

## News in Brief

*Cuba to Permit Religion Under Planned Constitution.* A Cuban communist official writing a constitution says religion will not be prohibited in Cuba, but that it will disappear "during the prolonged process of re-education" of the country's children. "Anyone may follow a cult of his preference", said Blas Roca in response to questions at a Havana factory meeting held to discuss the proposed new constitution, according to Havana radio. Mr. Roca, a member of the Party Secretariat and head of a commission drafting the document, warned that "what cannot be accepted is the existence of those who attempt to keep from working by using religious pretexts, or those who won't study, or serve their homeland with weapons in their hands, or sing the national anthem or salute the flag." (See: *International Herald Tribune*, 23 May, 1975)

*Religious Revival in Armenia.* Vasken I, the Supreme Catholicos of all the Armenians, recently visited London for the consecration of a new Armenian church. During the visit, the Catholicos affirmed that there is a widespread revival of religious faith in his country. In recent years there has been a four-fold increase in the number of baptisms being performed, with many communists bringing their own children to be baptized. Soviet law imposes restrictions on the education of children in the Christian faith, but young people are nevertheless being reached through their presence at religious meetings. The giving of the people to the Church has increased eleven-fold in the last 20 years. The Armenian Church has a vigorous publishing programme, with 5,000 of each issue of the monthly journal *Echmiadzin* being printed. In addition this year 20,000 copies of the Church Calendar were printed, as well as a further 10,000 wall calendars. The journal is a means of keeping in touch with the Armenian community outside the Soviet Union, but it is distributed in Soviet Armenia as well—and almost all calendars are for domestic use.

*Hungarian Evangelical Church Produces Film.* A film about the activities of the Hungarian Evangelical Church, made in coproduction by the Hungarian and Finnish Evangelical Churches, was recently shown for the first time in Helsinki. To mark the event, the Hungarian ambassador to Finland, Rudolf Rónai, gave a reception. Among the guests present were Archbishop Simojoki, several members of the Finnish government, as well as a number of personalities of the ecclesiastical and cultural life of the country. (See: *Népszabadság*, 15 January, 1975, p. 8)

*Slovak Calvinists.* In connection with the quatercentenary of the birth of Albert Molnár of Szenc, the Hungarian Calvinist Reformer and translator of the Psalms, some details have been provided about the little known community of Slovak Calvinists. The community probably came into existence simultaneously with the Hungarian Calvinist Reformation in the 16th Century and Slovak Calvinists have always been close to their Hungarian co-religionists. (The bulk of the population of Slovakia is Roman Catholic and Slovak Lutherans make up almost

the whole of the Slovak Protestant population.) The Slovak Calvinists today number about 20,000 with some 30 Ministers, according to the Assistant Bishop Andrej Mat'asik, and they are concentrated in the Zemplin area to the east of Kosice, where they have always lived. Their religious literature, including a translation of Albert Molnár's Psalter, was written in the East Slovak dialect from the Reformation onwards, but with the major difference that it used the Hungarian orthography (i.e. s=ś, sz=s, ts=c, etc.). This orthography was in use until the interwar period and the first publication to use literary Slovak (based on the Central Slovak dialect) did not appear until 1929 and that in the United States. From Sándor Csanda, "Slovak Translation of the Psalms of Albert Molnár of Szenc", *Irodalmi Szemle*, Bratislava, Vol. 17 No. 7 (September 1974), pp. 652-662.

*Communists Attend Church in Czechoslovakia.* Party leaders and State officials were exposed to an embarrassing situation, said the Prague Party publication *Tribuna*, when they had to take part in a church funeral service in Pribram, about 50 kilometres south of Prague. According to his last will, a member of the Communist Party was buried there with a church ceremony. The official representatives of Party and State even found themselves forced, the paper said, to take part in "a service in the church". It was to be hoped, it went on, that a communist would not in future force his comrades to "take their leave of him in church". (*KiPa* 17 May, 1974; here quoted from *Glaube in der 2. Welt* July-August 1974).

*Pocket Dictionary for Atheists.* In 1973 *Politizdat*, Moscow, published an "Atheist's Pocket Dictionary". The new publication is intended for "propagandists, lecturers, discussants and organizers of atheist work". Several well-known atheist writers have contributed to the book, which is edited by Professor M. P. Novikov. The references cover a wide range of topics from the general ("love of one's neighbour", "religious consolation", "religious feelings") to the abstruse ("Bachanalia", "Walpurgis night"). Individual persons are not mentioned, but among the few contemporary foreign institutions cited are the publishing house "La Vie avec Dieu" in Brussels ("a Catholic publishing house producing a significant quantity of religio-propagandist literature for distribution in various countries including the USSR") and the "Russicum" college in Rome ("a Jesuit-run school for the training of missionaries for the USSR and socialist countries"). Those interested in the "Second Coming of Christ" are directed to look up "Chiliasm". The longest single entry is that on "atheism".

*Rebirth of Nationalist-Christian Journal.* V. N. Osipov, the editor of earlier *samizdat* journals, such as *Veche* and *Otechestvo*, which were suppressed by the Soviet authorities, has now succeeded in producing a new journal, *Zemlya*. Like his previous publications, it advocates a form of Christian nationalism; in fact, Osipov takes the view that any form of nationalism apart from Christianity is highly dangerous. Only by being Christians can people truly be patriots. "People without mercy, generosity of spirit and love for God and man are not Russians." The journal's editors are dedicated to the rebirth of morality and national culture among the Russian people; to this end they regard free speech and constitutional guarantees of human rights as indispensable. *Zemlya* derives

much of its philosophical basis from the Slavophiles and Dostoevsky; its contributors bear a certain resemblance to the 19th century *pochvenniki*, who stressed the need to keep in touch with their primeval roots, with Mother-earth. It is from this concept of Mother-earth (*Mat' Zemlya*) that the journal takes its name. "Times may change, worldly authorities are transient, but the Nation is eternal, . . . No good seed, which falls into that Earth, will be lost."

*Another German Lutheran Pastor Leaves Russia.* Late in October 1973, a Volga German pastor named Johannes D. Schlundt arrived in West Germany. Pastor Schlundt was born in 1900 in the colony of Bauer on the "Bergseite" of the Volga. He graduated from an Evangelical Lutheran Theological Seminary in Leningrad in 1928 and then served as pastor in Rosenberg (Volga) from 1929-1930. During this period Stalin's liquidation of clergymen began, and for an additional year Pastor Schlundt hid on an outlying farm near Kamyshin. With hopes of being safer in Siberia, he then fled to Novosibirsk, only to be arrested in 1934 on charges of "espionage for Germany". He was imprisoned in a concentration camp near Vorkuta on the Arctic Circle for five years. When he had finished his term, he was given another three years. After his eventual release from the camp he was kept under police control until 1955 when all Soviet Germans were freed from their "closed settlements". At this time one of Pastor Schlundt's daughters was living in the town of Luga, south of Leningrad. Pastor Schlundt and his wife now moved to Luga where he earned a living as a book-keeper. In 1965 his wife died. Three years later he married a Soviet German schoolteacher, born in the Crimea. During all these years, Pastor Schlundt longed to return to religious work. Finally in 1970 he moved to the town of Prokhladny in the North Caucasus where about 5,000 Germans had settled. Although his religious activities had to be carried out very quietly because his congregations were not registered, Pastor Schlundt's name soon spread to many outlying communities where he was called upon to baptize children and to conduct other pastoral duties. A moving testimony about Pastor Schlundt's ministry was given by a recent "returnee" named Jauck, who states that his whole life was changed after he heard a Christmas sermon delivered by the Pastor. (From Emma Haynes, *Work Papers of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia*, December 1973.)

*Baptist Pastor Refused Exit Visa.* Further news has reached the West about Janis Smits, the Baptist minister in Aizpute, Latvia, who has for the past year been subjected to especially severe persecution by the authorities. In March of last year Smits was deprived of his registration to work as a minister. The reasons given for this were that he had schoolchildren in his choir and that he had asked believers to pray for religious prisoners of conscience. The congregation refused to accept this dismissal and as a result the authorities have threatened to close the church. Smits himself has requested permission to emigrate in order to continue his work abroad. Yet he has been refused an exit visa. In a recent telephone call to the West, he said: "I no longer work with the congregation. I dare not because of the government's threats against the congregation. I have also had to leave my flat and cannot obtain employment. On May 19, 1975, I was summoned by the militia and told that the Latvian Council of Ministers and the Ministry of the Interior had examined my application and that their

decision (refusal to grant an exit visa) remained unchanged." (See: *Keston News Service*, 17 June, 1975, p. 3)

*Vins Appeal Rejected.* Further details concerning the case of the reform Baptist leader Georgi Vins have been received at Keston College. The information is taken from a letter of 26 March, 1975, which his mother, Lidia Vins, addressed to the Human Rights Committee and Amnesty International. According to this, on 5 March, the Vins family delivered a letter to the Supreme Court of the Ukraine in which they drew attention to the illegality of his trial. Vins had himself already appealed to the Supreme Court against his sentence. The Court heard his case on 6 March and rejected the appeal. The family were not told of the decision until 19 March—despite almost daily enquiries. The fact that Vins was in hospital during this time was also "painstakingly hidden" from them. Lidia Vins appeals for help in opening a re-examination of the case with the participation of a Christian lawyer and representatives from the Soviet Supreme Court and Amnesty International. According to an official note of 25 March, her son is to serve the rest of his sentence in the Yakutsk Autonomous Republic (Eastern Siberia). (See: *Keston News Service*, 8 May, 1975, p. 4)

*Moscow Priest Injured in Road Accident.* The Orthodox priest Fr. Dmitri Dudko has recently been involved in a road accident. Although few details are known, the accident apparently took place when he was going to visit a sick brother in Bryansk district. Fr. Dudko had both legs broken. He is now making a successful recovery.

*Fifteen Years for Soviet Artist.* The Russian artist Vladimir Moroz has been sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment for large-scale speculation in icons. Moroz, aged about 40, is said to have received the maximum prison term under article 88 of the Criminal Code, which forbids speculation in items with foreign currency value. (See: *The Guardian*, 4 April, 1975)

*Metropolitan Nikodim Receives Award.* Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Novgorod has been granted the honorary degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology by the Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw for his outstanding services in the field of ecumenism.

*International Delegates meet at Zagorsk.* An interesting meeting took place by invitation of Patriarch Pimen at Zagorsk, July 23-26, 1974. Representatives from churches in socialist countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, E. Germany, Cuba, Poland, USSR, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia) listened to papers from theologians and experts on a variety of topics all devoted to a broader understanding of the theme announced for the 5th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi in November, 1975. As is stated in the communique, the goal was to understand the theme *Jesus Christ Liberates and Unites* "from the viewpoint of the service of the churches and the Christian for peace, justice and co-operation among nations". In addition to various specific questions on peace and disarmament, they also discussed the population problem, the problem of human rights "and a number of aspects of East-West relations" and considered the theme of "the priority of service for peace in religious publications". (*Bratsky Vestnik* 5/74, pp. 8-9 and *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii* 9/74, p. 56)