

News in Brief

New Polish Official for Religion. On 21 May this year Mr. Kazimierz Kakol was appointed to replace Mr. Aleksander Skarzynski as government official in charge of religious affairs. The post has been elevated: the new appointee becomes a "minister without portfolio". Mr. Kakol was born in 1920, graduated in 1946 from the Legal-Economic Department of Łódz University and has since held a wide range of legal and journalistic posts. He has been editor of the hard-line journal, *Prawo i Życie*, since 1957 and became a member of the editorial board of a Party theoretical monthly, *Nowe Drogi*. He is also Director of the Institute of Journalism at Warsaw University and Secretary of the Polish Board of Lawyers. As a man of legal and journalistic training who has travelled extensively in Europe, Kakol may be considered more suitable than Skarzynski to by-pass the Polish Church and conduct a direct dialogue with the Vatican. In 1968 Kakol was a leading critic of the alleged "Zionist" conspiracy in Poland. The Polish Catholic Church and especially its head, Cardinal Wyszyński, continue to clash with the State on such matters as education and "voluntary" Sunday working.

Dr. Ramsey visits East Germany. On 29 May the Archbishop of Canterbury held a meeting with Herr Willi Stoph, chairman of the East German Council of State. During the meeting Dr. Ramsey told his host that all wanted peace and that a "warm peace" required a mutual exchange of people. Herr Stoph was understood to have agreed with Dr. Ramsey on the importance of exchanges in the political, economic and cultural fields and to have expressed understanding for the Archbishop's wish to accelerate the pace of exchanges. However, he did not commit himself to help achieve this. One of the highlights of the Archbishop's visit to East Germany was the ecumenical service at Erfurt, in the Roman Catholic cathedral, attended by about a thousand Roman Catholics and Protestants. When asked by an East German correspondent whether he had gained some idea of Church life and the Church's position in a socialist country, Dr. Ramsey said that he thought Church life had many difficulties in a country based on Marxist principles, but that despite such difficulties, the Church did its work with courage and joy. (See: *The Times* 30 May 1974)

Death of a Czech Cardinal. Cardinal Stepan Trochta of Litomerice died in Prague on 6 April 1974 at the age of 69. Bishop Trochta was arrested by the Nazis during the last war and narrowly escaped execution. He was put under house arrest by the communist authorities in 1949 and in 1954 sentenced to 25 years imprisonment. Rehabilitated under Dubček, he was made Cardinal *in pectore* in 1969; the official announcement followed in March 1973. A Czech priest in Vienna has stated that the cerebral haemorrhage which caused the Cardinal's death was almost certainly induced by a brutal and lengthy interrogation carried out the previous day. The Cardinal was convalescing after three eye operations and had been ordered complete rest. Reports from Litomerice state that government officials did all they could to curtail public participation in the funeral. The number of those attending was restricted and a scheduled procession from the cathedral to the cemetery was forbidden. No funeral services were allowed to take place outside Litomerice. (See *The Tablet* 18 May 1974, p. 489)

Desecration in Polish cemetery. In the parish cemetery of Torun, thugs profanely destroyed 200 grave crosses. Because of this Bishop B. Czaplinski of Chelmino organized a solemn service of expiation at which he himself officiated. About 20,000 faithful took part in this service. (Translated from *Gazeta Niedzielną*, 24 March 1974, p. 6)

Nuncio appointed in Cuba. Pope Paul VI has appointed an apostolic nuncio to Cuba, thus restoring full diplomatic relations between the Vatican and that country. On 24 May the chargé d'affaires, Bishop Cesare Zacchi, who has been papal representative in Havana since 1961, was made apostolic nuncio and an archbishop. Though the Vatican never broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba completely, it withdrew its nuncio in 1961 after the expulsion of foreign missionaries, including bishops, in the first two years of the Castro government. The new appointment is seen as a result of the recent visit to Cuba of Archbishop Agostino Casaroli, Secretary of the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church. (See: *The Tablet*, 8 June 1974, p. 563)

Confucius Treatment for Dalai Lama. The recent Chinese campaign to "criticize Confucius and Lin Piao" has been translated into the Tibetan context with a renewed attack on the Dalai Lama, who fled to India after the unsuccessful rising of 1959. The attack has taken the form of an exhibition in Lhasa relating to alleged crimes such as human sacrifice. It has been suggested that Lin Piao sought to restore the Dalai Lama to Tibet. (See *The Guardian* 10 June 1974, p. 3)

British Baptists speak out. At an assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain in May, British Baptists made clear their commitment to the cause of human rights and religious liberty. They gave unanimous approval to a call for the Baptist Union council to take any appropriate action and make any necessary approaches to governments in attempts to demand such rights.

During the discussions, the Rev. Roger Hayden stressed that British action could be of considerable help, as had already been seen in response to the stand made by the Rev. Josif Ton in Romania. A delegation of British Baptists had held a full and frank interview with the Romanian Department of Cults, and five out of seven points made in a protest by Mr. Ton had been met, and others were under discussion. (See: *The Baptist Times* 9 May 1974)

Convention Protests about Soviet Conditions. According to a press release circulated on 11 April 1974, the Ukrainian Evangelical Alliance of North America held a convention last October at which it resolved among other things to demand that "national and international church and civic organizations, including private individuals" protest to the Soviet government about its persecution of religion; to demand that the Soviet government cease such interference in the lives of its religious citizens; and in particular to "express a resolute protest against the brutal persecution of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians and Baptists and its membership".

Scandinavian Appeal for Soviet Christians. In RCL No. 6, 1973 (p. 31) we mentioned the launching of an appeal by missionary organizations in Norway, Sweden and Denmark on behalf of Christians and others in the USSR who are

suffering for their beliefs. According to a recent press release, "the Scandinavian governments were urged to raise the question of the persecution of Soviet dissidents in the United Nations, and in the course of little more than two months' time 116,000 signatures were collected in support of the appeal . . . In Norway the total number of signatures was 77,300. On 30 January the appeal was presented to the Prime Minister by the chairman of the Norwegian mission, Bishop Monrad Norderval. In his speech the Bishop emphasized that while the violations of human rights in other countries had been condemned several times, the persecution of intellectuals, Christians and Jews in the Soviet Union had never been on the agenda of the United Nations.

London Protest. On Saturday 27 April about 150 people attended a protest meeting in London in support of Christians in the USSR who cannot express their beliefs freely. A petition signed by 8,700 people throughout Britain was then delivered to the Prime Minister. The meeting was organized by *Aid to the Russian Church*.

Human Rights in USSR. On 28 June this year the International Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in the USSR published a press release "The Current Human Rights Situation in the USSR" prepared by Mr. Peter Reddaway (London School of Economics and CSRC Council member). The report suggested that the Soviet situation regarding human rights had deteriorated in recent months and that when the Security Conference ends, it might become even worse. A paragraph of the report mentioned "a new drive of increased repression against religious believers".

Pupil Expelled from Moscow Yeshiva. In the USSR today there is only one Jewish *yeshiva* (theological school) still in existence. It is attached to the Moscow synagogue, but doubts have frequently been expressed as to the reality of its functioning. There is no certain evidence that any new rabbis have graduated from it. It certainly has very few pupils, and news recently reached the West of the expulsion of one of them. Ilya Essas, in a letter to World Jewry, writes: "In the summer of 1973 I entered, as a student, the *yeshiva* attached to the Moscow synagogue. Not long after that my wife, my son and I submitted an application for emigration to Israel. Being aware of the attitude of the leaders of the synagogue towards emigration I did not inform them of my intention, nor did I tell them that in November 1973 I received a refusal to this request. On 1 March 1974 I was arrested on the street by officials of the KGB and the police. At the time I was making my way to the building of the CPSU to demand an explanation for the refusals to our requests for emigration, received by my friends and myself. That same evening I was released with all the others. Three days later the president of the Moscow Jewish religious community and synagogue, Efraim Kaplun, said to me: 'As from today you will not set foot in this *yeshiva*. You should be a Soviet man and not think of going to Israel.'" (See: *Jews in the USSR*, London, 15 March 1974, p. 2)

Soviet Jews go abroad for training. Rabbi Arthur Schneier, the President of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, announced in Moscow recently that the Soviet government has given approval for ten young men to receive rabbinical training at the Budapest Jewish Theological Seminary headed by Rabbi Alexander Scheiber. Rabbi Schneier made his announcement after a meeting with the

deputy chairman of the Soviet Council on Religious Affairs, Mr. Pyotr V. Makartsev. The cost of the ten candidates' training will be borne partly by Soviet Jewry and partly by the Appeal of Conscience Foundation.

Mikhail Agursky arrested. The Soviet human rights leader Mikhail Agursky (see RCL No. 3, 1974, pp. 24, 29) was arrested at his home by security police in what appeared to be a move to silence all Jewish protest before President Nixon's visit to Moscow. (See: *The Guardian* 22 June 1974) He was released after ten days.

Late Patriarch's Secretary Arrested. Daniil Ostapov is reported to have been arrested in Moscow. Early reports differed as to whether he was under house arrest or in the Lefortovo prison. The story received publicity in the *Daily Telegraph*, London, on 2 April. A subsequent report in *The Guardian* of 25 April stated that the arrest was "on charges of hoarding valuables" and that he was being held in a prison hospital. Daniil Ostapov was a close family friend of the late Patriarch Alexi and had acted as his personal secretary since Alexi was a bishop. On 28 March Professor Andrei Sakharov and Igor Shafarevich of the Moscow Human Rights Committee made the following statement: "We are deeply disturbed at reports concerning the arrest of the elderly assistant to Patriarch Alexi, Daniil Andreyevich Ostapov. For a man of 79 who is seriously ill such an experience could have tragic consequences. We beg Church circles, both in our country and abroad, to take an interest in this matter and to make every effort to see that it receives publicity." When Patriarch Alexi died in April 1970, Ostapov wrote a long article for the Church journal entitled "The Patriarch's last spring" (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* No. 6, 1970, pp. 5-12). Written in a deeply personal style uncharacteristic of this journal, it reveals Ostapov's closeness to the late Patriarch. He remarked: "Promptness was the rule in the Patriarch's work. Replies to letters, resolutions, the distribution of papers - everything had to be done immediately, at once." Of the Patriarch's last night, Ostapov wrote: "By turns His Holiness would sleep, breathing deeply and heavily, would pray aloud or converse." There is a photograph of Patriarch Alexi walking arm-in-arm with Ostapov in the grounds of the patriarchal residence at Lukino, near Moscow, in winter-time. His son, Archpriest Alexi Ostapov, is a professor at the Moscow Theological Academy; after the Patriarch's death he was one of the first to arrive at the bedside to tend to the body. *The Guardian* report also mentions one Fr. Viktor Zhukov, who is said to have been arrested "after police found a large sum of money in his apartment".

Orthodox Painter in Mental Hospital. A document has reached the West from the Russian artist Yuri Ivanov, now in a mental hospital in Leningrad. Ivanov had already spent sixteen years in imprisonment; some of his sketches of fellow-prisoners have been printed in the West. In an autobiographical letter, Ivanov speaks of the repressions suffered by his family before him. His great-uncle, after serving a number of years in imprisonment, became a monk in the Pskovo-Pechersky monastery, where he died in 1962. Released in October 1971, Ivanov continued to be the object of close official scrutiny. On one occasion he was detained in the Orthodox monastery at Zagorsk. In April 1973 he went to the KGB in Leningrad to protest about this treatment; the official called an ambulance and he was taken to mental hospital. At the end of the article, dated 4 January, Ivanov states: "I write so that people who are interested in the true

state of affairs in this country might know what crimes are being committed inside the walls of medical institutions. I stand as a witness and as a witness I must be truthful, for if I refuse to testify or give false evidence, I will be judged by the most severe yet most just court of all – by the judgment of our Lord God and my own conscience.”

New Trouble in Pochayev. In the early 1960's there was a determined effort to close down the Orthodox monastery at Pochayev in the Western Ukraine. Carried out within the context of Khrushchev's nationwide anti-religious campaign, this particular effort is said to have begun thus: “The abbot had had the cupola of the Dormition church gilded during renovation. The local Party authorities were furious. The Patriarchate was told that the Archimandrite had to ‘disappear’, i.e. be immediately removed. However he was a friend of the late Patriarch Alexi since student days, so the latter simply refused to remove him. The result was the famous attacks on the monastery.” After much publicity in the West, the campaign against Pochayev was apparently shelved and the monastery continued to function, albeit with a much reduced complement of monks. At the beginning of this year a report reached the West about new pressures on the monastery. It was reported that the abbot Archimandrite Samuil and other members of the monastery council had written a letter to Vladimir Kuroyedov, head of the Council for Religious Affairs in Moscow, complaining that certain monastery buildings had been appropriated for secular use and that it was even intended to open an atheist museum there. The letter was written on 25 September last year but became available to Western correspondents in Moscow only in late January. The January issue of the Ukrainian atheist magazine *People and World* contained an article, reprinted from a local newspaper, by a former monk casting aspersions on the reputation of the monastery among the people (it is in fact one of the oldest and most venerated Orthodox shrines in the country) and levelling accusations of fanaticism. Oddly, the February issue of the same magazine mentioned an atheist museum in Pochayev which last year attracted some 17,000 visitors. Assuming that this museum is located in a building not connected with the monastery, it seems unlikely that there could be a need for two such institutions in one small town. On 12 March *Soviet News*, the organ of the Soviet Embassy in London, published an interview with Archimandrite Samuil and Metropolitan Filaret, head of the Orthodox Church in the Ukraine. Archimandrite Samuil denied having written such a letter to Kuroyedov and observed: “This is not the first time that the Pochayev Monastery has become the object of the inexplicably close attention and ‘concern’ in the western press.” Archimandrite Samuil was appointed head of the monastery in 1971. The main part of the interview, however, is devoted to Metropolitan Filaret who remarked: “During the eight years that I have headed the Kiev Metropolitan See as the Exarch, nothing like this has happened . . . There is no museum of atheism, nor is anybody trying to open one at the monastery.”