

# Reviews

## China and the Churches—in the Making of One World

published by Pro Mundi Vita Centrum Informationis,  
Rue de la Limite 6, B-1030 Brussels, 1975, 39 pp., no price indicated.

*Pro Mundi Vita* is a Catholic International Research and Information Centre in Belgium. It operates in five languages, through publications, surveys and colloquia. Its aim is to promote a Christian ecumenical contribution to studies and action relating to the future development of mankind – with special reference to questions of justice and peace. For a number of years now it has set aside one of its staff to collaborate with the Lutheran World Federation in a joint China Study programme. This excellent monograph is one of the results of this collaboration.

The first five pages sketch the general background. Together Christians and Chinese make up half of mankind. There is very little overlap – a fact which seems natural to the Chinese but which raises a profound question for Christians. Even at the height of the fourth attempt to evangelize China, in the '40s of this century, Catholic and Protestant Christians together comprised only 1% of China's population. For the past quarter of a century Chinese Christians have been cut off from all former foreign connections. Relatively few now dare to worship openly, though many meet in small groups all over China. The highest hopes of Christian Missions have here turned to the deepest disappointment. Two questions remain: "How much of a break with the past is *possible* in the pattern of being a Christian in relation to China? . . . How much of a change is *needed* in that pattern in order to make it credible as true service to the Chinese?"

The middle 14 pages analyse the present new phase in our global situation. The Chinese People's Republic is recognized as concurrently (1) the modernized successor State of the Middle Kingdom, (2) the new conscience of communism and Russia's rival for leadership of the international communist movement, and (3) the great champion of the Third World in struggles for liberation. Representing an even larger segment of mankind,

the Christian world is also seen to be in the throes of renewal, its traditions radically challenged from within and without, yet still showing its capacity to contradict both naive belief and facile unbelief. A Christianity with everything to give and nothing to receive has been learning that self-sufficiency is the ultimate obstacle to both giving and receiving. But the one world now inexorably in the making is beyond the control of any Communist Party or of any Christian Church. Our emphasis must be shifted from Christian converts to Christian values.

Four further pages suggest guidelines for a task of discernment yet to be accomplished. Our question has to be put into the context of both the total Chinese reality (seeing Mao Tse Tung in the perspective of vast stretches of China's past and future, and also refusing to overlook the millions regarded by Maoist orthodoxy as "non-people") and the total Christian reality (itself in a more or less traumatic transition to the new future God holds for it). Both China and the Christian Church are unfinished products as they stand. "Meaningfulness remains minimal not only because of closed unbelieving minds but even more because of closed believing ones." Christians must learn to reduce both their pretensions and their limitations.

So brief a review cannot do justice to the depth and daring of this creatively thoughtful essay. To it is appended not only a very useful survey of source material and 80 valuable footnotes, but also four highly interesting appendices, geographical, statistical and one listing over 50 significant dates.

DR. VICTOR HAYWARD

### From under the Rubble

ed. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Collins Harvill, 308 pp, £3.95.  
*Iz pod Glyb*, YMCA Press, Paris, 276 pp, no price indicated.)

"The phase in which Western Europe and the USA now find themselves is remarkably reminiscent of the 'Nihilist' era in Russia, that is, the period of a hundred years ago." That phase and the accompanying frame of mind led Russia to disaster – and now to a flickering moral recovery. So the Russians can – and must – "point the way out of the labyrinth in which mankind is now lost". At least such is the argument of this remarkable symposium, edited by Solzhenitsyn and written by himself and six other contributors, all but one of them still in the Soviet Union. They are dissidents and, like Solzhenitsyn himself, most of them are members of the Russian Orthodox Church. Mikhail Agursky, whose contributions to *RCL* written before he left the Soviet Union for Israel will be remembered, is a religious Jew who is very close to Christianity.

Their concern is for the future of their beloved Russia, as she comes