

For the Record

YUGOSLAVIA

Stambolic Receives Serbian Orthodox Patriarch

The President of the Serbian Executive Council, Ivan Stambolic, gave a dinner in honour of Patriarch German and members of the Assembly of Serbian Orthodox Bishops at the end of their assembly. A positive assessment of State and Orthodox Church relations was made in the toasts exchanged by Stambolic and Patriarch German (Tanjug, 1444 GMT, 19 May 1979)

HUNGARY

Foreign Church Leaders Meet State Official

A conference organized to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the death of the Hungarian Reformation figure, Ferenc David, brought foreign church leaders to the country. Imre Miklos, Chairman of the State Office for Church Affairs, met several of them including Professor George Williams of Harvard University, and Lajos Kovacs, Bishop of the Romanian Unitarian Episcopate. Hungarian Unitarian Church leaders were also present at the meeting. (Budapest Home Service, 1600 GMT, 21 May 1979)

POLAND

1,064 Polish Missionaries Overseas

Fr Antoni Koszorz, the director of the Polish bishops' mission bureau, reported that 383 Poles have entered missionary service in the last five years. There were

76 new missionaries sent out in 1974, 68 in 1975, 93 in 1976, 53 in 1977 and 93 in 1978. This brought the total number of Polish missionaries overseas to 1,064.

Of the 93 missionaries sent overseas in 1978, 54 were priests from orders, nine were diocesan priests, four were clerics, 25 were nuns and one was a monk. Among the 54 priests from orders there were 16 Verbists, seven Salesians, five Salvatorians, five members of the Order of the Resurrection, and four members of the Order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The diocesan priests came from Katowice (3), Przemysl (2), Lublin, Bialystok, Krakow and Włocławek. These new missionaries were sent to New Guinea (5), Australia (5), Japan (8), Africa (8) and Latin America (32). (*Berliner Kirchenreport*, 13 March 1979)

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Catholic is New Charter 77 Spokesman

On 8 February 1979 Vaclav Benda, a Catholic with a doctorate in philosophy and a degree in mathematics, was named as one of the three new Charter 77 spokesmen. Aged 33, he is married with five children. As he is not permitted to hold a post commensurate with his qualifications because of his religious and political views, he works as a stoker in a hotel. In addition to being a Charter 77 spokesman he is a member of the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted (CDUP). A statement issued by the Committee reported that on 12 March 1979 Benda and his wife were charged

with "subversion of the republic". Their flat was searched, books, private letters and Charter 77 documents were confiscated and Mrs Benda was interrogated for four hours. On 14 March the police returned to raid the flat again, after which a group of men arrived with cameras, re-arranged the furniture, planted a number of objects and documents around the flat and then filmed it all while the family watched helplessly. It is now very common for Charter 77 signatories, especially Charter spokesmen, to be subjected to this sort of harassment. (Charter 77 statement of 8 February 1979; CDUP statement No. 86 of 15 March 1979)

Cardinal Tomašek Visits Austria

The Austrian head of state, Mr Kirchschläger, unexpectedly paid a private visit to the Archbishop of Prague, Cardinal Tomašek, on 12 March, while on an official visit to Czechoslovakia. Mr Kirchschläger personally invited the cardinal to Salzburg for the May festivities to mark the 250th anniversary of the canonization of St John of Nepomucene, patron saint of Bohemia. However, on 9 May, two days before he planned to leave for Austria, Cardinal Tomašek was informed by the Czechoslovak authorities that he would not be permitted to make the trip. The Austrian Foreign Minister immediately summoned the Czechoslovak ambassador in Vienna and gave him a message for his government, in which it was pointed out that the cardinal's participation in a "purely religious festival" could only help to foster good relations between the two countries. Following this intervention the Czech government relented, saying that the cancellation had been the result of "misunderstandings". Cardinal Tomašek arrived in Austria on 11 May for a three-day visit, during which he was to have meetings with Mr Kirchschläger and Cardinal König. When journalists questioned him as to whether he would discuss the cases of individual dissidents at these meetings, Cardinal Tomašek replied that he "had no intention of doing so at the moment". Asked if the Pope's visit to Poland could have a beneficial influence on the situation of the Roman Catholic Church in Eastern Europe, he merely

said, "I hope so". (*Le Monde*, 11 and 12 May 1979)

Catholic is Victim of Psychiatric Abuse

In 1976 two psychiatrists who defected from Czechoslovakia reported that there was an increasing tendency in the psychiatric establishment there towards the bizarre theories of Dr Snejnevsky, the Soviet psychiatrist, according to which political dissenters and religious believers may be diagnosed as schizophrenic even when no symptoms of mental disorder are observed. The case of Augustin Navratil, a 45-year-old Catholic from Kromeriz in Moravia, is further evidence of this alarming trend. In the autumn of 1977 Navratil, who was a local councillor for the (Catholic) People's Party under the Dubcek regime and has since worked as a railway signal-box guard, received from Prague a petition calling for religious freedom. He revised it somewhat, adding even stronger demands, and with the help of another Catholic, Jan Pavliček, collected 11 signatures under the petition. The two then sent it to Cardinal Tomašek, who forwarded it to the authorities as requested. In January 1978 Navratil and Pavliček were charged with "incitement against the socialist order" for alleging that the State infringed believers' rights, for showing the petition to a number of citizens and for collecting signatures. Pavliček was sentenced without trial to eight months imprisonment on 27 October 1978. After appealing several times against this decision, he was ordered by the court to start serving his sentence on 6 February 1979. Navratil, however, was not sentenced but sent to Kromeriz psychiatric hospital for examination. The doctor's report, described by a British scientist as "pseudo-scientific gobbledegook", includes ludicrous phrases such as "hysterical self-stylization towards the ideal of a strong leading personality and with a strong moral responsibility which the subject understands as 'fidelity to his principles' and an inability to adapt to an adequate view of social reality". Having been found unfit to stand trial, Navratil, a father of nine children, was formally committed for treatment at the hospital.

BULGARIA

New Funeral Rites Introduced

The main function of the "Civic Rituals" service of the Bourgas town council is the creation and introduction of new festivals and rituals which, it is hoped, will create a materialistic world-view in the population while entering into their joys and sorrows. The new funeral rites are an example of this.

The writer Hristo Panayotov, a specialist in funeral rites, states that sorrow at someone's death drives some people to seek refuge in religion. The mystical character of church funerals, rooted in people's lives over thousands of years, can have a negative influence on certain sections of the population. The socialist funeral rites, both in form and content, are designed to counteract this and categorically oppose mysticism. They consist of a telegram of sympathy sent to the deceased's family by the town council and a speech dealing with the deceased's life and work, prepared and delivered by a member of the council or by the head of the deceased's place of work.

Introducing the new ritual was difficult because people preferred the church funeral especially as it was often the deceased's last wish. But things have been improving: for example, between 1 January and 30 June 1978, out of 590 people who died, 230 had civic funerals.

Attempts are being made to counteract the religious phraseology of funerals. For example, instead of saying "May God forgive (him)" – an expression which cannot be used by those with a materialistic outlook – people are urged to say "May he always be remembered" or something similar.

The funeral feasts of ancient times taken over by Christianity should now be replaced by a snack and a drink – this is sufficient and enables the family not to be alone at a difficult time. (*Chernomorski Front*, 17 October 1978, p. 4)

Atheist Education in Schools

Various forms of atheist activity have been introduced into the schools of the Bourgas region by the regional committee of the Komsomol, the education department and the Bourgas Regional Centre for Socialist Life and Culture.

These include weekly lectures by teachers, and extra-curricular activities such as conferences, question-and-answer evenings and atheist exhibitions.

This year members of "Young Atheist" clubs took part in a competition for the best atheistic drawing or caricature. The best entries were displayed in the Regional Youth Centre and in the foyer of a local cinema. Although certain schools are praised for turning their clubs into "true centres of atheist activity", the article which appeared in the local Bourgas newspaper claims that the clubs are not being used enough. More attention should be given to pupils who are "to a greater or lesser extent under the influence of religion". They need to be given a "scientific outlook" and a "sense of pride in the atheist traditions of our people".

A series of special seminars was held to provide teachers with training in atheism. The main task for the year ahead is to strengthen the "Young Atheist" clubs to make them "schools for the training of active atheists, able to carry out their own atheist work among both their peers and their elders". (*Chernomorski Front*, 27 October 1978)

EAST GERMANY

State to Provide Pensions

The East German government has approved the Protestant Churches' proposal that the State should include church employees in its pension scheme. Manfred Stolpe, head of the Secretariat of the Federation of Protestant Churches, reported to the Görlitz synod that this had been promised by the state Secretary for Employment and Salaries. The arrangement was first agreed on 6 March 1978 with Erich Honecker. (*Berliner Kirchenreport*, 5 April 1979)

Report from Görlitz Diocese

A written report presented by church leaders in Görlitz diocese to the Görlitz synod on 30 March, asserted that gross discrimination and prejudice against Christian children in East German schools is a rare occurrence. This was attributed in particular to the agreement reached last March between the Church

and the State. The report further stated that no particular difficulties had been encountered in pastoral work with church members who were in state hospitals and nursing homes. In fact, since the church-state agreement pastors had been able to visit patients outside official visiting hours. However, there were problems about holding regular services in some state institutions. The report added that the State had again approved a chaplain for Görlitz prison. (*Berliner Kirchenreport*, 5 April 1979)

Building Project Approved

The East German Council of Ministers approved a second list submitted by the Protestant Churches for building new churches in recently developed areas and towns. Nine building projects were approved in 1977 and there are another ten on the second list. (*Berliner Kirchen-report*, 5 April 1979)

Invitation to Dresden

The Federation of Protestant Churches in East Germany has invited the central committee of the WCC to hold its annual conference in Dresden in 1981. Bishop Johannes Hempel of Saxony, a member of the central committee, extended the invitation to the General Secretary of the WCC at its last meeting in Jamaica. The invitation was accepted.

In an interview which appeared in the East German church bulletin *Der Sonntag (Sunday)*, Bishop Hempel said that there were two main reasons for the invitation:

"On the one hand we wish to support the work of the WCC; we hope to be able to bear a considerable part of the cost. The second reason is the resulting opportunity to exchange information and have personal contact with Christians from other countries. Our churches have an understandable hunger for information. We believe this can be satisfied to some extent by face to face discussions with church representatives from other continents."

Bishop Hempel made clear, however, that the invitation had yet to be discussed with the local authorities. (*Evangelischer Nachrichtendienst*, 14 February 1979)

New Appointment

Lutz Borgmann has been appointed producer of radio and television broadcasts by the conference of Protestant church leaders in East Germany. He was formerly head of the press and information office of the Federation of Protestant Churches. (*Berliner Kirchenreport*, 27 March 1979)

Dr Coggan Visits East Berlin and Hungary

Dr Coggan's twelve-day visit to Hungary via East Berlin (24 May-4 June) took him to a synagogue in Budapest; Esztergom, Hungary's Catholic centre; and Karlshorst, the Soviet military headquarters for East Germany, where he preached a Whit Sunday sermon in the Lutheran Church of the Good News. Dr Coggan found the Christian churches thriving and commented that, while there could be no agreement on questions of ideology and belief, he felt that church-state relations were improving in areas such as social issues. The Archbishop further commented that East European governments were realizing that the Church could not be exterminated. (*The Daily Telegraph*, 4 and 5 June 1979 and *The Sunday Telegraph*, 27 May 1979)

ROMANIA

Release of Religious Believers

A number of Romanian religious believers imprisoned over the past six months have been released early. Petru Cocirteu was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment in connection with the troubles at the Caransebes Baptist Church on 15 October. He was released on 15 April. Ionel Prejban has also been freed. He served most of his eight month sentence.

In Mediaș, where nine people were arrested in connection with an unauthorised Pentecostal meeting led by Ioan Samu, three have now been released. Ioan Samu, Franciss Paris and Viorel Lacatus served their full initial sentences of six months, though there has been confusion in the West over the question of their sentences having been lengthened at an appeal hearing held in

January. Ironically the other six still in prison, and expected out on 21 July, were originally sentenced for a disturbance during the appeal of the three released Pentecostals.

Church to be Demolished

Vasile Talos, pastor of the Mihai Bravu Church in Bucharest and overseer of the Ploiesti Baptist Church, is under pressure from the Baptist Union in Romania because of his support for the Christian Committee for the Defence of Religious Freedom, and for its founder Pavel Nicolescu. The Mihai Bravu Church with over 600 members is to be demolished in the autumn. (*Christianity Today*, 25 May 1979 p. 49)

SOVIET UNION

Christian Seminar

On 26 February 1979 three members of the Christian seminar, founded nearly five years ago by Alexander Ogorodnikov, appealed to A. S. Plekhanov, Council of Religious Affairs representative for Moscow, concerning the continuing discrimination against Orthodox Christians. On 10 January 1979 Alexander Ogorodnikov was sentenced to one year in camp on a charge of parasitism. Years of persecution preceded this. The writers say he is threatened with a new sentence. A meeting of the Christian seminar was forcibly broken up by militia on 10 February 1979, and an older participant, T. N. Shchipkova, threatened with legal proceedings. Religious literature was confiscated, including six copies of their journal *Obshchina* (*Community*) which is a testimony to their spiritual path. The militia regretted that they could not apply more drastic measures, declaring that the policies of the Party were directed at the destruction of religion.

Orthodox Believer Released from Psychiatric Hospital

Alexander Kuzkin was released from Moscow Regional Hospital No. 5 (at Abramtsevo) on 2 March 1979 after four months' hospitalization. Kuzkin was not subjected to treatment during the latter part of his confinement.

In December the head doctor of De-

partment 4 of the hospital complained to Kuzkin that "somebody was fighting for his release", and that "Deutsche Welle" radio had mentioned Kuzkin. He also told Kuzkin that the length of his sentence did not depend either on him (the head of the Department) or on the head doctor of the hospital. (*Bulletins Nos. 14 & 15 of the Working Commission to Investigate the Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes*)

Orthodox Nun in Psychiatric Hospital

Valeriya Makeeva, a 50-year-old Orthodox nun, was sentenced on 12 April 1979 to indefinite confinement in a psychiatric institution for the criminally insane. She was charged with engaging in illegal production of handicrafts - embroidering monastic belts with words from Psalm 91 and selling them to believers for sums ranging from 50 kopecks to one rouble (c. 35-70 pence). She used the money to help nuns whose convents had been disbanded (as hers had been), and to help needy Christians. Following her arrest on 15 June 1978, Makeeva underwent psychiatric examination at the Serbsky Institute of Forensic Psychiatry in Moscow from 18 September to 8 December. She was classified as psychopathic with personality change, and the psychiatrists recommended forced treatment in a Special Psychiatric Hospital. Makeeva has already spent two periods in psychiatric hospitals, the first time for four years from 1949 when she feigned mental illness to avoid a long sentence in the Stalinist concentration camps for her religious activities. In 1972 she was interned for seven months in Psychiatric Hospital No. 5 in Moscow.

Makeeva is considered to be in good mental health by relatives and acquaintances (including psychiatrists), although her physical health is extremely poor. The Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in the USSR has appealed to Christians of all denominations, especially Orthodox and Catholic nuns, to come to the support of Makeeva. (*Bulletin No. 15 of the Working Commission to Investigate the Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes. Document of the Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights*, 24 April 1979)

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