

the Dubcek era, was later revised and translated into German, and has only now been translated into English.

Machovec's book is thus the product of a unique period of optimism and open-mindedness, a fact clearly reflected in the opening chapter, where the author states confidently that "there has been a real transformation in the relations between Christianity and Marxism". We have a right, alas, to be sadly sceptical about such honest but sanguine assertions. The period of dialogue in Czechoslovakia was, after all, unfortunately brief.

One wonders, moreover, whether Peter Hebblethwaite is right to call Machovec's book "a minor but indispensable Marxist classic". A minor classic, perhaps; and certainly a very readable and informative book. But there is little which is specifically "Marxist" in his interpretation of the gospel message, which might have been more accurately entitled "A rationalist looks at Jesus", or "An existentialist looks at Jesus" or even "A Bultmannian looks at Jesus". But then Machovec, like so many modern Marxists, reduces Marxism to a methodology, a system of "sober scientific analysis" which rejects fixed dogma.

This easy-going type of Marxism will certainly be much more palatable to the average Christian than the editorials of *Pravda*. And Machovec's "demythologised" Jesus, the man who urges people to totally change their lives, will undoubtedly make sense to many who consider themselves Marxists. So, even though the book is unlikely even to scratch the surface of orthodoxy on both sides, for many it could open new avenues of thought. What a pity it is not for sale in Eastern Europe.

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White Book on Restrictions of Religion in the USSR

by Michael Bourdeaux, Committee for the Defence of Human Rights
in the USSR, Brussels, 1976, 66 pp., 65p.

Religious Liberty in the Soviet Union: WCC and USSR—A Post-Nairobi Documentation

edited by Michael Bourdeaux, Hans Heblly and Eugen Voss,
Keston College (CSRC), 1976, 96 pp., £1.50.

These two volumes are important reports for all those concerned with an accurate assessment of the limitations on religious liberty in the USSR. The first, slighter book sets out the present state of the law and then, with the support of documents, considers the present limitations