

News in Brief

Jesuits in China

Radio Vatican reports that there are still 123 members of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in the People's Republic of China. The Jesuits started missionary work in China as early as the 16th century. The source of the information was a Chinese Jesuit living in exile. (*Idea*, 2 February 1976, p. 3)

Albania and Atheism

Albania "recognizes no religion and supports and develops atheist propaganda for the purpose of implanting the scientific materialist world outlook". This is one of the clauses at present being drafted for the Albanian Constitution. The Constitution appears to confirm that Albania does not intend to change its position on religion. Its position was stated clearly in the famous 1967 declaration which described the country as the first atheist State of the world. According to the Albanian leader, Mr. Enver Hoxha, "the only religion for an Albanian is Albanianism". Nevertheless, not all is as clear-cut as the State might wish. Even in 1967 the anti-religious campaign did not advance without opposition. In a province of central Albania elderly villagers, many of them members of the Communist Party, objected strongly to the conversion of mosques into warehouses. They claimed that the mosque was a house of prayer and to help secularize it was tantamount to raising one's hand against God. In Northern Albania, too, communist campaigners were told that the authorities should distinguish between the removal of politically unreliable Catholic priests

and the fundamental human right to believe in God. Today, foreign religious circles, which keep a close watch on Albania, report that underground religious movements of various denominations still survive. (*The Financial Times*, 17 March 1976, p. 6)

"Religious Survivals" in Albania

References to the survival of religion in Albania were made in an article by Petro Dhimitri which appeared in Tirana *Bashkimi*, the main Albanian Party newspaper, on 30 October 1975. In the "Partizani" district of Vlora a small "temple" was uncovered, in which some people, mostly elderly, gathered for religious activities and to which they also gave money. The "temple" was in fact a house. The son of the owner of the house was singled out as the main culprit because he allowed this group to continue undisturbed. He should have reported his parents' behaviour to the authorities. For failing to do so he was to be reprimanded, not only privately but also at his place of work. At Narta a family organized a religious "memorial" feast. Relatives and local friends gathered for this religious rite but no one took the initiative and complained about this event. The neighbours, who knew about the preparations for the feast, were part of a conspiracy of silence. Such irresponsibility encourages this kind of activity, complains the article. Only because the guests fell ill with food poisoning did the incident come to light. (*JPRS*, 12 December 1975, pp. 1-3)

Roman Catholic Church in Vietnam

One of the two new cardinals named by Pope Paul on 27 April "in pectore" (i.e. in secret) is the Archbishop of Hanoi, Joseph Marie Trin-Nhu-Khue. After the successful consultations with the government of North Vietnam, the Pope announced the appointment of the Cardinal Archbishop of Hanoi, who had arrived in Rome immediately before the consistory. After many years when relations between the Vatican and the Church in Vietnam had been severed, various recent contacts have had a favourable effect on the conditions of the Church in that country.

French TV carried an interview with Archbishop Binh of Saigon, who said that the adjustment of Catholics to the new reality would not develop without some nervousness. Many Christians ask if co-existence is possible with others for whom atheism is not simply a vague principle. The archbishop nevertheless believes that the healing of the wounds of the war, the Second Vatican Council and the important changes in the Church in recent years will make it easier for Vietnamese Catholics to cooperate in a united effort to rebuild the country. The government guarantees freedom of religious cults. Catholics in North Vietnam can practice their faith and have possibilities for deepening it. It is very valuable to have discovered that the Church can still be alive in a socialist country, the archbishop continued. Although the Church remains conscious of the revolutionary nature of Marxism, it must nevertheless insert the Gospel into this new world. It can only do this if it recognizes the value of this world, said the archbishop.

After the unification of North and South Vietnam it appeared that the government in Hanoi was interested in an increasing integration of Catholics into the country. This impression was sustained by the open benevolence with which the government allowed the meeting of the Bishops' Conference of South Vietnam in Saigon and the voyage of the newly appointed Cardinal Trin-Nhu-Khue to Rome.

The solidarity of Christians with their country at the time of the war, the neutral stand of the Vatican during the war, and the international humanitarian

help of the Church to both North and South Vietnam have all contributed to the improvement of the situation of the Church in North Vietnam. At a reception for the new Cardinal Archbishop of Hanoi, President Pham Van Pong welcomed the "positive contribution of Catholics in the war against American aggression and towards the building of socialism". Catholics of North Vietnam are today present in public life. Twenty of the 420 members of the People's Assembly are Catholics, among them two priests. The President of the Red Cross is a well-known Catholic, Dr. Vo Duy Tung. The Presiding Judge of the People's Court in Hanoi, Tanh, and the commanding officer of the People's Army in the province of Ngho-An, Colonel Van Diem, are both Catholics. (AKSA, 4 June 1976.)

Shortage of Catholic Priests in Laos

Bishop Thomas Nantha of Vientiane reported that there are only nine remaining Catholic priests in the North of Laos to minister to more than 23,000 Catholics. One of them has been "deprived for several months now of all liberty", he told the superior general of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Fr. Ferdinand Jett, in Rome. The Bishop added that he believed the people's faith would uphold them despite the removal of foreign missionaries from the country at Easter. (Tablet, 19 June 1976, p. 603)

Churches in East and West Germany Maintain Contact

Catholic and Protestant Churches have served as a conduit for hundreds of millions of dollars in West German payments to the East over the past 15 years, according to a newspaper report based on a series of interviews of clergymen from both sides. Some of the money goes to support negotiations for the release of political prisoners in East Germany, but other amounts help to supplement pastors' salaries or contribute towards the building and technical supplies needed, particularly for the 52 church hospitals in the East. The total sum involved is calculated at 80 million dollars a year. In 1975, 42 million dollars were spent on prisoners alone. Negotiations for the release of prisoners are carried out with the East German Minis-

try of Foreign Trade, which sends a list of goods it wishes to buy in the West via the Evangelical Church of Germany. The operation Director, Bishop Hermann Kunst, then buys the goods with the money offered by the West German government for the release of the prisoners. The Bishop's own mediator is a representative of a Protestant Charity Agency. The Roman Catholic Church in East Germany is said to transfer 14.8 million dollars a year to East Berlin, also through the East German Ministry for Foreign Trade. So, though neither Cardinal Bengsch of East Berlin nor Bishop Schick of Fulda, West Germany, can visit the parts of their diocese which extend into West and East Germany respectively, the latter can still help the former by paying for the buildings, for example, in which the Catholic Primate of East Germany has his headquarters. Funds for new roofing, even a new 400,000 dollar organ for the Cathedral of East Berlin, are other ways in which East and West German Catholics can demonstrate their unity. (*The New York Times*, 4 April 1976, pp. 17-18.)

New Baptist Church for East Berlin

The Bethel Baptist Church (in East Berlin) which has been trying since 1945 to obtain permission to rebuild its house of worship, has finally succeeded. Permission has been given to erect a new structure in a new location. The original building was bombed during the Second World War. In the meantime the congregation has been meeting on the upper floor of a former factory. The new church is planned to seat 300 people. It will have auxiliary rooms for church youth work, women's and children's organizations, and a larger room for conferences and Union meetings. The full cost of the building is estimated at 500,000 marks. Half is to be paid by the Baptist Union in the German Democratic Republic, and the remainder, it is hoped, will be raised from among sister Baptist churches within the European Baptist Federation. This will be the first time that the East German Baptists have asked for assistance from abroad, claims the Union's General Secretary, the Rev. Rolf Damman. (*European Baptist Press Service*, 31 March 1976, p. 3.)

East German Church League's Statement on Zionism

Leading clerics of the member churches of the German Democratic Republic Church League have issued a joint statement expressing their "grave concern" at the UN's condemnation of Zionism as racism. Their statement thus opposes the policy of the German Democratic Republic Government and that of the rest of the Eastern Bloc. "However one might judge Zionism in the world, the condemnation of Zionism as racism concerns us greatly", said the church leaders. They draw attention to the period of the Third Reich, when the Germans denied the right of the Jewish people to exist, and they point out that their Churches have always supported the ecumenical anti-racism programme. Among the church leaders who signed the joint statement are Bishops Schoenherr, Braecklein and Krusche. (*Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 3 December 1976, p. 5.)

New Appointments in Hungarian Catholic Church

For the first time since the communist government came to power in Hungary, all 11 Hungarian Catholic dioceses are now filled. Bishop Kornel Pataky was appointed to the see of Győr, and Fr. László Toth was made auxiliary Bishop of Veszprém. This completes the hierarchy of the Hungarian Catholic Church and is seen as a result of Archbishop Luigi Poggi's visit to Budapest earlier this year. The Archbishop acted as the official of the Vatican Council for the Public Business of the Church. (*Tablet*, 1 May 1976, p. 437.)

Hungarian Bible Printed

On 15 December 1975 the new Hungarian Bible, commissioned by the Hungarian Bible Council, was issued. The press department of the Reformed Church was responsible for this first edition of 30,000 copies. One third of the Bibles have been dispatched to the various parts of the country. The United Bible Societies supported the project by supplying 35 tons of paper. The Chairman of the Hungarian Bible Council, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Tibor Bartha, thanked the UBS secretary, the Rev. Ulrich Fick, for the United Bible Societies' help. The trans-

lation took 25 years to complete. (*The National Bible Society of Scotland, Bulletin* No. 24, March 1976.)

Meeting of Bible Societies

A meeting of representatives of all Central and East European Bible societies was held on 22 September 1975 at Klosterneuberg near Vienna. Dr. Adalbert Rebic, professor of Bible studies at the Zagreb Theological Faculty represented Yugoslavia. He spoke of the translation, publication and distribution of Bibles in Yugoslavia. (AKSA, 3 October 1975.)

Statistics for Ljubljana Archdiocese (Yugoslavia)

The official gazette of the Ljubljana archbishop has published the following figures for the archdiocese:

Children in primary school, 90,000; those receiving religious instruction, 63,000 (70%); those going regularly to mass, 46,000 (51%); pre-school children at religious instruction, 3,650 (35%). (AKSA, 16 January 1976.)

Superior of Monastery in Yugoslavia Imprisoned

Oslobodjenje of Sarajevo, 5 March 1976, reports that Fr. Miroslav Cvitkovic, Superior of the Franciscan monastery at Plehana, has been sentenced to six years in prison for hostile propaganda by the court at Doboj. According to the paper he made a number of journeys between 1968 and November 1975 to several Western countries where he met members of the "Croatian Freedom Movement" and their leaders. From them he obtained literature of a hostile nature and instructions for hostile activities within Yugoslavia. (AKSA 5 March 1976.)

Vatican's "Ostpolitik" Defended

The journalist and historian Hansjacob Stehle, representative in Rome of the North German and West German radios and author of *The Vatican's Ostpolitik* which appeared in 1975 (see the review in this issue p. 32) said in a lecture in Munich that some of the credit for the improvement in the religious atmosphere in East European countries can be attributed to the Vatican's diplomacy. The alternative to the policy of the Holy

See towards countries where a communist government is in power is not martyrdom and the catacombs. No pope is authorized to hand over believers to martyrdom; this is not a principle of the Church and the catacombs were never "a great spiritual lodging house" least of all for Catholics. The Holy See directs its diplomacy according to the situation in individual countries. There are different approaches, for example, to Hungary and to Czechoslovakia. The Holy See's diplomacy is elastic and not based on the principle of "all or nothing". Stehle discusses the eagerness of the Vatican to fill vacant sees: the re-establishment and nurture of the Church's structure is the principal task of the diplomacy of the Holy See. It begins with partial solutions which lead towards global solutions, and priority is always given to relations with the Soviet Union. Thus the Holy See took part in the Helsinki Conference on the basis that the "cold war" is harmful to the Church. (AKSA, 23 April 1976.)

Visit of Cardinal König to Polish Primate

Last year Cardinal König visited Cardinal Wyszyński, and had talks with Polish bishops concerning the possibility of inviting still more Polish priests to work in Austria. There has been a big increase in young priests in Poland. More of them are interested in this new field of work. The visit of Cardinal König to the Polish Church was to coordinate the need of the Austrian Church for Polish priests and the offers of Polish priests to serve in Austria. (AKSA, 12 September 1975.)

Police Demolish Polish Chapel

On 10 April this year more than a hundred policemen with dogs attacked Catholics who were building a makeshift chapel in the village of Gorki, 13 miles north-west of Warsaw. They then pulled down the building, which was being constructed without official permission (the nearest church was some distance away). Cardinal Wyszyński denounced the incident in his Easter sermon, but said that he prayed for those who had shown such "brutality". Incidents of this kind were common before Gomulka was replaced in 1971, but have

been rare in recent times. (*Keston News Service* No. 20).

Kremlin Crackdown on Georgia

A decree of the Central Committee (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) has ordered a campaign against ideological deviation, corruption and nationalism in Georgia. The decree claimed that some progress had been made since the Central Committee condemned the state of Party and government administration in 1972. The first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, Vasili Mzhavanadze, was subsequently removed. The recent decree included amongst Georgia's shortcomings "philistine, petty bourgeois thinking, money-grubbing, manifestations of nationalism, outdated and harmful customs and *religious prejudices*" (our italics). (*International Herald Tribune*, 29 June 1976.)

Georgian Detained in Moscow

The Georgian writer and human rights campaigner, Dr. Zviad Gamsakhurdia (see his letter and photograph in *RCL* Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 49-50) was detained recently by the KGB in Moscow. He was accused of knocking over an old woman as he ran through a subway. After being held for four hours, he had books, films and written notes confiscated. (*International Herald Tribune*, 29 June 1976.)

Tverdokhlebov's Appeal Dismissed

On 12 May 1976 a Moscow court dismissed an appeal by Andrei Tverdokhlebov against a sentence of five years' internal exile for "slandering the Soviet State". The hearing took place in the absence of Tverdokhlebov and his lawyer. Andrei Tverdokhlebov, secretary of the Moscow branch of Amnesty International, was sentenced in April. One of the charges brought against him was that he had defended Leonid Plyushch and Viktor Fainberg, former prisoners in psychiatric hospitals, both of whom are now in the West. While in Lefortovo prison, Moscow, pending trial, Tverdokhlebov, an Orthodox believer, was refused the ministrations of a priest. Vladimir Albrekht, a Roman Catholic, has appealed to Patriarch Pimen for help and prayer on behalf of Tverdokhlebov (see DS/1975/0/50 and DS/1975/0/49).

(*The Times*, 13 May 1976, p. 9 and *Russkaya Mysl*, 29 April 1976, p. 5.)

Orthodox Christian in Psychiatric Hospital

Anatoli Dmitrievich Ponomaryov, a Russian Orthodox Christian, was recently arrested and placed in Civil Mental Hospital No. 3 in Leningrad (Department No. 8 for severely disturbed cases). This is the third time he has been put in a psychiatric hospital. Ponomaryov has appealed for permission to emigrate to the West, since he is unable to get work in Russia.

New Russian Theological Publication

The 13th volume of *Bogoslovskiye trudy* (Theological Works) has been published by the Moscow Patriarchate. It is dedicated to the 75th birthday of Nikolai Uspensky, Doctor of Church History, Professor at the Theological Academy in Leningrad, a connoisseur of Russian Liturgical music. The volume comprises an article on Professor Uspensky and some of his theological works. (Tass radio broadcast in English, 9 February 1976.)

Demonstration for Georgi Vins

On 8 May 1976 an estimated 6,000-8,000 Christians from the British Isles demonstrated in London for the release of Georgi Vins. The demonstration took the form of a rally in Hyde Park, followed by a march through the West End of London to Westminster. Whilst the marchers headed for Downing Street, a delegation from the rally visited the Soviet Embassy to present a petition for the release of Vins, which had been signed by 280,000 people. A Conservative Member of Parliament, Mr. Michael Alison, led the delegation to the Embassy. An officer of the Embassy, however, refused to accept the petition. He said that it would have to be sent to the Embassy by post. Mr. Alison complained that such a refusal was an affront to a Member of Parliament and said that he would write to the Foreign Secretary asking him to make representations about the Soviet Embassy's discourtesy. The rally was one of 13 similar rallies organized by Christian Prisoners' Release International.