

of cautious optimism and hope. A theological seminary – officially described as “Courses of Biblical Study” – was established in Leningrad in 1925 to offset the loss of the theological faculty at the University of Tartu in Estonia which became inaccessible after Estonia had declared its independence.

Then years later, the situation had changed out of all recognition. Ideological and financial pressures, an almost total loss of communication between the Church Council in Moscow and the provincial churches, internal quarrels and splits within the Church itself, increasingly frequent closures of churches and arrests of the clergy – all this led the sole surviving Bishop Malmgren to express the opinion in 1934 that the Lutheran Church in Russia had practically ceased to exist as an organized Church. In 1934 the Leningrad seminary was closed down. By 1936 there were only eight active Lutheran pastors in the whole country. Bishop Malmgren himself left the Soviet Union for Germany also in 1936. In 1938 the last remaining Lutheran church in Moscow was closed down. The collapse was unexpectedly swift. It did not mean the end of all religious life for Evangelical Lutherans in Russia, but it forced them to seek new ways of preserving their faith. Often they did this by establishing closer links with other communities of Evangelical Christians. Dr. Paul Hansen, European Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, who visited the Soviet Union in 1976, reported that hundreds of Protestant congregations in Soviet Central Asia and Siberia – German-speaking Lutherans, Reformed, Brethren and Mennonites – lead an active church life without “explicit dogmatic theology, definite church order, clergy and outward organization”. To read Wilhelm Kahle’s story without this postscript is a profoundly depressing experience.

JANIS SAPIETS

### Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR: Their Treatment and Conditions

Amnesty International Report, A. I. Publications (53 Theobald’s Road, London, W.C.1) 1975, 154 pp., £1.00

This report is a pioneering attempt to study the fate of political and religious prisoners in the USSR by splicing together evidence from official and unofficial sources. The result is convincing. When carefully analyzed, the official sources reveal precisely the same laws, regulations, and official attitudes which appear and re-appear so regularly in the voluminous materials of *samizdat*.

There were previously, of course, many reasons for believing in the accuracy and reliability of *samizdat* information about prisoners. Documents could in many cases be checked against each other, or against the oral or written testimony of prisoners' friends and relatives; moreover, the victims themselves could sometimes be cross-examined in person after their release, either by visitors to the USSR, or after their emigration to the West. But now the general picture is confirmed from a different angle more systematically than ever before: by a penetrating analysis of the basic legal texts and other official sources, and by the skilful interweaving of this analysis with material from *samizdat*.

The approach is mainly a legal one: it measures Soviet practices against Soviet legal theory and also against international norms such as the UN's "Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners", adopted in 1957. While to a considerable extent Soviet practices are found to accord with inhumane and intolerant legal acts, the latter often conflict with more liberal legal acts (to which religious believers and dissenters appeal, but usually in vain). In addition, the authorities often go beyond the law, and Amnesty knows of no cases when they have been prosecuted for doing so, even though laws for the purpose exist.

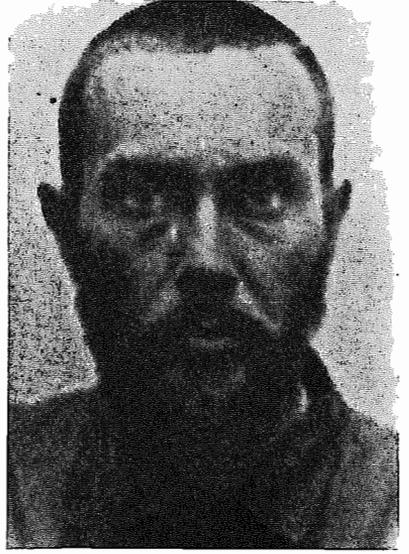
Religious prisoners feature prominently in the report. The case of the Baptist Yakov Pavlov is presented in detail, and those of Georgi Vins and Gennadi Kryuchkov are also discussed. When analyzing the application of Art. 227 of the Criminal Code, the author examines the case of the Buddhist group headed by Bidiya Dandaron\*, which was broken up by the KGB in 1972. This article penalizes "infringements of citizens' rights carried out under the guise of religious activity", and is so elastic that it could, if necessary, be used against virtually any religious community.

Once sentenced, believers face further discrimination in the forced labour camps and prisons. Here, no religious activity of any sort is permitted: no services, no prayer-meetings, no visits from ministers or priests, no religious literature, no Bible. Even individual prayer is often harassed unless it is practised so discreetly that it is not observed. Resistance to many of these restrictions is often strong, and the protesters point out that many of the regulations which allegedly sanction them are secret, unpublished, and therefore illegal.

Forty pages of the report are devoted to the practice of forcibly internment dissenters in mental hospitals. Here the case of the neo-slavophil Orthodox layman, Gennadi Shimanov (see RCL No. 3, 1976) is examined. The author quotes the exhortations of the psychiatrist in charge of him:

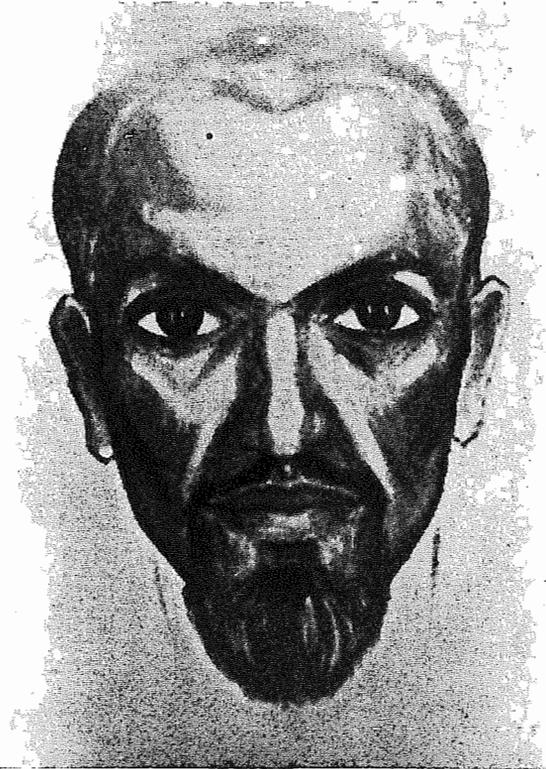
Everything that you just told us confirms us in the view that illness lies at the root of your "conversion". . . . If you had grown up in a

\* See RCL Vol 1, No. 4-5, pp. 43-47, for more information about this case. Ed.



Nikolai Ivanov (above left), Yevgeni Vagin (above right) and Mikhail Sado helped organize the All-Russian Social-Christian Union for the Liberation of the People (VSKhSON). The photograph of Vagin was taken in a labour camp. (See review article pp. 23-26.) A photograph of VSKhSON's leader, Igor Ogurtsov, appeared in *RCL* Vol. 4, No. 3.

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Leonid Borodin, another leader of VSKhSON. Above he is seen with his wife, Larissa Simanovich, in Siberia (Summer 1974). © Keston College

religious family or had lived somewhere in the West, well, then we could have looked at your religiousness in another way. But you were brought up in a family of non-believers. You are an educated person. . . . And suddenly – wham! – you're religious . . . ! It's very odd indeed.

While Amnesty was preparing the report it was also conducting informal discussions about its work and aims with official Soviet lawyers. In this connection it sent a draft of the report to Moscow and asked for comments and corrections. These would be considered for inclusion in the final text. Eventually Lev Smirnov, the president of the Soviet Lawyers' Association, replied. His letter, reproduced in facsimile in the report, foreshadowed the inevitable end of Amnesty's efforts to establish a fruitful dialogue :

In connection with your letter dated 15 April and so-called "Report of Conditions of Detention of Prisoners of Conscience", we would like to acknowledge you that we are not eager to discuss about what you call a book and that is vulgar falsification and defamation on Soviet reality and socialist legitimacy.

*Pace* Mr. Smirnov, the report is in fact the most valuable available source for readers who want to understand the mechanisms by which religious and political prisoners are punished for their beliefs in the USSR.

PETER REDDAWAY

## Marxism and the Church of Rome

by Hervé Leclerc, Conflict Studies (Institute for the Study of Conflict)

No. 45, 1974, 13 pp., £1.00.

The idea of the Church of Rome being "subverted from within" by highly-placed ecclesiastical figures (including several eminent cardinals and possibly even the Pope himself) will sound far-fetched to many of us. Nevertheless, when we are promised – as Brian Crozier promises in his editorial note – "arguments powerfully supported by research and documentation", then we are bound to take note.

I have to say quite frankly, however, that I neither found the arguments powerful nor the research very convincing. Hervé Leclerc (which is a pseudonym for a French correspondent accredited to the Vatican) sets out to demonstrate that the Catholic Church has to a dangerous degree been penetrated by "the principles of historical materialism and Marxist-Leninist subversion". To identify the roots of this process he goes back to the French Revolution, and then traces its development