

News in Brief

ALBANIA

Roman Catholic Bishop Re-arrested

Ernesto Coba, the elderly Roman Catholic bishop, was believed to be living quietly with his family since his release from prison (date unknown). However, a refugee reported in autumn 1979 that he had been re-arrested in about 1975 on unknown charges. His family did not know where he was imprisoned, or even whether he was still alive. Nothing is known about Nikolle Troshani, the only other surviving Catholic bishop.

The Albanian authorities claim that people are free to worship privately in their own homes with no worse consequences than the disapproval of their neighbours. But Radio Tirana's complaints over the last few years that "reactionary elements" have been continuing to meet for prayer and that the neighbours have failed to take action, suggest that dire consequences threaten active members of a Church which is not entirely dead. (*Keston News Service*, No. 85, 8 November 1979)

Restoration of Byzantine Churches

Visitors to the excavations at Kruje and the Durres amphitheatre report that Byzantine churches on these sites are being restored. They will be open only as museums. Religious and political repression in Albania remains so acute that even when talking alone with a foreigner in the open air, Albanians are usually afraid to admit that any Albanians still believe in God.

BULGARIA

Day of Remembrance Introduced in Burgas
The Burgas local paper *Chernomorski*

Front announced on 26 October 1979 that a Day of Remembrance for the dead would be held in the town on 3 November. The newspaper interviewed Boris Tumangelov, a member of the National Committee for the Introduction of New Rituals, and D. Ilchev, chairman of the committee which is making preparations for the Day of Remembrance. Tumangelov stated that the new ritual would replace the religious (Orthodox) days of remembrance which exploit human grief. Ilchev mentioned the new "House of the Deceased" in Burgas, where almost all funerals had been held since May 1979. He added that socialist "commemorations" of individuals were replacing Orthodox memorial services and were already an established tradition. New funeral rites were introduced in the Burgas region last year (see *Chernomorski Front*, 17 October 1978, and *RCL*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1979, p. 198).

The Day of Remembrance is the latest step in an intensified campaign of atheist education which has been organized in the Burgas region for the last 18 months, and which is combating the growing influence of Christianity, particularly among young people.

Church Supports Disarmament

On 20 June 1979 Metropolitan Pankraty of Stara Zagora made a speech at a National Conference on Détente in Europe which was held in Sofia. His speech was a general statement in favour of détente and disarmament, with special reference to the efforts of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries to achieve these goals. Metropolitan Pankraty concluded by saying that the Church was informing its members about these subjects. (*Tsurkoven Vestnik*, 11 July 1979)

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Secretly Ordained Priest Dies in Prison in Slovakia

A reliable source has reported the death of Fr Milan Gono, who died in Bratislava prison on 20 or 21 July 1979 while awaiting trial. He died, it was officially stated, after falling from some scaffolding.

According to the Slovak report, Fr Gono was secretly ordained by the late Cardinal Trochta (d. 1974). He was arrested in Trnava in March 1979 for "theft of socialist property", although a search of both his and his parents' homes provided no evidence to substantiate the charge. After three months of detention a new charge was levelled against him—sexual misconduct. During the trial an elderly nun and another secretly ordained priest were forced to give details about Fr Gono's pastoral activities. Fr Gono admitted that he had been secretly ordained by the Cardinal (whom the prosecutor castigated as "the dregs of humanity") and stated that he would never renounce his priestly calling. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for "obstructing state supervision of the Church" (Art. 178 of the Penal Code). An appeal was lodged against this sentence, and a new trial was set for 26 July 1979.

Fr Gono's body was given to his parents for burial on condition that he was not buried as a priest or in clerical vestments. The post-mortem examination showed extensive injuries and facial wounds. His parents managed to contact a close friend of the prison warden who was held responsible for the "accident". The warden maintained that Fr Gono was already dead at 8 a.m. on 21 July, having died under interrogation when the authorities tried to make him divulge the names of other secretly ordained priests. This claim was corroborated by the doctor who examined Fr Gono's body: he stated privately that the priest was already dead when his body fell from the scaffolding. (*Pro Fratribus*, No. 31, 1980, pp. 7-10)

Bishop Jan Korec Interrogated

At the end of July 1979 the Slovak bishop Jan Korec SJ was summoned to police headquarters in Bratislava to explain the publicity constantly given to him in the western press, and its allegations that he is being harassed. With his usual bluntness the bishop answered that he could not keep

silent about the regular summonses to the police station for interrogation "lest people began to think he was a secret police major". Replying to charges of "illegal pastoral activities", he made it clear that to regard a meeting of people who had assembled for prayer as "illegal" was totally unacceptable. When pressed to explain why and how he had received religious books from abroad, Korec simply replied that if religious literature were published freely in Slovakia, he would not need to get it from abroad. The police tried unsuccessfully to force him to deny the western reports and to divulge the names of people who went to Poland without passports for the Pope's visit in June. The interrogators closed the meeting by offering the bishop a remote parish in the mountains. He declined it on the same grounds as in 1976, when a similar offer was made to him: "I would accept it if all Slovak priests who have been denied their ministry were re-instated as well."

Bishop Jan Chrysostom Korec is regarded in Slovakia as a Christian hero. His life of courage and suffering epitomizes the fate of the Slovak Catholic Church. He studied theology at the Uniate Theological Seminary and was secretly ordained a priest after its closure in 1950. In 1951, at the height of the Stalinist terror, he was secretly consecrated a bishop (at the age of only 27). This was discovered in 1960 and he was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment, during which he contracted tuberculosis. Released and rehabilitated during the Prague Spring in 1968, he was sentenced in 1974 to serve the remainder of his original prison term. However, this sentence was mitigated due to his bad health and his fame abroad. Since then he has worked as a railway porter, store-keeper and maintenance mechanic. In 1976 the government tried to expel the bishop from Czechoslovakia, but the Vatican did not accept its proposal for transferring him. Since then he has been under constant police surveillance and regularly harassed in attempts to persuade him to leave Bratislava for the countryside. (*Hlas z Rima*, November 1979)

New Charter 77 Spokesman

On 1 January 1980 Miloš Rejchrt (33), a pastor of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, was nominated as one of the three new Charter 77 spokesmen. Ordained in 1970, he was deprived of his state licence

to exercise his pastoral duties in 1972, allegedly because of a paper on Berdyayev's book, *The Origin of Russian Communism*, which he presented at a Protestant clergy conference. In 1971 Rejchrt had persuaded the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren to withdraw from the Prague Christian Peace Conference (CPC), and this was probably the main reason for the removal of his licence.

Since losing his licence he has been able to find work only as a stoker. He is married with two children. Although relatively unknown outside Czechoslovakia, he has written a number of letters criticizing Czech legislation on religion and protesting about violations of human rights (see *RCL*, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 161-2). On 21 January 1978 he wrote a now famous letter to Karoly Toth, General Secretary of the CPC, criticizing him for hypocrisy (see *RCL*, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 171-3):

I reproach you for one thing: that you say "peace, peace" where there is no peace. You claim that here [i.e. in Czechoslovakia] you have no concerns, that you have to go elsewhere to find discrimination. Before the concrete victims of despotism you run away from our place and time into exotic countries, into a different world, as far as the Third World. [. . .] Do not shout "peace, peace" where there is no peace, but rather say that there is a war, a quiet and ruthless war between the powerful and powerless. War about what? The immediate answer is that it is about human rights. No, it is something wider, more extensive and essential, it is war about peace.

Like Václav Benda, his predecessor (a Catholic philosopher sentenced to four years' imprisonment on 23 October 1979: see *RCL* Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 249-51), Rejchrt is not only a spokesman for the whole Charter 77 movement, but is also a representative for the growing number of Christians involved in it.

Czech Catholics Released

Six Czech Catholics, imprisoned since 10 September 1979 and charged with five other men for "illicit trading" (they duplicated and disseminated Catholic *samizdat*, such as the Pope's encyclical and his letter to priests) were released without explanation on 9 January this year. Fr František Lízna SJ collapsed soon after his release,

due to mental exhaustion following four months of imprisonment. He is said to have lost 20 lbs. in weight.

The meeting in Rome from 15 to 21 January between the three Secretaries for Church Affairs in Czechoslovakia and two Vatican negotiators, Archbishops Poggi and Silvestrini, gives some clue to their sudden release. The discussions, mainly on the appointment of new bishops, could not have begun while the Catholics remained in custody, particularly in the light of the Pope's concern over the fate of the eleven accused. One of the eleven was Fr Josef Zvěřina SJ, the most prominent Czech theologian (see his letter in *RCL* Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 48-51). Over 500 people sent an appeal to the Pope from Czechoslovakia in October 1979. A worldwide outcry followed, and Cardinal Hume and Cardinal König were among those who protested. The Czech authorities doubtless hoped to put extra pressure on the Vatican by leaving the charges open: the eleven could be put on trial if the negotiations failed.

But from the outset the negotiations were unlikely to be successful. The view of the Czechoslovak government is that bishops are paid by the State, and so any discussions about episcopal jurisdiction independent of the State are irrelevant. It also regards the nomination of professors and admission of students to the country's only two seminaries as its own prerogative. The stumbling-block in the negotiations over any future appointment of bishops to the nine vacant sees (out of 14 dioceses) is the regime's insistence on appointing Bishop Vrana of Olomouc as the new archbishop. This demand is totally unacceptable to the Vatican. Virtually every protest letter from Czechoslovakia since Bishop Vrana's appointment mentions him unfavourably, and Pope Paul VI came to regard his appointment as one of the greatest errors of Vatican *Ospolitik*.

In view of these major obstacles it is surprising that the Rome meeting took place at all. The German Catholic News Agency (KNA) commented: "It seems that the Czechoslovak government is interested in negotiations with the Vatican only when they feel the pressure of an unstable international situation". Certainly, the uproar in the West over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has been carefully reported by the Czechoslovak press, rather than being dismissed and ignored as a piece of

hysterical western propaganda. (*Katholische Nachrichten Agentur; Keston News Service*, No. 91, 7 February 1980)

Jesuit Priest Fails to Appear in Court

Fr Oskár Formánek SJ (65), accused in February 1979 of having violated the law on state supervision of the Church (Art. 178 of the Penal Code), failed to appear in court on 10 January 1980 on the grounds that he had not received a written statement from the court officially informing him of the charges against him. He has been involved in a protracted dispute with the authorities over illegal celebrations of the Mass and the dissemination of religious literature published abroad. In October 1979 he wrote to the local interrogation office questioning the legality of asking "experts in atheism" to give evidence in court on the subversive nature of religious literature. "Surely, researchers from the department of scientific atheism can hardly be said to be without prejudice?"

Although his co-defendant Mária Kožárová, two atheist professors and most of the 90 or so witnesses appeared, the trial was postponed until 14 February. This is the first time in Czechoslovakia since the communist take-over in 1948 that a priest summoned to appear in court has failed to do so. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 January 1980; *The Tablet*, 26 January 1980; *RCL*, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 80; *Hlas z Rima*, October 1979)

Jesuits Condemn Religious Persecution in Czechoslovakia

The wave of house searches, interrogations and arrests in Czechoslovakia, which followed the Pope's visit to Poland, involved an unusually large number of Jesuits. This prompted the Jesuit headquarters in Rome to issue a statement on 5 February. Expressing their concern over the fate of Fr Oskár Formánek, the Jesuits accused the Czechoslovak authorities of organizing a repressive campaign against priests who show even a minimum of zeal in carrying out their pastoral duties. Priests are not allowed to celebrate the Mass or exercise their ministry outside their parishes. In some ways they cannot even exercise their ministry within their own parish: for example, they are not allowed to visit the faithful freely or to offer religious instruction. If priests do not observe these regulations reprisals follow which include the withdrawal of a priest's

state licence to exercise his ministry. The Jesuits state that the harassing of priests and active laymen has increased gradually over the last three years (since the Charter 77 movement began. *Ed.*) About 400 people were interrogated in that period, and during house searches all religious literature, including the Bible, is being confiscated. (*The Times*, 7 February 1980; *Catholic Herald*, 15 February 1980)

Jewish Museum Loses Publishing Licence

The authorities have withdrawn the publishing licence from the State Jewish Museum of Prague in an attempt to "re-organize" the publication of books on Jewish subjects. The museum was established in 1950 as a "custodian" of the synagogue and other religious treasures of Bohemia and Moravia. In the past the museum has published a number of richly illustrated volumes on the religious and cultural history of Czechoslovak Jewry, mainly in English for distribution in the West. The future of the bi-annual historical series *Judaica Bohemiae*, published by the museum, may be affected by the new move. (*ICJC Newsletter*, Vol. XI, No. 1 (58), 1980, p. 2)

EAST GERMANY

Pastoral Work in Prisons

According to East Germany's penal code, prisoners belonging to a religious association may take part in religious activities if they wish. However, until recently it was an issue which could not be mentioned in the media. Pastoral work in prisons was one of the subjects raised at the church-state discussions in March 1978, and since then various church publications have mentioned this area of service. Erich Honecker, the East German Head of State, expressed willingness to increase the opportunities for pastoral counselling with prisoners. He agreed that prison libraries could in future stock religious books and accept 150 such books per year, which were to be supplied by the churches. Further negotiations since then have resulted in prison chaplains being appointed for at least two dozen prisons. The negotiations applied to ordinary prisons only. Institutions for young offenders, preliminary detention centres, military prisons and institutes of the Ministry for State Security are exempted from the ruling.

There are now 19 pastors engaged in part-time pastoral work in prisons. In addition, one ordained priest from the Berlin-Brandenburg church has been employed as the only full-time prison chaplain for several prisons for the last 30 years and in part receives his salary from the State.

The churches continue to be concerned that prisoners must express their desire for pastoral counselling when they are first interned as later requests are often turned down. Experience has shown that in the past many prisoners either were afraid to make this request when they were first interned or simply did not know that the opportunity existed. Spiritual counselling and religious services with prisoners may only take place under supervision. (*Berliner Kirchenreport*, 3 July 1979, pp. 1-2)

New Supplement to Hymn Book

The Protestant Press in East Berlin has published a supplement to the Protestant hymn book. It was produced jointly by the Council of the Evangelical Church of the Union (EKU) and the leadership of the United Lutheran Evangelical Church. As early as 1974 the Görlitz regional synod requested the EKU synod to produce a collection of modern hymns. The Lutheran churches participated in the work from an early stage so that the supplement, containing 83 songs, can be recommended for use in all the Protestant churches in East Germany. (*Berliner Kirchenreport*, 15 May 1979, p. 3)

Youth Sunday

Approximately 10,000 young Christians from the Thuringian regional church and neighbouring churches in Saxony gathered in Eisenach in June last year to celebrate Youth Sunday, an event organized every three years by the Thuringian church. Bishop Werner Leich held a one-hour forum, answering young people's questions. Military instruction (introduced into East German schools in autumn 1978) was one of the subjects raised. Other questions came up on the use of modern hymns; co-operation with other denominations on a local level; why there is no religious instruction in schools; how young people experiencing difficulties can be helped; whether the Church would comment on trends in modern literature; and how the Church could raise its voice

more clearly in public life. The climax of the day was the celebration of the Eucharist.

Another 800 young people also gathered in Güstrow cathedral on 17 June to celebrate Youth Sunday. There were drama presentations, a short address by the regional youth pastor, a time of open prayer, and a greeting from Archbishop Matulis of the Lutheran Church in Latvia who was visiting East Germany at the time. (*Berliner Kirchenreport*, 4 July 1979, p. 4; *Mecklenburgische Kirchenzeitung*, 24 June 1979—quoted in *BKR*, 10 July 1979, p. 3)

Evangelistic Crusade in Görlitz

Evangelistic meetings were held last year in Görlitz throughout the week 18-24 June. Two West German evangelists were invited as guest speakers—the Rev. Dr Gerhard Bergmann and Wilfried Reuter, Director of the Bible College in Seeheim. The number of people attending the meetings in St Peter's Church varied between 1,700 and 2,500, more than a third of whom were young people. A choir with 160 members and 40 trumpeters took part in the crusade which was advertised beforehand by 500 posters and 20,000 printed invitation cards. A spokesman for the church estimated that at least three quarters of the townspeople had heard about the crusade and been invited to attend. A team of 40 counsellors, half of whom were young people, was prepared several weeks beforehand so that they could talk on an individual basis to anyone who was interested. (*Berliner Kirchenreport*, 3 July 1979, p. 4)

POLAND

Church-state Controversy in the Western Press

A strange picture of church-state relations emerged from an interview with Mr Merker, Polish Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs, published in the West German daily newspaper, *Die Welt* (24 November 1979). Mr Merker implied that petitions signed by 700,000 believers, demanding regular religious programmes on radio and television, had been organized by "people who had nothing in common with the Church". Moreover, he continued, since the bishops had not approved the petition nor submitted a written request for religious programmes to the government, he saw no point in discussing the

matter further. He claimed that the Polish media pursued a neutral policy, promoting neither a religious nor an anti-religious viewpoint. In his view, the small allocation of paper for the Catholic weekly, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, was due to a general shortage of paper in Poland. In reply to a question, which he felt to be meaningless, about changes in church-state relations since the election of a Polish Pope, he said: "But for significant improvements in church-state relations in the '70s there would not be a Polish Pope". Quoting from Cardinal Wyszyński's address in an attempt to prove that the gulf separating the government from the people was due to "man fleeing from responsibility", he concluded by defending the government's policy of refusing passports to certain people. This, he said, was "every State's prerogative".

The statements made by Mr Merker so surprised the Polish Episcopate that Fr Franciszek Goscinski, Director of the Episcopate's Secretariat, decided to give an exclusive interview to the French paper *Le Figaro* (2 January 1980) thus breaking for the first time the policy of "resolving church-state problems at home" without turning for publicity to the foreign press. It may be significant that this happened when the Church was putting pressure on the government to abandon its plans to build a motorway which would impede access to the shrine in Czestochowa. The following five points were made in *Le Figaro*:

1) It is difficult to agree with the (official) claim that radio and television in Poland are "neither anti-religious nor religious and do not put out atheistic propaganda". In fact, says the Episcopate, "the general aim of all these programmes is to alter the way people think and to instil into them an atheistic worldview". This is why the activities of the Church and the Holy See "are either passed over in silence, or else, for the most part, presented in a negative light". Moreover, the programmes are often "contrary to Christian moral values".

2) The claim (made by the Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs) that the Episcopal Conference has not so far addressed any written request to the government about the Church's access to radio and television "is inadmissible". In fact this matter has been raised in writing "in the name of the Episcopal Conference at the highest level". It has frequently been the subject of discussions between the

Church and State and between the Polish government and the Vatican. In addition, letters about this have been sent "by the ecclesiastical authorities to the state authorities and to the Committee for Radio and Television". "It is difficult to believe", states the Episcopate, "that the Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs does not know all this."

Furthermore, it is not true that the petition, signed by over 700,000 believers, which asked the authorities to allow the Dominical Mass to be broadcast on radio and television, was organized without the support of the Church. It was not signed only by dissidents, states the Catholic hierarchy, but by believers "aware of their responsibilities towards the Church". The signatures were collected by parish priests and then sent by the bishops to the Committee for Radio and Television. The Episcopate stresses that "the ecclesiastical authorities approve of these initiatives and support them, even if they have not been organized at their request".

3) With reference to the limitations imposed by the State on the print-run of Catholic newspapers and other Catholic publications, the state authorities claimed that Party newspapers were equally affected by these restrictions. The Church, on the other hand, asserts that "the number of copies printed of Catholic newspapers and other Catholic publications is, proportionally, in no way comparable to the number for the Party press and other Party publications, or to that for the secular press". The first represent only "a very small percentage" compared with the last. Catholics cannot even buy a copy of the Gospels. "This", states the Polish Church, "is proof of the discrimination to which believers are subjected." The authorities often claim that the restrictions are due to a paper shortage. "Unfortunately," state the bishops, "we have been hearing this argument for more than ten years and it is difficult to believe that this is the real reason." The small print-run of Catholic newspapers and other Catholic publications constitutes "one of the main problems of the Church's life in this country".

4) The Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs claimed that the good relations existing between Church and State in Poland made possible the election of a Polish Pope. The Episcopate points out that this question would not seem to fall

within the scope of the State's policy on religion. To begin with, "it is difficult to imagine how the quality of church-state relations could have had any influence". In fact the choice of a Polish Pope expressed "the overall will of the College of Cardinals and reflected the importance of the Polish Church within the universal Church".

5) The representatives of the Office for Religious Affairs show "a tendency to lock the Church up in the sacristy". As Cardinal Wyszyński said in his address of 6 January 1978, the Church can certainly work to increase "the moral and social involvement" of the population, but this depends on certain conditions: i.e. access to the mass media for the Church; creation of Catholic organizations; recognition by the State of the Church's legal status. The Primate's demands are "fully relevant" today. In fact, "if the Church is expected to co-operate with the State and exert an increased moral influence on the population, she must, in addition to her religious means, be able to avail herself of the appropriate tools which will enable her to have an impact on the population".

The Episcopate protests at the way in which the Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs quoted Cardinal Wyszyński: "It is inappropriate, to say the least, to quote the Primate out of context".

Never before has the Polish Church defined her policy towards the State so clearly. Today the Church is in a sufficiently strong position to do so since the state authorities rely on it to keep the situation in the country calm.

Shortly before the bishops' statement was published in *Le Figaro*, Mr Kakol, the Minister for Religious Affairs, attacked the Church in the Swedish daily newspaper, *Svenska Dagbladet* (31 December 1979). Disregarding the discrepancy between the circulation of the Catholic and secular press in Poland, he stated that the increased shortage of paper expected in 1980 would have an equal effect on all newspapers, including Catholic periodicals. The Minister expressed concern over the changing character of *Tygodnik Powszechny* which, in his view, was becoming a "papist outlet", a sort of Polish edition of *Osservatore Romano*. Church and State merely co-exist, and in a difficult situation their sole common interest is concern for "the strengthening of moral values and patriotism". In this area dialogue was possible,

"but to give in to the Church's demands would lead to open conflict in Poland". Kakol warned the Church that to organize a "clandestine youth movement (Oasis) similar to the Scouts went beyond the Church's liturgical role and could not, therefore, be allowed to continue".

Conflict over Access to Czestochowa

On 29 September 1979 Bishop Stefan Bareła of Czestochowa (shrine of the "Black Madonna") issued his first pastoral letter. He revealed that work had already started on a four-lane ring road at the foot of the hill on which the famous Pauline monastery and shrine of Jasna Góra stand. He accused the authorities of trying to cut the shrine off from the city: to reach the monastery pilgrims would have to pass through a subway less than ten metres wide. Bishop Bareła painted a gloomy picture of the chaos which this project would create. Up to three million pilgrims come to Czestochowa each year. The planned route had nothing to do with "the rationalization of urban transport", Bishop Bareła declared, but was an attack on "the heart of Polish Catholicism". He accused the authorities of trying to prevent the Pope from repeating his ceremonial drive to Czestochowa when he came again for the 600th anniversary of the Black Madonna icon in 1982.

On 14 December 1979 the Bishops' Plenary Conference issued a communiqué which expressed grave concern about the planned motorway and expressed the hope that the authorities would avoid a major conflict with the Church. Before this communiqué was issued the Bishop of Czestochowa had issued three pastoral letters after trying unsuccessfully to persuade the authorities to re-route the highway round the back of the monastery. Thus the public was aware of the conflict even before 14 December.

On 20 December a special committee, led by Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, inspected the site of the subway. In its report to the bishops and Cardinal Wyszyński the Committee stated:

After inspection and deliberation we agree that such a subway is unacceptable—not only does it make access to the shrine more difficult, it makes a massive flow of pilgrims impossible. We call upon your Eminence and the bishops to make immediate and forceful repre-

sentations to have work on the subway stopped at once.

Cardinal Wyszyński decided to bring this problem to the attention of all the people of Poland. Next day he sent telegrams to the diocesan bishops which read:

Most urgent, please arrange for prayers for the intention of the Marian shrine (at Czestochowa) threatened by the stubborn determination of the municipal authorities to construct a motorway with an underpass tunnel cutting off direct access for pilgrims from the town to the shrine.

On 23 December Cardinal Wyszyński sent another telegram to Bishop Stefan Barela of Czestochowa thanking the Committee for inspecting the work on the tunnel. He said the tunnel would "create great danger for the crowds flowing back to the town, mar the most beautiful cultural site in Poland, endanger the monastery and its tower and disrupt the serene atmosphere of prayer and meditation". He added: "This is a sign of the authorities' lack of concern for the culture and history of Poland, it is an indescribable act of barbarity. I hope that the prayers of all Poland will stand in defence of Czestochowa and prompt the government to instruct the municipal authorities to halt this senseless project."

The Bishop of Czestochowa issued a pastoral letter on 27 December to be read in the churches of the diocese. It informed believers of the Episcopate's stand. In addition, a special communiqué was read which urged the faithful to pray that work on the tunnel should cease. "Three times a day all bells in the diocese will ring to remind the faithful to pray the Angelus for free access to the shrine."

Considerable public protest resulted from the Church's action. In some Warsaw districts posters appeared urging people to "defend Czestochowa"; this was a reference to the famous siege of 1655 when a handful of monks successfully defended the shrine against the invading Swedish army. Protest letters from all over Poland were sent to the authorities: these included one signed by 2,156 inhabitants of Łódź (12 January) and another by 2,420 people whose signatures had been collected by the *ad hoc* student committee at Lublin, founded on 18 January 1980 to defend Czestochowa. By the end of January, it is estimated that over half a million protest

letters had been sent to the Polish government, including many from abroad. The Church's uncompromising stand and the avalanche of protests forced the government to enter into top-level negotiations with the Church in early January. It was even reported (*Sunday Times*, 20 January) that the Pope intervened discreetly by explaining his position to Mr Szablewski, Poland's representative to the Vatican.

The government could not delay its decision much longer despite its reluctance to sully its public image before the Party Congress. On 8 February the Polish Press Agency (PAP) issued an apology which overflowed with concern for the pilgrims' safety and the proper development of the town's road networks. The statement made clear that the controversial ring-road would be re-routed.

In Poland this dispute has become symbolic. Since the War Czestochowa has become a symbol of national defiance against the communist regime. For example, in 1956 a demonstration took place there for the release of Cardinal Wyszyński, and another in the '60s when "Our Lady of Czestochowa" was placed under guard by Gomulka's government. The increased animosity aroused by this dispute will inevitably poison relations between the Episcopate and the Party for some time to come. The removal of Kazimierz Kakol, Minister for Religious Affairs, from the Central Committee (he was a candidate member) during the 8th Party Congress in February, may be the first step in his eventual removal from office. Kakol is well-known in Poland for his inability to hide his hatred for the Church even in public. In the present climate, therefore, he might have become a cause of embarrassment for the Party.

SOVIET UNION

Patriarch Pimen Distributes Awards

In 1979 Patriarch Pimen awarded several honours to hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church, including Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh, resident in London, who received the Order of St Sergius of Radonezh, second class, on the occasion of his 65th birthday. On 7 September Patriarch Pimen elevated Archbishop Leonid of Riga and Latvia to the rank of Metropolitan, and Bishops Serapion of Irkutsk and Chita, and Makari of Uman, to the rank of Archbishop.

(*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, No. 10, 1979, p. 2)

Obituary of Metropolitan Nikodim

The Moscow Patriarchate clearly feels a keen sense of loss after the death of Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Novgorod on 5 September 1978. The *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, No. 4, 1979, devotes 32 of its 80 pages to his life and work. All the articles emphasize his tireless work for the Church, his pastoral care for the faithful, and his refusal to work less hard despite five heart attacks. Special mention is made of his phenomenal memory and his valuable service in the field of ecumenism.

Obituary of Metropolitan Serafim

Metropolitan Serafim, formerly of Krutitsy and Kolomna, died on 22 August 1979 during the liturgy in Leningrad's Cathedral of the Transfiguration. Born in 1905 as Vladimir Nikitin, he studied architecture and then worked as a civil servant until 1951, with a break from 1941-5 when he served in the Soviet Army. In 1951 he was ordained deacon, then presbyter. In 1958 Fr Vladimir graduated from the extra-mural department of Leningrad Theological Academy with the degree of Candidate of Theology. On 26 June 1962 he took monastic vows and assumed the monastic name of Serafim. Five days later he was raised to the rank of archimandrite at the Pskov Monastery of the Caves. He was consecrated bishop in 1962, and in 1971 was made Metropolitan of Krutitsy and Kolomna and a permanent member of the Holy Synod. Ill health forced him to retire in 1977. (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, No. 6, 1979, p. 14)

Improvements to Seminaries and Monasteries

Improvements were made in the Leningrad Theological Seminary and Academy in time for the beginning of the 1978-79 academic year. Lecture halls, dormitories and other premises were repaired, and a new building was added to the existing premises to provide a hostel, dispensary and infirmary. The Church of St John the Divine was completely repaired. The Convent of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin near the village of Alexandrovka, (Odessa region) commissioned its own electric power station, and a new residential block was built for the sisters, as well as various household premises. On 21

September 1978 Metropolitan Alexi of Tallinn and Estonia visited the Odessa Theological Seminary and was shown, among other things, the new hostel. (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, No. 1, 1979, pp. 16-18; No. 5, 1979, pp. 35-6; English language edition, No. 5, 1979, p. 49)

New Publications of the Moscow Patriarchate

In 1978 the Moscow Patriarchate published a *Manual for Churchmen (Nastol'naya Kniga Svyashchennosluzhitelya)*, which is intended to assist pastors in expounding the fundamental themes of divine services. It contains a calendar of the Orthodox Church from September to February, including the chief facts about the lives of the saints of the Orthodox Church. The hagiographies are accompanied by a bibliography of the most important works of the Church Fathers which have been printed in Russian.

Issue No. 19 of the annual *Theological Studies (Bogoslovskie Trudy)* appeared in March 1979. The main part of the volume is taken up by a new translation of Augustin's *Confessions*. This issue also contains the sixth and final chapter of *The Order of the All-night Vigil in the Orthodox East and in the Russian Church* by Dr Nikolai Uspensky, Professor Emeritus of Leningrad Theological Academy. (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, No. 6, 1979, p. 79)

Georgian Orthodox Metropolitan Sentenced

Metropolitan Gaioz of the Georgian Orthodox Church was sentenced (1979) to 15 years' imprisonment with confiscation of property, according to an article published in *Zarya Vostoka*, the Russian-language newspaper of Georgia. Gaioz was convicted for stealing and selling on the black market 75 culturally valuable items of church art and articles of worship, including religious literature and icons with precious stones.

Bidzina Titikoyevich Keratishvili took the name Gaioz when he entered holy orders in 1971. He rose rapidly in the Georgian Orthodox hierarchy, being appointed a deacon three days after taking orders and a hieromonk a short time after this. In 1971 he became secretary to Efrem II, the Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia, and in March 1972 Efrem elevated him to the rank of bishop. He

became Metropolitan of Urbnis by the age of 30. Both prior to and after the death of Patriarch Efrem in 1972, Gaioz took over much of the direction of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

Allegations about the theft of a large quantity of church property from the Patriarchate were made by Georgian Christians some years ago and were referred to in a detailed report (dated 19 March 1973) by David Koridze, a senior Georgian Procuracy official. Gaioz was the first on a long list of church, government and KGB officials implicated in the theft. However, it would appear from the article that none of the high-ranking government and KGB officials, nor the wife of the First Party Secretary in Georgia, were prosecuted along with Gaioz.

Zarya Vostoka states that valuables worth 288,721 roubles were found in Gaioz's flat. Some of the articles recovered were returned to the Church; the rest, however, were handed over to the State Museum of Georgia. Rare and ancient manuscripts were given to the Institute of Manuscripts of the Academy of Sciences of the Georgian SSR, while 264 church books from the library of the former Patriarch were returned to the Patriarchate. An unspecified number of books were handed over to the Karl-Marx republic library.

The arrest and imprisonment of Gaioz look like a natural sequence to the death of Patriarch David V in 1977 and his replacement by Patriarch Ilya II, the candidate supported by Zviad Gamsakhurdia and other Christians in 1972. (*Zbrya Vostoka*, 14 June 1979, p. 4; *Keston News Service*, No. 79, 16 August 1979. See also *RCL*, Vol. 3, No. 6, pp. 45-54; Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 49-50; Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 48-51)

Believers Prevented From Re-opening Churches

More than 10,000 Orthodox churches were forcibly closed during Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign (1959-64), and in many parishes attempts to re-open the churches for worship have been continuing for years. Detailed documentary reports of believers' attempts to re-open churches have been received from parishes in Balta, Odessa region; Khinochi, Rovno region; Kotovo, Volgograd region (see *RCL* Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 258-60); Balashovka,

Rovno region (see *RCL* Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 260-1); Bolshoi Khomutets, Lipetsk region; Lozovaya, Kharkov region; and the city of Gorky, east of Moscow. Though the reports have been written independently, the stories they tell are remarkably similar. Visits to local authorities have proved fruitless, believers' appeals have been ignored or received short shrift, and they have been sent back and forth from one office to another. In no case have appeals for help to the CRA been successful. (*Documents of the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believer's Rights in the USSR*, Vols. 7, 9 and 11)

The "Pavlograd Affair"

The Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in the USSR has sent to the West a number of documents from parishioners of the Uspenskaya Church, Pavlograd, who were suspended from Holy Communion for three years by Archbishop Leonti of Simferopol and Crimea. The suspension follows their attempts to join the *dvadsatka* (parish council) in order to put an end to drunkenness and disorder in parish life and to organize much-needed repairs to the church. The former priest, churchwardens and parish council members had obstructed all their efforts to do this. When their attempts to join the parish council were also obstructed they appealed to Archbishop Leonti, who at first received them sympathetically and encouraged their efforts. They conclude that his suspension of them was due to outside pressure. They have appealed more than once to him and to other church leaders, including Patriarch Pimen, for re-instatement and they were re-instated in January 1979. However, their other complaints have not been heeded. (*Documents of the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights in the USSR*, Vols. 1, 2, 4, 5 (Part I) 6, 7 and 11)

Anti-religious Discrimination Against Prisoners

The Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in the USSR has protested about anti-religious discrimination against Soviet prisoners in a recent letter to the Pope and other Christian leaders. They append letters giving specific examples. One, from the wife of recently released Alexander Ginzburg, states that he could not receive any religious items

in letters: "One cannot copy out texts of prayers, or texts from the Gospels and the Bible: one cannot send the Orthodox calendar for 1979 or postcards of icons". The labour camp commandant told her: "In our country the Church is separated from the State, and since Ginzburg is now in a state institution he is separated from the Church". Fr Vasily Romanyuk writes that when he was being taken into exile all his handwritten texts from the Bible and the Psalms were confiscated. He points out that prisoners are refused permission to see priests or take Communion, though this is their lawful right.

Igor Ogurtsov

Igor Ogurtsov, sentenced in 1967 to 20 years' imprisonment for his part in the All-Russian Social Christian Union for the Liberation of the People (VSKhSON), is now in his 13th year of confinement. His poor health is causing grave concern, and in 1979 his mother appealed to Mrs Brezhnev, Mrs Carter and the International Association of Physicians. The Helsinki Monitoring Group called on the public, especially doctors, and all heads of governments of the signatory countries of the Helsinki Agreements to save his life. His mother's request for Ogurtsov to be transferred to the hospital of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Leningrad has been turned down. In a letter of 30 June 1979 to the editors of *Die Welt*, *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*, Ogurtsov's mother thanked the addressees for printing her appeal to the International Association of Physicians, and thanked all those who had expressed sympathy for the fate of her son. A complete recovery would depend on a change in his living conditions.

Orthodox Woman Detained in Psychiatric Hospital

Anastasiya Kleimenova was arrested, it is reported, at the beginning of 1979 and detained in an ordinary psychiatric hospital. No further details are known. However, a document from Kleimenova herself describes an earlier attempt to have her committed. This took place after she and other parishioners in the village of Bolshoi Khomutets, Lipetsk region, had been actively trying to have the village church re-opened. They had been writing appeals and visiting the local authorities without success since 1974. On 7 April 1978 she was walking home from the house where they held services when a bus

pulled up beside her and two men forced her to get into it. She was taken to a psychiatric hospital and detained for 12 days for examination. She was diagnosed healthy on this occasion. (*Cahiers du Samizdat: News Brief*, 15 April 1979, supplement, p. 4; and *Documents of the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights in the USSR*, Vol. 7, pp. 848-50)

Christian Student Expelled from Moscow University

The Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in the USSR has reported that Sergei Bogdanovsky was expelled from Moscow State University on 18 May 1978 because of his religious beliefs. Allegedly "anti-Soviet" materials were discovered among belongings which he left for safe-keeping in a storeroom of the university hostel. In a conversation with the secretary of the Komsomol (Young Communist League) on 12 May, Bogdanovsky was told that religious beliefs were incompatible with his remaining a member of the Komsomol. On 15 May he sent a statement to the Komsomol voluntarily renouncing his membership. On the same day the Komsomol issued a statement depriving him of membership for "behaviour unworthy of the title of Komsomol member". He was subsequently expelled from the Department of Embryology of the University's Biology Faculty and from his hostel. (*Documents of the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights in the USSR*, Vol. 4, pp. 509-13)

YUGOSLAVIA

Mother Teresa Opens Home in Zagreb

Mother Teresa opened her first children's home in Yugoslavia in the city of Zagreb in June 1979. She hoped to open another home in her native Skopje, in the largely Albanian diocese of Skopje and Prizren, in 1980 if possible. She assured her fellow-Albanians that they were very much in her heart and in her prayers. (*Drita*, June 1979)

Archbishop's Comments

An article by Archbishop Franić of Split on his recent visit to Poland as a member of the Pope's entourage appeared in *Crkva u Svijetu (The Church in the World)*, No. 3, 1979. He compared the religious situations in Poland and Yugoslavia, and

commented on the wide-spread ignorance about Yugoslavia which he found even among the bishops. They thought of Yugoslavia as a social democratic State. Comparing the two ruling parties, Franić told the Polish bishops that the Yugoslav party "is a real Marxist party, though of a special type, and not in the least social democratic", and that the Polish party was in many ways "closer to social democracy than the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav party has reached a compromise with the so-called progressive wing of the Catholic Church, while theirs . . . has achieved a compromise with the 'pietistic elements' of the Catholic Church." (*AKSA*, 12 October 1979)

New Approach to Church-State Relations

A number of recent events in Croatia indicate that the authorities are making a serious effort to draw the Churches, and in particular the Catholic Church, into closer unity with socialist society. At the same time they are not relaxing their condemnation of the "pretensions" of the Church to be the embodiment of the nation, or of the identification of religion with nationalism.

In January the Socialist Alliance set up a new committee which will make special efforts to include believers in the work of the Alliance, and to spread the consciousness that believers are not alien to a socialist society, but are helpers in building it. It is clear that there has been a good deal of petty harassment at a local level, and the authorities are determined to impress on everyone that this is harmful to the unity of the whole nation which they are trying to create at this difficult time. The annual New Year reception, given by the president of the Croatian assembly to representatives of all the religious communities in Croatia, was attended not only by members of the Catholic and Orthodox hierarchies from dioceses all over Croatia, and the leaders of the Islamic and Protestant religious communities, but also by leading representatives of the cultural, academic and social life of Croatia. The occasion itself and the speeches were reported at length in the press.

Two recent interviews with leading Croatian communists are a further pointer to the attitude of the authorities. The first was with Jakov Blažević, chairman of the

Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia, who was public prosecutor at Archbishop Stepinac's trial in 1946 and is a rough diamond whose blunt statements occasionally embarrass his colleagues. While attacking members of the hierarchy who try to prove that there is no religious freedom and who use the Church for political ends through religious manifestations with nationalistic overtones, he equally condemned "sectarianism" and the use of hard-line, administrative methods against believers and the Churches. Religious belief, he said, must not become an obstacle to the co-operation of believers in realizing the common interests of all citizens; the orientation of the Catholic Church today led to world peace, and to a more just political and economic relationship of people and countries.

The Blažević interview was a gruff acknowledgment by a hard-liner of the new line of the authorities. The second interview was with Dr Vladimir Bakarić, the veteran Croatian communist leader, a man of high calibre whose influence is usually on the side of peace and reconciliation. His assessment of church-state relations was both moderate and benevolent. He drew a distinction between the Pope's conservatism on questions of church dogma, which he said was the Church's business, and his attitude to world affairs, which was in the spirit of John XXIII and Paul VI. He brushed aside the question of atheism, which he described as a movement of the 19th century: "We have nothing to do with this for the simple Marxist reason that we know the Church cannot be abolished, it lives in people's heads . . . it is stupid to fight against the Church as a religious institution. Our criteria are not 'Are you an atheist or not?' but 'Are you for or against socialism, are you for or against world peace?'; everything else takes second place." And he concluded, "I am not pessimistic about the situation today. It seems to me that willy-nilly the Church in Croatia must follow the line of Vatican II, however sluggishly. Our comrade Lalić (president of the commission for relations with religious communities) can quarrel with Archbishop Kuharić but they quarrel at the same table; that is already an advance". (*AKSA*, 4 January 1980 and 11 January 1980)