

News in Brief

Vatican Envoys Hold Talks in Warsaw and Prague. Mgr. Luigi Poggi, the Apostolic Nuncio charged with special tasks as a travelling negotiator, left on 25 February 1975 for a month's stay in Poland. Mgr. Poggi saw the Pope just before his departure. He has recently been leading a Vatican working group holding discussions with an official Polish delegation and will undoubtedly want to carry forward the discussions about the establishment of diplomatic relations between Poland and the Holy See. During the visit Mgr. Poggi was to tour central and north-western Poland to sound out opinions of clergy and believers about freedom of religion in the country.

The visit coincided with a trip to Prague by Mgr. Agostino Casaroli, the Secretary of the Vatican's diplomatic department. Mgr. Casaroli defined his task in Czechoslovakia as an exchange of views and opinions, an expression of what the Vatican hoped to see done in achieving better relations and a general improvement in the atmosphere of contacts between the two sides. (*The Times*, 26 Feb. 1975, p. 6)

Polish Authorities Denounced for Wrecking Church. The Polish Primate, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, has protested to the civil authorities against their demolition of a chapel in Warsaw without first consulting Church authorities. In a statement read in all Warsaw churches on Sunday, 1 December 1974, the cardinal described the incident as "a violation of the rights of bishops" and "unprecedented since the end of the war". It is understood that the church of Beatus Ladislaw of Gielniow was demolished to make way for new buildings. (*The Tablet*, 7 Dec. 1974, p. 1201)

Polish Baptists Dedicate New Church. A well-designed building seating 450 was dedicated 1 September, 1974, in Bialystock, Poland, by the Polish Baptists. Built by voluntary labour with some donations received through the Baptist World Alliance, it replaces the rather uninviting factory building in downtown Bialystok where the church has met since the war. The various dedication proceedings lasted six and a half hours and included a baptismal service for 13. The church is under the care of the Rev. Piotr Dajludzionek and has a total membership of 363 of which ten are employed as professors and teachers in the medical faculty. (*EBPS*, 27 Sept. 1974, pp. 8-10)

Controversy among Polish Orthodox. A lively polemic about the use of Church Slavonic in the Orthodox service began last year in the pages of the *Warsaw Church Herald*, the official organ of the Polish Orthodox Church. In reply to a previous article, indicating particularly the incomprehensibility of certain Church Slavonic expressions for the modern believer, in *Church Herald* No. 5, 1947 it is described as a "great good fortune" that the Orthodox Church "has received and preserved the Slavonic language until now as a bulwark of Orthodoxy against the aggressive intentions of Western influences". (From *Glaube in der 2. Welt* July-August 1974)

Festival of Religious Song in Poland. On 19 May 1974 Cardinal Wyszyński met poets, composers and organizers of "Sacrosong 1974" – the sixth festival of religious song in Poland (19-22 September). Participants in the meeting discussed a wide range of subjects besides those directly connected with the festival. Cardinal Wyszyński spoke of the tremendous need for religious creativity relevant to modern man.

Polish Clergy May Travel Abroad. Polish priests can now travel abroad if they first ask permission from their local Church authority. Only for trips to the USA is special permission necessary; this must be obtained from the Secretariat of the Polish Primate. This is one of the guidelines for foreign trips by Polish priests; these were elaborated by the Polish episcopal conference in January 1974. (*Kipa* 9 May, 1974; here quoted from *Glaube in der 2. Welt* July-August 1974).

Catholic Believers Harassed in Czechoslovakia. A number of Roman Catholic priests in Czechoslovakia have been forbidden to carry out their ministry. The regional court of the Slovakian city Liptovsky Mikulas sentenced Fr. Josef Kazda (aged 39) to three months imprisonment for having conducted mass and given religious instruction to children after this was forbidden him. Fr. Victor Trstensky of Tynau was forbidden to work as a priest on grounds that he was teaching acolytes and studying new songs for the choir. Fr. Peter Kostov of Caka lost his rights as a priest after sending a letter to the Czech President Svoboda complaining of illegal interference in matters of faith. (*Glaube in der 2. Welt* 9/74 p. 7)

New Restrictions on Catholic Nuns. Catholic nuns in Czechoslovakia have recently been barred from attending classes at or receiving diplomas from State schools of nursing. This was broadcast on 7 February 1975 by Vatican Radio, which quoted foreign news agencies. The Czech government department responsible for religious affairs based its decision on what it alleged to be the nuns' involvement in activities forming part of the Church's political programme, which it accused of contributing to "the general ideological subversion of socialist countries by the West". (*The Tablet*, 22 Feb. 1975, p. 189)

Catholic Publications Confiscated. The political police have recently mounted a series of actions against Catholic publications in Yugoslavia. In its account of the first of these – against the Slovenian paper *Druzina*, published in Laibach – the government news agency TANJUG alleged that a large quantity of subversive material was discovered on the premises and confiscated. Several issues of the Croatian periodical *Glas Koncila* were likewise confiscated for the alleged reason that they either carried material adversely critical of the Church's situation in other eastern communist countries or they reported in a tendentious way the Church's situation at home. Also confiscated by reason of its alleged attacks on the State was an issue of *Svedocenje*, a Slovenian periodical issued in Zagreb by the Institute for Conciliar Studies and read almost exclusively by clergy and intellectuals. The ostensible reason for this action was that the issue in question included an article by a well-known Slovenian theologian in which he exposed the harassments to which he had been subjected during his military service. The same treatment was given to yet another Catholic publication – in this case a special supplement of the Zagreb press-agency, *Aksa*. The offending supplement

carried a statement issued by an episcopal source in Mostar and describing the current pastoral situation in the Herzegovina region. (*The Tablet*, 5 Oct. 1974, pp. 970-971)

About 100 parents and children recently staged a sit-in in the city hall of Split, Yugoslavia. According to the Belgrade newspaper *Vecernje Novosti*, they were protesting at the ban on a kindergarten conducted by nuns. (*Ostkirchliche Information* 74-XI, p. 7)

New Bishops for Hungary. On 10 January 1975 the Pope named five new bishops in Hungary and transferred four others, thus bringing it about that all but two of the eleven Hungarian dioceses now have their residential bishop – a record total since the communist government has been in power. What paved the way for these appointments were the talks in Budapest last November between Vatican envoys and government officials and, the following month, the visit by a senior member of the Vatican's Council for the Public Affairs of the Church. Commenting on the new appointments, a spokesman for the council said: "The former dearth of residential bishops had caused tension and uneasiness both among the hierarchy and the body of priests in Hungary. Now that is all over. A new sense of tranquillity will be attained." He added that the Vatican's move had been made possible by its preceding talks with the Hungarian government. These talks, in turn, had been rendered easier by the termination of Cardinal Mindszenty's 15-year asylum in the US embassy in Budapest and his departure for Vienna in 1971. The same spokesman also said that further talks between Vatican and Hungarian government officials were expected to resume shortly. (*The Tablet*, 25 Jan. 1975, p. 90)

Bible for Hungary. The new Hungarian Protestant Bible translation, on which scholars of the Hungarian Bible Council have worked since 1947, is ready for publication. The first edition of the new translation is to be 40,000 copies. (*Baptist Times*, 14 Nov. 1974, p. 3)

Baptists Elect New Leaders. At the 41st Congress of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists held in Moscow 11-13 December, 1974, Andrei E. Klimenko was elected the new President replacing the 76-year old, ailing Ilya G. Ivanov, who retired as President but remains on the Council. Alexei M. Bychkov was re-elected as General Secretary. Klimenko, aged 61, has been on the Council since 1963, was a Vice-President since 1971 and served as superintendant of churches in the Volga region. The 46-year old Bychkov was also elected Vice-President of the European Baptist Federation at that organization's meeting in Oslo, 23-26 August. (*Bratsky Vestnik* 5/74, p. 26)

Biblical Stories Published in Moscow. *Novye Knigi* has announced that the Moscow publishing house Politizdat will print a third edition of Polish writer Zenon Kosidovski's *Stories from the Bible* during the second quarter of 1975. The 1968 edition of 200,000 was quickly sold out. Although the purpose of the book, particularly the concluding remarks by A. Osipov – the Russian Orthodox Seminary Professor turned atheist, was to further the cause of atheism, many read it as an opportunity to learn something about the contents of the Bible. Kosidovski himself

stressed that the Bible was no divine revelation but it was a "masterpiece of world literature". Very likely this 3rd edition will be sold out even more quickly. (*Glaube in der 2 Welt* 1/75, p. 22)

Lutheran Church Opens in Omsk. Evangelical Lutheran Germans in Omsk (USSR) have finally been able to register a church after five years of effort. The registration application carried 120 signatures. A building costing 8,500 roubles and seating 250 persons was thereupon dedicated. Seven lay ministers serve this congregation of up to 350 people. Earlier the congregation had met in homes and in the Baptist church. (*Heimat in Glauben*, Jan. 1975, p. 2)

Orthodox Priest Searched. On 20 February, 1975, KGB representatives conducted a 10-hour search in the flat of the Orthodox priest Fr. Dimitry Dudko. The search continued till 3.00 a.m. the following morning. Unofficial sources in Moscow believe that it was connected with the case against the religious journal *Veche*, which closed down after the arrest of its editor, Vladimir Osipov, last November. Fr. Dimitry had contributed articles to the publication and was closely acquainted with Osipov. The security men who conducted the search had brought Fr. Dimitry back to the Moscow flat from his new parish at Kabanovo, 85 kilometres away. (*Reuter*, Moscow, 21 Feb. 1975)

Buddhist Scholar Dies in Labour Camp. Bidya Dandaron, one of the Soviet Union's most distinguished Buddhist scholars and spiritual leaders died in a labour camp at Vydrino on 26 October 1974. (See *RCL* Vol. 1, Nos. 4-5, p. 43.) He was 60. Many of his friends believe that his death was caused by the harsh treatment that he received there.

Telepathy East and West. In March last year Eduard Naumov was sentenced to two years in Soviet labour camps. His crime: study and promotion of "parapsychology". Parapsychology includes the study of such phenomena as telepathy and thought control. Because it is not generally accepted in the USSR as a science, Naumov and other Soviet parapsychologists have experienced considerable difficulty in the pursuit of their interest. Probably one of the crucial factors in this case was the fact that Naumov carried on an extensive correspondence with Western specialists. In the words of a recent appeal by Soviet physicist Lev Regelson: "As enthusiastic fans of their science they violated - not Soviet law, no - but those unspoken (essentially illegal) Party-ideological regulations, adherence to which is demanded of every individual in the USSR. Although all these actions could not be punished by law, at the same time they could not remain unpunished. So there was a crack-down. Naumov has been imprisoned, other parapsychologists have, so far, been driven out of their jobs." (Regelson himself was a signatory of an appeal to the Russian Orthodox Council in 1971.) Regelson went on to address "people with a mystical and religious interpretation of the world: use a portion of your spiritual energy to ensure that the psychic sphere of our lives, whose study Naumov so persistently pursued, does not become a sphere where evil forces have total sway; it is necessary that sincere and honest people such as Naumov study the potential of this world, and not only those who are interested in parapsychology as a new tool of violence against the human personality."