years of her life, she became more and more involved in actively beating up people, even shooting them, including pastors and members of churches. Then 1956 came and she fled Hungary, with the burden of her youth with her. She married and lived abroad, selling bags in markets. Only her husband knew her story: no-one else. She did not want to have anything to do with religion. She lived a completely isolated life. Her conscience was still accusing her. She died recently, and I stood at her death-bed and was asked by her husband to be present at her funeral. Only a handful people were present. Afterwards he told me her story.

After what is often coined as ‘the changes’ in 1989, a new era started. There was euphoria all over after the Berlin Wall came down.

1989-1998: Euphoria after the Wall Came Down

In October 1994, a consultation was convened in Oradea, Romania, focusing on the issue of Theological Education and Leadership Development in Post-Communist Europe.¹⁸ The Consultation produced a significant document: The Oradea Declaration.¹⁹ It describes the differences and similarities with the West European context, pointing to the atmosphere of euphoria in 1994 and the ‘special Kairos times’ – a time of ‘unprecedented opportunities for the gospel of Jesus Christ’ – and to the complexities faced in equipping new leaders. The new possibilities are tempered by ‘the rapid secularization of our societies’ and by the increase of some historic tensions between evangelicals and the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches.²⁰ It states that these tensions have ‘the potential of diverting the energies of all Christians from the God-given possibilities of our time, and this would be a tragedy of profound consequences’. The Oradea Declaration continues by stating that the situation is even more complicated by ‘the flood of well meant, but sometimes misguided, wasteful and inappropriate efforts from foreign agencies’.²¹ It also

¹⁸ See also Kool, ‘A Protestant Perspective on Mission in Eastern and Central Europe’.

¹⁹ ‘The Oradea Declaration’, in John C. Bennett et al (eds), *Equipping for the Future: Consultation on Theological Education and Leadership Development in Post-Communist Europe* (Oradea, Romania: unpublished, 1994). The entire document can be found at the end of this book in the Historical Document section.

²⁰ One of the continuous tensions has been the issue of proselytism. The scope of this presentation does not allow for a more detailed treatment. See, for an overview of the discussion, Kool, ‘A Protestant Perspective on Mission in Eastern and Central Europe’, and Kool, ‘The Church in Hungary and Central and Eastern Europe’, 159-63.

²¹ ‘The Oradea Declaration’.

recognizes the often overlooked rich heritage of the historic churches in the region: 'We thank God that Christian faith came to our lands many centuries ago, resulting in the establishment of historic churches. Through these churches, many aspects of our national cultures and identities have been shaped and preserved. We pray for the renewal of these churches by the transforming power of the gospel resulting in holy living and authentic witness to Christ.'²²

In 1993, Anita Deyneka, speaking from her experience in Russia, is concerned with how to make the expatriate involvement more useful to the churches in Eastern Europe: 'How strategic is Christian assistance from afar? And how can such assistance be made more strategic? How can the many tributaries co-operate and converge – not only with each other as Westerners – but perhaps most importantly with our brothers and sisters in the East – so that an ocean of blessing will overflow?'²³

A first characteristic of this period was that many theological institutions were established to train pastors for Evangelical churches. During this time, the external conditions had to be created – buildings, libraries, etc. – for which funds had to be raised and programmes developed. A number of networks for theological education were developed, several in Central Europe, others in the former Soviet Union.²⁴ Professors, mostly from western countries, came to teach 'in the western way', with a western mindset and view of mission, 'overseas mission', because no qualified local lecturers were available.²⁵ At the same time, these professors from the West played a window-opening role to the countries that had been virtually cut off from developments in world Christianity for such a long time. A second characteristic was the massive 'invasion' of evangelical missionaries that took place. By far the majority came with no background knowledge in culture or language, in an attitude of 'the need to bring Jesus' to Eastern Europe.²⁶ But for centuries, millions of people have worshipped Jesus Christ in Central and Eastern Europe. Miroslav Volf reminds us that what was rather needed was 'to wash the face of Jesus... dirtied not only by communist propaganda, but also by so many compromises of our churches'.²⁷

A third characteristic was the massive financial support from the West. In this period, salaries were still low, so costs were also relatively low. It

²² 'The Oradea Declaration'.

²³ Anita Deyneka, 'Building Bridges for God's Kingdom: Questions to Help Western Missions Think More Strategically', in Sharon Linzey, M. Holl Russin and Mark R. Elliott, *East-West Christian Organizations: A Directory of Western Christian Organizations Working in East Central Europe and the Newly Independent States Formerly Part of the Soviet Union* (Evanston: Berry Publishing, 1993).

²⁴ Kool and Penner, 'Theological Education in Eastern and Central Europe'.

²⁵ Kool, 'Leadership Issues in Central and Eastern Europe', 135-39.

²⁶ Kool, 'A Protestant Perspective on Mission in Eastern and Central Europe'.

²⁷ Miroslav Volf, 'Fishing in the Neighbor's Pond: Mission and Proselytism in Eastern Europe', in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 20 (1996), cited in Kool, 'A Protestant Perspective on Mission in Eastern and Central Europe'.

resulted in a situation where the readiness and willingness of local people and churches to donate to missions in East European countries was 'overruled' by well-meaning western organizations and churches.²⁸ Their self-supporting capacity was strongly diminished or disappeared completely.

A fourth characteristic was the attempt to encourage partnership among the 200 evangelical mission organizations working in the region, for which purpose the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization convened a summit conference in Budapest in 1991 on 'Evangelization in Post-Marxist Contexts'.²⁹ A six-point strategy for mission groups working in Eastern Europe and the former USSR was outlined, with the purpose of discouraging 'freelance entrepreneurial approaches': 1. Enabling churches and mission organizations in eastern countries to undertake their own work of evangelizing their own people; 2. Modelling and encouraging co-operation in the work of evangelization; 3. Going where Christ is not named or known; 4. Undertaking involvement over the longer term that aims to produce fruit that will remain; 5. Working only from an adequate understanding of the people and their contexts; 6. Working with complete ethical and financial integrity.³⁰

A fifth characteristic was the establishing of two different kinds of mission agencies, illustrating the dilemma of doing mission the 'western way' or the 'eastern way', out of a sense of nostalgia. The first kind is the re-establishing of former mission agencies, like in Hungary: the *Evangélikus Külmisziói Egyesület* (Hungarian Lutheran Foreign Mission Society)³¹ and the *Liebenzell Misszió Molnár Mária Alapítvány*,³² both with strong roots in the past.³³

The second kind is the establishing of mission agencies as branches of European mission agencies. In Hungary, as the fruit of regular visits of Piet and Joke Koen from the Netherlands, Wycliffe Hungary was established in 1998. Missionaries serve in South Asia, Romania, Croatia, Great Britain, Nigeria, Cameroun, Hungary and Papua New Guinea.³⁴

²⁸ Penner, 'Western Missionaries in Central and Eastern Europe'.

²⁹ Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization: Budapest Summit Statement to those Working in Eastern Europe and USSR, 1st-7th September 1991; as quoted by James A. Scherer, 'Revolution in the East and Its Missionary Implications for Christians in the West', in *Dialog*, 31.2 (1992), 114.

³⁰ www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/GUIDES/046.htm#5a (accessed 17th November 2014).

³¹ <http://ekme.lutheran.hu> (accessed 2nd December 2014).

³² www.liebenzell.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&lang=hu (accessed 2nd December 2014).

³³ Cf. Kool, *God Moves in a Mysterious Way*.

³⁴ www.wycliffe.hu (accessed 2nd December 2014). See also Klingsmith, 'Hungarian Missionary Sending Efforts'.

The birth of BSM Poland, a partner of Wycliffe, in 1995³⁵ is described by Scott Klingsmith who conducted ground-breaking research into indigenous East-Central European missionary-sending efforts that began in 2000.³⁶ Their missionaries were trained ‘the Polish way’, in the train to the mission field in Central Asia. His research showed the advantages Polish missionaries enjoyed working in Central Asia. The older ones especially already spoke Russian, the standard of living was not so different, and the cultural gap not as great as for westerners. Another advantage was that the Poles did not need visas. An interesting observation was that, ‘since Poles do not have money, they focus on relationships. People they serve likewise have little money and value relationships’. Finally, Poles had experience of living under Soviet domination, and therefore go to Central Asia as fellow-sufferers.³⁷

Also, the start of the Romanian mission movement was researched by Klingsmith.³⁸ He observes that there were already leaders with a broad national platform for spreading the vision. When they began to speak about the urgency of missions, they had a ready audience. Since the 1989 Revolution, Romania had sent short- and longer-term missionaries to a wide range of countries, including Afghanistan, Albania, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Kenya, Libya, Macedonia, Moldova, Pakistan, Russia (particularly Siberia), Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. In addition, several people were working cross-culturally within Romania, particularly with Turks and Gypsies. Many Romanians had also been on short-term mission trips. The number of short-termers was undoubtedly in the hundreds. Many young people had served with Operation Mobilization and Youth with a Mission in various projects, and many mission schools and seminaries were encouraging or requiring a short-term experience as part of their programme.³⁹ Klingsmith tells us the story of the Hobans, serving in Albania from 1994, living at the same level as the villagers, and having to face hardships of various kinds there. They hauled water by donkey and for three years did not have a car. They went as newly-weds to the village of Pinet to establish a Christian presence, and were adopted and protected by the village. ‘During the violence in 1997 many foreigners were evacuated, but the Hobans decided to stay. The villagers told them: “You’ll be the last to die. First, we will die; then our children will die; only then would you die”’.⁴⁰ In a sense, a western mission

³⁵ Klingsmith, ‘Missionary Sending Movements: A Polish Case Study’. See also: www.bsm.org.pl/en/about_us/cooperation/wycliffe_bible_translators.html (accessed 2nd December 2014).

³⁶ Klingsmith, *Missions beyond the Wall*.

³⁷ Klingsmith, ‘Missionary Sending Movements: A Polish Case Study’.

³⁸ Klingsmith, ‘The Romanian International Mission’; ‘Advantages Romanians Bring to Missions’; *Missions beyond the Wall*. See also Kool, ‘The Church in Hungary and Central and Eastern Europe: Trends and Challenges’, 155-59.

³⁹ www.eastwestreport.org/articles/ew13206.html

⁴⁰ Klingsmith, ‘Missionary Sending Movements in East-Central Europe’.

organization had to be a role model for the initiative of Aletheia Church, even though some Western missionaries had created problems in Romania by their attitude. But even that was taken as an example to learn from: 'If this is what a missionary is, we can do a better job than they do. We have people who are more mature, better prepared, more experienced, and able to teach.'⁴¹

It is remarkable that in a poor country like Romania, the churches are able to support their local missionaries, one of them the Hoban family in Albania, with US\$250 per month. One respondent of Scott Klingsmith emphasizes: 'Economics is not the biggest problem. People think first you have to have money. Not True. Money is only money. Most important is vision.'⁴² The Aletheia Church was one of the first churches in Romania to send out missionaries without support from an outside organization and, even though at some point that was offered, the offer was declined. The leaders felt that 'God had called them to do it, so they asked God to supply the needs'.⁴³

So in this period mostly short-term missionaries were sent, by local churches, without an agency to support them, without any cross-cultural training. Others were sent through a foreign mission agency or they just went by themselves, often without even their local church's knowledge.⁴⁴

A final characteristic of this period was that the 'flow' of partnership was mainly from west to east. A strong sense of partnership was fostered when Christian communities round the world prayed for the churches struggling in the Soviet empire. The collapse of the USSR was seen as an answer to their prayers. Peter F. Penner directs attention to the paradox that when the doors finally opened for Christian mission, these churches that had survived the persecution of the Soviet empire were neglected by the rest of the world: 'After the changes, it seemed, the same churches the West was praying for were suddenly not useful any more'.⁴⁵ Many western missionaries did not co-operate at all with the churches in the Conference of European Churches (CEE) in ways appropriate to the situation of the latter. Instead, they chose to do it in ways that reflected their own cultural mores and missionary traditions.⁴⁶ In this period, scholarships offered opportunities to study in the West: so also an east-to-west flow began, and there were also 'exposure' visits to the West. Changes were in the air.

⁴¹ Klingsmith, 'Missionary Sending Movements in East-Central Europe'.

⁴² Klingsmith, 'Missionary Sending Movements in East-Central Europe'.

⁴³ Kool, 'The Church in Hungary and Central and Eastern Europe'.

⁴⁴ Personal communication of Ghiță Rîțișan to author, 17th November 2014.

⁴⁵ Penner, 'Scripture, Community, and Context in God's Mission in the FSU', 10, cited in Kool, 'Trends and Challenges in Mission and Missiology in "Post-Communist" Europe', 29.

⁴⁶ Penner, 'Scripture, Community, and Context in God's Mission in the FSU'.

1998-2008: Disillusionment

The period of euphoria was followed by a period of disillusionment. There was a great sense of uncertainty regarding the direction of mission work. Copying 'nostalgia' models did not work, and copying 'imported' models did not work either. It became clear that still many shadows of the past were alive that needed to be taken seriously. In some places, they even grew stronger.

The first characteristic of this period of disillusionment was that shadows of the past were still alive.⁴⁷ Four such 'shadows' could be detected. The first was a lack of unity among the churches. An effective policy of the communist governments of divide and conquer was expressly to create mistrust and divisions between denominations and within the Christian congregations by spreading rumours and creating fear. As a result, Christianity in Central and Eastern Europe still suffers from many divisions. It still has a long way to go towards restoring relationships in a process of reconciliation. These divisions were reinforced by the countless independent mission initiatives imported from the West following the changes. A second, closely related, shadow of the past was mistrust. Communist government policy was to foster distrust and division between, and within, congregations by spreading rumour and fear. One could never be sure who the stool-pigeon was, or who informed on the congregations to the authorities. According to a Hungarian sociologist, the greatest obstacle to the 'changes' in society was the lack of trust.⁴⁸ If trust is lacking, co-operation stagnates, not only within the church and the congregations, but in relationships between denominations and church associations. No community-disrupting force is stronger than this one.⁴⁹ Even now, in many places throughout the CEE, the Christian community is wracked by division. The third shadow of the past was that Christians were considered to be second-class citizens, with limited opportunities. That affected their attitudes and mindsets. Many had an 'inferiority complex', while 'to be recognized as a believer was something similar to living with a physical handicap'.⁵⁰ Many were afraid of being involved in outreach and preferred to spend most of their time with other Christians, preferably from the same denomination. Where many did not learn to carry responsibility, it is interesting to note that, on the other side of the coin, many pastors often adopted an attitude of over-responsibility for their parishioners, in the sense

⁴⁷ Kool, 'A Protestant Perspective on Mission in Eastern and Central Europe'.

⁴⁸ I. Gábor Kovács, 'A Magyarországi Református Egyház Küldetése a Szociológus Szemével' (paper presented at *A Református Értelmiségi Konferencia. A Magyarországi Református Egyház balatonszárszói Soli Deo Gloria Konferenciatelepén*, 21st-23rd August 1998), 40.

⁴⁹ D. Machajdik and Juraj Kusnierik, *The Church in Central Europe: Not Prepared for Freedom* (Sen Research Papers: Bratislava: SEN, 1999), 17, cited in Kool, 'Trends and Challenges in Mission and Missiology in "Post-Communist" Europe', 28.

⁵⁰ Juraj Kusnierik and Milan Eieel, *Shadows of the Past: The Impact of Communism on the Way People Think in Post-Communist Society* (Sen Research Papers: Bratislava: SEN, 1997), 22, cited in Kool, 'A Protestant Perspective on Mission in Eastern and Central Europe'.

of being responsible for their personal decisions, their relationships, the quality of their family lives, etc. They took on a kind of a Christian *guru* role, without whom no major life decisions could be taken.⁵¹ A fourth shadow of the past was the dichotomy between the public and the private. During the communist period, sometimes quite rigorous pressure was exercised to keep faith and religion in the private sphere. A ghetto mentality was the result. Churches were not allowed to be ‘relevant’, to speak to the context, and were pictured as outmoded, only for the ‘old ladies with a scarf’. This dichotomy was reinforced by a nineteenth-century pietism with its narrow view of spirituality as a personal, existential and emotional relationship with God, which had a strong influence in Eastern Europe. An ongoing consequence is that the majority of Christians still live in two separate worlds.⁵² It is this same theology which is critiqued by the younger generation. A strong emphasis towards integration of the Christian faith into all areas of life can be detected, based on a larger view of God and his Kingdom. There is now a growing interest in public theology. Kosta Milkov established the ‘Balkan Institute for Faith and Culture’ in Macedonia, with a vision of using the theological and cultural legacy of the Balkans to engage in a dialogue and debate with the most representative aspects of society, such as the university, the arts, the media, the governing structures, and other agents that form public opinion.⁵³ Marcel Măcelaru and Corneliu Constantineanu recently established the ‘Institute for Faith and Human Flourishing’ in Timișoara, Romania, with a distinctive vision statement of ‘advancing the integration of earnest theological reflection, genuine Christian spirituality and transformative public engagement for life’.⁵⁴

A second characteristic that strengthened the disillusionment was the fact that donors started to pull out, as new challenges arose – such as China. It was enlarged by increasingly high donor expectations, as mission agencies and churches in the West made more and more use of business models. These focused on short-term projects, dominated by a value-for-money perspective and characterized by a secular worldview. These models were strongly output-oriented, focusing on success and results. They clashed with post-communist realities that were not output-focused. The western paradigm of mission clashed with the East European mindset.

A third characteristic that led to disillusionment were conflicts and divisions, and the struggle for co-operation. An ambiguous view of the role of western missionaries emerged. Although there was definitely a sense of appreciation for what they did, critical voices could also be heard. With regard to the situation in the former Soviet Union, Peter Penner was

⁵¹ Marsh Moyle, ‘Shadows of the Past: The Lingering Effects of the Communist Mindset in the Church and Society’, in *Transformation*, 16.1 (1999).

⁵² Kusnierik and Eieel, ‘Shadows of the Past’, 23.

⁵³ www.rzim.eu/meet-our-associates-kosta-milkov (accessed 17th November 2014).

⁵⁴ Corneliu Constantineanu to author, ‘Notes’, email, 2016.

concerned not to dismiss the past fifteen years of struggle for co-operation between East and West as unworkable by re-emphasizing that much good had come from the West.⁵⁵ Speaking from the Romanian context, Dănuț Mănăstireanu similarly credits western missionaries for their positive contribution, although he also refers to general discontent in post-communist Europe ‘with the way most Western missionary agencies handled their relationships with nationals’.⁵⁶ Concerning co-operation with local churches, Mănăstireanu agrees with Penner that ‘many western missions were building their own missionary empires as if no indigenous churches existed in former communist countries’.⁵⁷ A major problem facing many missionaries was their lack of cultural and contextual formation. As one of them expressed it: ‘Our team had little understanding for cultural differences or the impact and need for contextualization. We came over with the mentality that what worked in the US would also work in Eastern Europe.’⁵⁸ Another confessed openly: ‘Our understanding of the local church was basically non-existent.’⁵⁹

The question could be asked: why did missionaries start ‘building their empires’? Undoubtedly one factor was the shift in mindset in supporting missionaries, and the above-mentioned commercialization of mission. When they are not planting their own flags, or building ‘memorials for (their) actions’,⁶⁰ but working invisibly within existing structures, donors easily get the impression that their missionaries have not done enough to prove their success. Secondly, many missionaries who came to work in the post-communist world lacked understanding of the situation of the local church, because they were supported by or worked with a para-church organization and not with a particular church. They often work independently of local churches and they do not understand their important role. Their understanding of mission tends to be more pragmatically related to enhancing numerical growth rather than reflecting a good understanding of the biblical concept of mission. The predominant mission paradigm used in post-communist Europe by western missionaries is expansionist, reflecting a nineteenth-century colonial understanding of missionary activity, or what David Bosch refers to as the Enlightenment Mission Paradigm.⁶¹ It conceives of mission as what takes place ‘overseas’, in a

⁵⁵ Penner, ‘Scripture, Community, and Context in God’s Mission in the FSU’, 31.

⁵⁶ Dănuț Mănăstireanu, ‘Western Assistance in Theological Training for Romanian Evangelicals to 1989’, in *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, 14.4 (2006), 7; and David Novak, ‘Czech Evangelicals and Evangelism’, in *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, 13.1 (2005).

⁵⁷ Mănăstireanu, ‘Western Assistance in Theological Training for Romanian Evangelicals to 1989’, 7; Novak, ‘Czech Evangelicals and Evangelism’, 8-10.

⁵⁸ Mănăstireanu, ‘Western Assistance in Theological Training for Romanian Evangelicals to 1989’, 2.

⁵⁹ Kool, ‘Trends and Challenges in Mission and Missiology in “Post-Communist” Europe’, 30.

⁶⁰ Penner, ‘Scripture, Community, and Context in God’s Mission in the FSU’, 30.

⁶¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (American Society of Missiology Series, 16; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 274ff.

foreign country. It conjures up the image of an individualistic, ‘heroic’ missionary, sent by a mission society. Though some of these missionaries do try to work with the local churches and acquire an understanding of the local language, they are more inclined to operate as a culturally homogeneous group, often led by US team leaders and US-based mission agencies, instead of working with and partnering nationals. Penner observes that ‘the team decides what their philosophy of ministry is, what can be done and what should not be done, often neglecting the existing national ministries’. He wonders ‘how ‘effective can such a mission be when it makes decisions on an unknown context without partnership in the decision-making process or at least with a mixed, not solely Western, team?’⁶²

Thus in this period, a new search for partnership and co-operation could be detected, like the Romanian International Mission (Misiunea Internațională Romană – MIR) (1999).⁶³ A new paradigm started to emerge.

2009-2014: Towards a New, Innovative Mission Paradigm for Central and Eastern Europe

After a period of euphoria, marked by attempts to import western mission paradigms or to reintroduce mission paradigms of the past, a period of disillusionment followed. Neither of the two attempts seemed to be satisfactory for addressing the shadows of the past in the post-communist contexts of Central and Eastern Europe.

The scope of this presentation does not allow for a full treatment of the new, innovative and creative mission paradigm that is now emerging. It will be presented as a discussion starter. The term ‘innovative’ is used, because this paradigm differs from the ‘traditional’, western mission paradigm of ‘overseas’ mission. It relates to the flexible and creative way in which Central and East Europeans had to learn to find a way in and adapt to the challenges of their (post-communist) contexts. Similarly, to David Bosch in his seminal book *Transforming Mission*, in which he deals with elements of an emerging post-modern or ecumenical paradigm,⁶⁴ I will present four elements of this new, innovative mission paradigm for Central and Eastern Europe.

New Perspectives in Partnership and Co-operation

The first element is the emerging of new perspectives in partnership and co-operation. Two new perspectives in partnership and co-operation could be identified. One is the birth of indigenous mission agencies, with more

⁶² Penner, ‘Critical Evaluation of Recent Developments in the CIS’, 129-30.

⁶³ See e.g. Klingsmith, ‘The Romanian International Mission’.

⁶⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*.

equal partnering of 'East' and 'West', while the other is that of crossing the traditional frontiers of the evangelical and ecumenical movement.

A remarkable feature of mission in Central and Eastern Europe, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, is that missionaries from these former communist countries can now be found in countries like Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey, China, North Africa and Mongolia, sent by emerging indigenous mission agencies like the Pentecostal Association for Foreign Mission in Romania (APME), established in 2006.⁶⁵ In 2011, it had sent out 32 missionaries to countries or regions like Asia, Macedonia, Uganda, Albania, Southeast Asia, Sudan, Middle East, Namibia, Kosovo, Spain, Central Asia, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, East Asia, Mozambique, Madagascar, Africa and Papua New Guinea. By 2014, this number has increased to 51 missionaries in twenty countries.⁶⁶ 98% of the donations came from Romanians, 60-70% of them in Romania, and 30-40% from Romanians in the diaspora. This overall percentage of 98% was still 80% in 2011. These so-called 'diaspora Romanians' play a significant role in supporting cross-cultural mission, but also as missionaries themselves. Recently two couples from the diaspora Romanian community were sent out as missionaries through APME.

Another new perspective in partnership and co-operation are initiatives which cross the traditional evangelical and ecumenical divides. One such initiative is the Lausanne Orthodox-Evangelical Dialogue that has its roots in the Lausanne III in Cape Town consultation in 2010, and has been held now twice in Albania and once in Helsinki.⁶⁷ Such initiatives are also taking place at a local level, like the dialogue with some Orthodox representatives in Kiev, initiated by the Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary.⁶⁸ The Global Christian Forum also shows that the traditional 'divides' are becoming obsolete. The WCC organized a consultation on the place of evangelism in theological education in Europe in 2012, and is now planning to publish a handbook on evangelism.⁶⁹ For organizations and churches in some western countries, such initiatives may not be easy to understand, and – probably more important – difficult to 'defend' to their donor constituency.

⁶⁵ www.apme.ro (accessed 1st December 2014). See also the chapter by G. Rişan on APME in this volume.

⁶⁶ Personal communication with G. Rişan by email with author, 17th November 2014.

⁶⁷ Available at: www.loimission.net (accessed 1st December 2014).

⁶⁸ Presentation at the Missiological Conference organized by the College of Theology and Education in Chişinău, Republic of Moldova: 'Evangelical Mission in the Eastern European Orthodox Contexts: Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine', 22nd-23rd March 2013. See also the chapter by Dănuţ Mănăstireanu on the Lausanne Orthodox Initiative elsewhere in this volume.

⁶⁹ www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/consultation-plans-a-handbook-on-evangelism-in-europe-1 (accessed 1st December 2014).

Missionaries, Local Churches and Their Members as Agents of Mission

A second element of an emerging new, innovative paradigm for mission is the growing vision of the nature of the local church as missional church, actively participating in mission. Elsewhere I have extensively dealt with the fact that since Edinburgh 1910 significant changes have taken place in the formation for mission and in the agents of mission.⁷⁰ The ‘Antioch paradigm’ as proposed by Wilbert Shenk, focuses on the organic and complementary mode of mission and offers an integral connection between the various agents of mission. In Central and Eastern Europe, a shift can be observed from the ‘traditional’ mission paradigm with the missionaries as sole agents of mission to the local church as an agent of mission.

The characteristics of the traditional – Edinburgh 1910 – paradigm are that missionaries are sent from the ‘Christian’ West to the ‘non-Christian’ rest, with missionaries as key ‘active’ players and the churches fulfilling a rather ‘passive’ role of praying and giving. In Europe, including Central and Eastern Europe, the mainline churches are struggling with a large passive fringe as a mission challenge; an active role is often played by the mission societies, who are the ‘circle of people committed to mission’.

Shenk emphasizes that, in the Antioch paradigm, the church works out its missionary existence in the world. Mission in western culture calls for a ‘fundamental reorientation of the church in modern culture to mission to its culture’.⁷¹ In Luke’s twofold model, he identifies the organic mode or the witnessing of the disciple community scattered under the impact of persecution and, secondly, the complementary mode: certain individuals set apart for itinerant ministry. Thus three kinds of agents of mission can be identified. First of all, Paul and Barnabas who, as cross-cultural missionaries, are sent on an innovative mission expedition to other cultures. Secondly, the Antioch church as a missional church, that ‘organically’ serves as an open, welcoming and witnessing community in its own urban setting, seeking to overcome the shadows of the past, and searching for ways to come ‘out of the ghetto into the world’. The third kind of agent are the members of Antioch church, who are missionaries to their own community, families and workplaces. That implies a changed role for pastors in training church members to be ‘local’ – cross-cultural – missionaries in the secularized context. Developing a theology of work, and

⁷⁰ Anne-Marie Kool, ‘Changing Images in the Formation for Mission: Commission V in the Light of Current Challenges: A Western Perspective’, in Kenn Ross (ed), *Edinburgh 1910: Mission Then and Now* (Oxford: Regnum, 2009).

⁷¹ Wilbert R. Shenk, ‘The Training of Missiologists for Western Culture’, in J. Dudley Woodberry, Charles E. Van Engen, and Edgar J. Elliston (eds), *Missiological Education for the 21st Century: The Book, the Circle and the Sandals: Essays of Paul E. Pierson* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996); ‘Training Missiologists for Western Culture’, in *Changing Frontiers of Mission* (American Society of Missiology Series, 28: Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), cited in Kool, ‘Changing Images in the Formation for Mission’, 169.

training church members to be witnesses in their professions is related to this challenge.⁷²

A Holistic Understanding of Mission

A third element of the unfolding innovative paradigm is the emergence of a holistic understanding of mission. In the previous two periods, evangelism and social action were often considered as two competing, unrelated elements of mission. The scope of this presentation does not allow for more than one example: Beginning of Life (BOL) (2002) Moldova.⁷³ BOL's first responses to the acute problems of Moldovan society were individual consultations with women in the abortion unit of the municipal hospital, and abortion prevention education for teens in schools, as the number of aborted children in Moldova during the year exceeded 50% of the number of children who were born. In 2006, BOL was reorganized to gain an extended official status and opportunities as a public association. In 2007, BOL began to develop a new programme to combat human trafficking and sexual violence in Moldova. In February 2009, a 'House of Change' was established as a rehabilitation centre for victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. In subsequent years, the team and the range of BOL projects expanded greatly. By 2013, BOL were running another four centres: the Urban Centre; the Psychological Art Studio; the 'Dream House' Prevention Centre for girls at risk; and a Humanitarian Aid Centre.

Local and Global Involvement in Mission

A fourth element of the emerging new mission paradigm emphasizes a closer connection between the 'local' – like mission work by the Antioch church in the local context – and the 'global', like the innovative mission work of Paul and Barnabas in cross-cultural settings. Mission has a worldwide dimension, as the whole church is called to take the whole gospel to the whole world, but the 'world' starts at our doorstep.⁷⁴ 'Local' and 'global' are different categories from 'home' and 'foreign' mission, dominating the traditional mission paradigm. More and more churches in Central and Eastern Europe, especially in Ukraine, Romania, Moldova and Bulgaria are sending missionaries to other countries. In this way, they also allow their local churches to gain an insight into world Christianity and reduce provincialism.

In the meantime, the reality of the slogan 'Mission in Six Continents', first introduced at the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in

⁷² Kool, 'Changing Images in the Formation for Mission'.

⁷³ www.bol.md (accessed 1st December 2014).

⁷⁴ Anne-Marie Kool, 'Grenzenlos Berufen – Trends, Gefahren und Aufgaben in Der Weltmission Heute', in *Transparent*, 2014.4 (2014): www.annemariiekool.org/2014/11/trends-gefahren-und-aufgaben-in-der.html

Mexico City (1963), is slowly breaking through, after half a century (sic!).⁷⁵ At the World Mission Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, it dawned that the whole world, including Europe, was a mission field.⁷⁶ Revisiting mission in Europe should be high on our agenda too.⁷⁷ Ulrich Parzany reminds us that Europe is a unique mission field: it is ‘post-Christian’, which means ‘that we do not start at zero’.⁷⁸ Europe has a long Christian history. Parzany continues: ‘We have to be thankful for what the Lord did in building his church of true believers. Especially, we are thankful for the Reformation Movement and the renewal of churches through Pietism and revival movements during the last 300 years up to now.’⁷⁹ Viggo Sogaard adds, that one of the negative consequences is that ‘Christian tradition produced immunization of many nominal Christians against the gospel’.⁸⁰ Even after 25 years, this assessment still stands, although there are significant differences in the religious situation of Western, Northern, Southern and Eastern Europe. There are also significant differences between the various Christian traditions.

Challenges for Mission in, to and from Central and Eastern Europe

After this first, historical part, with an analysis of 25 years of East European mission, we now direct our attention to the future, briefly outlining the challenges for mission in, to and from Central and Eastern Europe. Often mission work in the eastern part of Europe, ‘East European mission’, has been viewed from a western, West European or North American perspective. Publications on mission in this region were also dominated by this perspective, as newsletters and websites were – understandably – written under missionary or mission agency auspices, and by western missionaries. The expression ‘understandably’ is deliberately chosen, because western missionaries and mission agencies were responsible for raising funds for their own mission work, and often for their ‘indigenous’ co-workers as well. A second reason for the dominance of this ‘missionary perspective’ is that relatively little research has been undertaken by local scholars, and often the research that has been undertaken is sitting in someone’s computer or desk drawer, or is available at a significant cost on the ProQuest website. ‘Local’ research and ‘indigenous’ writing and publication as well as distribution is still in its

⁷⁵ David J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1980), 189.

⁷⁶ Cf. Kool, ‘Changing Images in the Formation for Mission’.

⁷⁷ See my ‘A Missiologist’s Look at the Future: A Missiological Manifesto for the 21st Century’ in the present volume, pp. 698–712..

⁷⁸ Ulrich Parzany, ‘Cooperation in World Evangelization: A Call for Help from Europe’, in *World Evangelization*, XVI.60 (1989).

⁷⁹ Parzany, ‘Cooperation in World Evangelization’.

⁸⁰ Viggo Sogaard, ‘Re-Evangelizing Europe: Utopia or Reality?’, in *World Evangelization*, XVI.60 (1989).

infancy. It is a time-consuming and costly venture that does not yield quick results and is difficult to measure in terms of output.⁸¹

In the following section, an attempt is made to write on the challenges for mission in, to and from Central and Eastern Europe from a local, grassroots perspective. Therefore, a different wording is chosen, marking a shift from a predominantly geographical, West-East paradigm and direction, often referred to as 'Eastern European Mission', to a cross-cultural, multi-directional character.

The relative proximity of current areas of crises in the Middle East, Russia and China – often with a large percentage of young people searching for new meaning – combined with the strength and flexibility of this “non-western” mission movement – in the so-called evangelical Bible-belt countries like Romania, Ukraine, Moldova and Bulgaria⁸² – provide the context for the challenges for mission in, to and from Central and Eastern Europe. They constitute the economic and geopolitical implications for mission in Central and Eastern Europe.⁸³

The following six main challenges can be identified. The scope of this article does allow only for a brief treatment.

'Mission from the Margins'

The 10-12 million Roma (Gypsy) minority is considered one of the greatest challenges Europe faces. A massive exclusion is still going on in Europe, as well as in Eastern Europe. That is now a reality.⁸⁴ Many false negative images exist. Many European churches, including the Central and East European churches seek in various ways to respond to the Roma people, often living at the margins of society. At the same time, signs of what are generally referred to as 'revivals' among the Roma.⁸⁵ In 2014, an international conference was organized by a Chinese mission organization with 200 participants, half of them Roma pastors or Roma Christian

⁸¹ Cf. J. Samuel Escobar, 'Evangelical Missiology: Peering into the Future at the Turn of the Century', in William D. Taylor (ed), *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue* (Globalization of Mission Series: Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000).

⁸² See e.g. Susan Wunderink, 'Eastern Europe's Evangelical Hub: A Scholar Discusses the Development of Evangelicalism in Ukraine', in *Christianity Today* (2008): www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/januaryweb-only/105-22.0.html

⁸³ I.K. in presentation at a conference with the theme: *Revolutions in European Mission*, organized by the European Evangelical Mission Association held in Bucharest, 18th-21st November 2014.

⁸⁴ Klaus-Michael Bogdal, *Europa Erfindet Die Zigeuner: Eine Geschichte Von Faszination Und Verachtung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011); 'Europe Invents the Gypsies: The Dark Side of Modernity', in *Eurozine*, 24 (February, 2012): www.eurozine.com/articles/2012-02-24-bogdal-en.html

⁸⁵ See e.g. Katharine Quarmby, 'Romani Pilgrims: Europe's New Moral Force', *Newsweek Limited*: www.mylibrary.com?id=662195; Miroslav A. Atanasov, *Gypsy Pentecostals: The Growth of the Pentecostal Movement among the Roma in Bulgaria and Its Revitalization of Their Communities* (The Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements in Pentecostal/Charismatic Studies), (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2010).

workers. As a result, national and regional indigenous Roma initiatives were established to network, connect and research for the sake of sharing the gospel and seeing transformation in Roma communities throughout Europe. The aims are fivefold: '1. Share the vision (with Roma leaders, non-Roma leaders, local churches, organizations, movements, mission organizations, different denominations, EU governments...); 2. Educate / empower / equip (Roma leaders, non-Roma leaders who are working among Roma, youth, church, movements); 3. Encourage transformation (in individuals, communities, whilst encouraging reconciliation between Roma and non-Roma); 4. Attract missionaries (research mission field, attract local and global missionaries, train missionaries); and 5. Encourage (local churches, ministries, mission initiatives).'⁸⁶ Little is known about 'revivals' going on in France and Spain, as well as in Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Finland and Russia. More research is needed to map the Roma Christian communities, the nature of these revivals, and who the Roma pastors leading these communities are. These Roma Christian communities are increasingly reaching out from the 'margins' to the majority society, as in Spain where more research has been undertaken.⁸⁷

Giving Roma Christianity a face, taking steps towards getting to know Roma church history, will not only be beneficial in teaching the Roma churches, but also in helping the majority society to break out of entrenched stereotyped images and move from image to reality. In this process, a key motto should be: 'Nothing about us without us.'⁸⁸

Theological and Missiological Education

After 1989-1991, there has been a great need for well-equipped leaders in the churches of Eastern Europe, able to deal with the burning issues of the context we face, like the churches' response to nationalism and ethnicity, the revitalization of the churches for local and global mission, how to communicate the gospel in a relevant way to the secularized de-churched (nominal) and un-churched people of former communist countries, and how to move towards reconciliation in church and society. A common difficulty these churches and their educational institutions face, according to Jason Ferenczi, is the need to 'develop leaders who can articulate a Christian worldview in the context of extremely pluralistic societies, in a way that answers the deep spiritual questions of a highly educated population'.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ <http://romanetworks.com/vision-and-mission> (accessed 18th February 2016).

⁸⁷ See e.g. Paloma Gay Y Blasco, 'Gypsy/Roma Diasporas. A Comparative Perspective', in *Social Anthropology*, 10.2 (2002).

⁸⁸ Anne-Marie Kool, 'Eastern European Churches' Responses to the Roma People', in *Great Commission Center International. International Roma Consultation: Roma for the Nations, Budapest 29th September-3rd October 2014* (Budapest: unpublished, 2014).

⁸⁹ Jason E. Ferenczi, 'Theological Education in the Former Soviet Union: Some Recent Developments', in *Religion in Eastern Europe*, 21.6 (2001), 1.

Peter Penner sums up some of the failures of his generation in establishing new theological institutions in the former Soviet Union: ‘(We) have failed to prepare adequate national leadership and to keep the needed balance between the indigenous and the expatriate influences... to invest in more quality instead of bricks and mortar, in closer links between church and theological institutions, in better co-operation between institutions, preparing these institutions to merge, if necessary, in order to become mutually stronger and more relevant, and also to invest in a stronger network with the global, and specifically European, family of theological institutions.’⁹⁰

Wojtek Kowalewski identifies a number of major challenges for theological education.⁹¹ The first one calls for ‘the recognition of the holistic content of the gospel... which is to be relevant to all spheres of life and is not just limited to the “spiritual”’.⁹² Another challenge is that of being relevant to the local context, that of “hearing” and “understanding stories” of contemporary people... and seeking new ways of missional interaction with these stories within broadly understood Christian community life’.⁹³ A third challenge is to ‘develop a new theology of openness to others, a theology of dialogue, a theology of reconciliation understood in spiritual and social terms’.⁹⁴ Kowalewski expresses his hope that this radical rethinking will prevent a further marginalization of evangelical Christianity, which is caused by an approach to mission as a form of a “hit-and-run” attitude... based on individual as opposed to communal confrontation and consequently putting great emphasis on “the saving of individual souls rather than a broader healing of the land or any consideration of the social implications of obedience to the gospel”’.⁹⁵

One of the important issues raised time and again is that of co-operation. There are a number of national and regional networks for theological education, but they operate rather independently of each other. Another challenge in theological education is that of creative educational methods, like (hybrid) distance-learning, and exposure visits, in which students are ‘plunged’ into new contexts to experience the diversity of our society and the power of what God can do. Increasingly, theological schools in Central and Eastern Europe are making links with schools in the ‘majority world’, with theological schools in, for instance, Africa and Asia, but it is still

⁹⁰ Penner, *Theological Education as Mission*, 344.

⁹¹ Wojciech Kowalewski, *A Theology of Mission for Post-Communist Poland: Towards an Integrative Approach* (Cardiff: Cardiff University, 2004); ‘Missiological Challenges in Polish Evangelical Theological Education’, in Peter F. Penner (ed), *Theological Education as Mission* (Schwarzenfeld, Germany: Neufeld Verlag, 2005).

⁹² Kowalewski, ‘Missiological Challenges in Polish Evangelical Theological Education’, 337.

⁹³ Kowalewski, ‘Missiological Challenges in Polish Evangelical Theological Education’, 337.

⁹⁴ Kowalewski, ‘Missiological Challenges in Polish Evangelical Theological Education’, 339.

⁹⁵ Kowalewski, ‘Missiological Challenges in Polish Evangelical Theological Education’, 339, quoting Malcolm Clegg.

incidental. In cases where it takes place, it proves to be very beneficial, as mutual issues are recognized.

In many CEE theological institutions, ‘getting a degree’ seems to be more important than education for transformation, of oneself, and of church and society, related to the challenge of the relevance of missiological research and education.⁹⁶ It is important to research mission practice by analyzing what has been done in mission in a particular country or denomination in CEE over the past 25 years, comparing it with developments worldwide and across denominations and countries, and drawing lessons for the future.

Another challenge is co-operation between mission practitioners and missiologists, to enable cross-fertilization to take place between mission theory and mission practice, so characteristic for the discipline of missiology.⁹⁷ In order to facilitate and promote the study of contextual mission theory on the mission practice of Central and Eastern Europe, the Central and East European Association for Mission Studies⁹⁸ was established in 2002 by a number of people interested in the study of mission in this region. We hardly knew of each other’s areas of research, teaching or publications. Since this – pioneering – situation in Central and Eastern Europe differs so much from countries in Western Europe, for instance, where missiology has been well established for one and a half centuries, the need was increasingly felt to establish a special Central and East European international and interdenominational platform to serve and to co-ordinate the modest initiatives in this field, linked internationally with the International Association of Mission Studies.⁹⁹

A related challenge in missiological education and research is nurturing integrity in mission practice and methods, to uncover secular world views

⁹⁶ Cf. Joshua T. Searle and Mykhailo N. Cherenkov, *A Future and a Hope: Mission, Theological Education, and the Transformation of Post-Soviet Society* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014). See also Anne-Marie Kool, ‘From Marginalization to Revitalization: Missiology’s Contribution to the Renewal of Theological Curricula of Theological Institutions in Eastern European Contexts’, in Mihai Malansea (ed), *Evangelical Mission in the Eastern Orthodox Contexts: Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine* (Chişinău: Universitatea Divitiae Gratiae, 2013).

⁹⁷ Kool, ‘Bridging the Gap between Mission Theory and Mission Practice in Mission in Central and Eastern Europe’, in *Beyond the Iron Curtain: Being Church in Central and Eastern Europe Twenty Five Years after the Political Changes* (Heiligenkreuz, 2015).

⁹⁸ www.ceeams.org (accessed 1st December 2014).

⁹⁹ The aims of CEEAMS are similar to those of IAMS: to promote the scholarly study of theological, historical and practical questions relating to mission in Central and Eastern Europe; to disseminate information concerning mission among all those engaged in such studies and among the general public; to relate studies in mission to studies in theological and other disciplines; to promote fellowship, co-operation and mutual assistance in mission studies; to organize international conferences of missiologists; to encourage the creation of centres of research; and to stimulate publications in missiology.

in our missionary methods and to strengthen biblical perspectives in our mission work.¹⁰⁰

*Missionary Spirituality*¹⁰¹

In 2004, Adrian Dorin Giorgiov analyzed sources of stress and potential burn-out among Hungarian Baptist pastors in Romania, focusing on accountability systems that might help to alleviate the problem. The study indicated that isolation and overwork took their toll in that 77.6% of the pastors indicated estrangement from their fellow pastors, and that only a few pastoral couples have close friends in church, ‘because shared confidential information might be compromised’.¹⁰² Unfortunately, not much has changed ten years later.

The related challenge is how to maintain and nurture a healthy missionary spirituality as a pastor or mission worker, when having to operate under the pressures of well-meaning donors operating with a business mindset, of getting good value for money. There is a need for a spirituality that functions as a kind of ‘lifeline’ in our daily mission work, supporting a healthy balance between action and reflection, and between work and rest.

Jonathan Bonk emphasizes the importance of such a missional spirituality: ‘God can and does love the world, but human beings are so constituted that they cannot. When we try, our expressions of love for the multitudes inevitably degenerate into pious posturing. We are called upon to love one another, spouse, neighbour, stranger and enemy – whatever the cultural or cross-cultural context.’¹⁰³ He adds that this is a great challenge for each of us, even the most pious but, without it, our missiology is not worth much. ‘Wherever the context of our missionary work, unless we fall into the ground and “die” at this personal level, our missiology means nothing. Given the ways in which we missiologists have come to envision and project the Christian task, this fact is of profound missiological import.’¹⁰⁴

In order to restore and nurture relationships, with God, with each other, with ourselves, and with our community, time is needed – time to reflect, time to repent, time to seek healing and restoration by God. But the paradox is that time is just what is most lacking, as we often hear. Possibly we could speak also about a crisis in the structuring of our time. The order of time

¹⁰⁰ J.N.J. (Klippiess) Kritzinger, ‘Nurturing Missional Integrity’ (paper given at the KRE-CIMS Seminar in Budapest in October 2011).

¹⁰¹ Kool, ‘Leadership Issues in Central and Eastern Europe’, 144ff.

¹⁰² Kool, ‘Leadership Issues in Central and Eastern Europe’, 144ff.

¹⁰³ Jonathan Bonk, William D. Taylor (ed), ‘Engaging Escobar... and Beyond’, in *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue* (Globalization of Mission Series: Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000), 53.

¹⁰⁴ Bonk and Taylor, ‘Engaging Escobar... and Beyond’, 53; Kool, ‘Leadership Issues in Central and Eastern Europe’.

established by God in creation through the periods of Sabbath – in which people were to turn not to themselves but to God alone – has been replaced by an order of time determined by their work requirements. Instead of religion, our order of time is determined by the requirements of economy and consumption, which has serious missiological repercussions.

The 'Commercialization' of Mission Organizations and Churches

An important challenge is to 'bring our missionary methods under the Word of God', as it was coined by Lesslie Newbigin in 1962.¹⁰⁵ Especially in North America, but increasingly also in Europe and CEE, churches and mission organizations operate on the basis of secular business principles instead of theological principles.¹⁰⁶ They focus more on output and results instead of fruits growing in a hidden way, on value for money instead of free grace, on success stories instead of sacrifice and commitment, on quantity instead of quality, on superficial quick results instead of long-term transformation and incarnation, on clinging to power instead of submitting oneself to humble service. Thus secular values are permeating the church, robbing it of its missionary zeal. Fortunately, it would be a grave mistake to generalize.

Otherness and Reconciliation

One of the burning challenges is that of 'otherness', especially related to the Roma (Gypsies), but also to the refugees and migrants. It calls for a theology of reconciliation.¹⁰⁷ It is well known that Miroslav Volf has dealt extensively with the concept of 'otherness' and ethnicity, dealing specifically with his own, Croatian, roots. He is of the opinion that otherness should be placed at the centre of theological reflection. 'The future of the whole world depends on how we deal with ethnic, religious and gender otherness'.¹⁰⁸ Volf's response to otherness is a 'theology of embrace'.¹⁰⁹ On the basis of his Central-East European experiences, he calls attention to the fact that evangelical and pietistic groups have forgotten about the importance of reconciliation between people because their faith has become a matter of an individual relationship between God and man. In other words, the doctrine of reconciliation is reduced to

¹⁰⁵ Lesslie Newbigin, 'Bringing Our Missionary Methods under the Word of God', in *Occasional Bulletin from the Missionary Research Library*, 13.11 (1962). See also Kool, 'Changing Images in the Formation for Mission'.

¹⁰⁶ *The Thailand Report on Secularists: Christian Witness to Secularized People*, Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 8 (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1980).

¹⁰⁷ See my other contribution in this volume: 'Eastern European Churches Engaging Roma People: Historical and Missiological Perspectives', pp. 522–545.

¹⁰⁸ As preceding.

¹⁰⁹ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996).

‘reconciliation of the soul with God’. People are seen as sinners before God, they are called to repent, to receive forgiveness and a new life in Christ. The problem is that this central belief is considered to have consequences only for private morality, for ‘Sunday’, with no consequences for ‘Monday’ or the other days of the week or for other areas of life. The problem of otherness is an ‘anti-mission’ imperative, which divides and which hinders people from crossing cultural and ethnic barriers with the gospel.

Conclusions

What has been achieved in 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall? A revolution has taken place in mission in Central and Eastern Europe. The new mission paradigm is not a copy-and-paste variety of the western mission paradigm, but a new innovative mission paradigm is emerging, characterized by suffering instead of by success, focusing on individual and community, instead of the sole individualistic focus of the West. This new paradigm bears contours of the Antioch paradigm with a threefold focus on the agents of mission, also focusing on the local church and its members. It is enriched by a two-way partnership model in which both partners learn from each other and are invigorated by the different perspectives they bring to the table. There is also a mutual honesty in challenging the others’ fundamental presuppositions on what mission is all about.

It was a naïve presupposition of western missionaries and mission agencies to try to mould Central and East European mission to fit our western models. That did not work. Coming out of a period of four, and in some cases seven, decades of suffering, mission as suffering is a more adequate paradigm than that of success. In this emerging new paradigm focusing on God’s mission, Peter Kuzmič’s words written 25 years ago, are well-chosen and still valid:

We need enablers, we need partners, we need better trained missionaries, servants, credible witnesses who help bring the whole Gospel, which... covers proclamation of truth and exhibition of love, manifestation of power and integrity of life. In the task of world evangelization, it will also require less competition and more co-operation, less self-sufficiency and more self-denial, less ambition and more willingness to serve, less of a drive to dominate and more of the desire to develop.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Peter Kuzmič, ‘How to Teach the Truth of the Gospel’, in J.D. Douglas (ed), *Proclaim Christ until He Comes* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1990), 201.