

Church. For them, an excellent elementary introduction very suitable for young people is *The Orthodox Church*, by Sergei Hackel (40p + 5p).

The most comprehensive recent history of the Russian Orthodox Church is still *Christians in Contemporary Russia*, by Nikita Struve, excellent value at a reduced price (£2 + 15p).

### *Helen Tier*

Helen Tier worked with us for a year and a half and died on 2 January 1973, aged 32. She had been seriously ill earlier and knew her medical condition. Her bravery was an example to all of us. I never once heard her complain. When I had my accident in January 1972 she was the first to visit me in hospital (my wife was away for the day)—and I shall never forget the way she encouraged me to bear pain. Helen kept our records, looking after the mailing list and financial contributions. She never made a mistake and often came to the office when she was not well enough to do so. We shall not forget her as a person, nor the work she did. She now rests in peace with God.

## Editorial

In this first issue of the CSRC's new journal we present articles, documents and bibliographical material on various aspects of the religious situation in the USSR. This vast conglomerate of differing national groups presents in itself a complex field for research—and it is this field which up to now has been studied by those working at the Centre. However, in future issues of this journal we hope to redress the balance by publishing material on the religious situation in other countries of Eastern Europe and China. In addition to the articles and documents which we shall be publishing on the Christian Church, we hope to include informative articles on other religious groups, such as, for example, the Jews, the Buddhists and the Moslems in the USSR.

The Centre hopes that *Religion in Communist Lands* will be of educative value and will become a forum for the presentation and discussion of *all* aspects of the religious situation in Communist societies—both the positive and the negative aspects—for the Centre is a research organization, not concerned with presenting a particular viewpoint; it is non-political and independent of denominational affiliation. We would hope rather to try to emulate that balanced, luminous figure of the Russian nineteenth

century, Pushkin, who refused to be one-sided in religious as in other matters: in his correspondence and discussions with the Westernizer, Chaadaev, and the Slavophile, Khomyakov, who advocated adherence to Roman Catholicism and Russian Orthodoxy respectively, Pushkin—both a European and Russian patriot—whilst being able to appreciate their points of view, also saw another side to the question and stressed to them the value of the Reformation and Protestantism.

Unfortunately it is generally harder to get news of the positive side of church life than of the tragic difficulties that confront so many believers. But we shall make special efforts to give authentic accounts of the mighty works of the Spirit whenever we can. At the moment there is in the Russian Orthodox Church an intense revival of liturgical worship. Gone are the days when most believers allowed the Liturgy to flow over them, apprehended indeed as a life-giving stream, but without an explicit understanding of all the words. The new type of wideawake, educated believer wants to “pray the liturgy” and demands a higher level of preaching. In spite of the increased pressure of official atheist propaganda young educated married people, who have much to lose, come forward in increasing numbers to make their communion and to have their children baptised.

.. This issue of *Religion in Communist Lands* contains, besides documentation from the Soviet Union, articles by staff members of the Centre only, but in future we hope to receive articles from outside contributors. A wealth of information recently reached the Centre on the Roman Catholics in Lithuania, showing that their situation resembles markedly that of other Christian groups, for example the Russian Baptists. The latter are called in full the Evangelical Christians and Baptists, abbreviated to ECBs, and some of them have been badly hit by the anti-religious campaign launched by Khrushchev in 1959. This is illustrated by the article on the ECB Council of Prisoners' Relatives and by the letter from the Baptists of Piryatin (printed in the document section). A recent official pronouncement on the Party's policy towards religious groups, published in *Pravda* (see the document section), reveals the complex organization of atheist propaganda, the ramifications of which, however, are in need of considerable “improvement”. Indeed, despite these propaganda efforts, a Christian writer, in the neo-Slavophile *samizdat*<sup>1</sup> journal, *Veche*, states that “atheism is something alien, imported, not part of us” and that “in Russia the religious question is now the main question of the day” (see the document section). Perhaps this is an exaggeration, and this anony-

<sup>1</sup> This term means literally “self-publishing”. It is used as a generic term for all unpublished documents, coming from the Soviet Union.

mous writer, attempting in part to achieve the style of a prose-poem, lacks discipline in the way he writes; but it is true that the "religious question" is an issue which interests members of Soviet society and worries those involved in atheist propaganda. Religious beliefs, and in particular the Christian faith—or "survivals of the past" as the *Pravda* article euphemistically puts it—are by no means dead. Faith which has been tried in the fire is something which spreads and is 'difficult to suppress. The Russian Orthodox Church has kept alive in Soviet society a spiritual tradition that still draws many to it today. As an example of this continuing tradition we publish extracts from an article in the official publication, *The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, on St. Tikhon of Zadonsk (1724-1783). Of him Fedotov wrote: "He is the first 'modern' among the Russian saints, with his interior conflicts, his painful groping for his spiritual way—the constant shifting of light and shadow, of ecstasy and depression." After four years as bishop of Voronezh, he retired to a monastery at Zadonsk and there devoted himself to prayer and writing. His work, *On True Christianity*, with its call to follow the way of self-sacrifice and prayer is still most relevant to Christians in contemporary Soviet society.

As Michael Bourdeaux remarks in his review of Joshua Rothenberg's book on the Jewish religion in the USSR, the legal aspect of the religious situation is one that must be studied if the position of believers in the USSR is to be understood. The ECB believers of Piryatin refer in their letter to various points of law: Article 124 of the Constitution on freedom of conscience, the 1918 Decree on the Separation of Church and State and of Schools from the Church, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are examples. On the basis that these legal guarantees have been violated, the Piryatin believers argue that they have been treated unjustly. It appears that sometimes the law is disregarded by the authorities: secret instructions are issued and obeyed rather than the law. As an example of this we include in the document section the instructions sent to the special Commissions, set up to assist the local authorities in the study and supervision of religious life.

The final section of the journal will always be devoted to bibliographical material—official press articles, *samizdat* documents, and reviews of Soviet books on religion and atheism, when there is the space. As the support for the Centre develops, so also will the scope of this journal.

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