

News in Brief

BULGARIA

Trial of Bulgarian Pentecostals

The trial in September 1979 of five Bulgarian Pentecostals was reported in three Bulgarian publications: the national newspaper *Otechestven Front*, the Burgas local paper *Chernomorski Front* (two of the defendants are from Burgas) and the weekly magazine *Anteni*. All three publications condemn the Pentecostals for receiving goods, foreign and Bulgarian currency from foreign missions (Evangelism to Communist Lands and Slaviska Missionen are named in this context). It is alleged that the defendants used some of the currency in the foreign currency shops to buy goods which they later resold together with goods received from abroad.

Detailed descriptions are given of the alleged activities of the defendants—Pastor Georgi Todorov Genchev of Veliko Turnovo, Nathaniel Tsachev of Troyan, Peter Yanev and Bancho Banchev of Burgas, and Dimitur Zhekov of Akheloï. The late Ladin Popov, a well-known Bulgarian Pentecostal émigré pastor, comes in for special attack as the instigator of much of the currency smuggling. A sixth person, Dimitur Dimitrov, who defected, was tried in *absentia* for the same offences. *Chernomorski Front* refers to him as an evangelical but the other publications are silent on this point.

The article in *Otechestven Front* ("When the Right Hand 'Does Not Know' What the Left Hand is Doing") is very long and detailed, as is that in *Anteni* ("Dollars in the Bibles"). The author of the latter attended the trial and, although he condemns the five Pentecostals' activities, he does not sound unsympathetic towards some of them: he even comments on Peter Yanev's "Bulgarian worthiness".

The article in *Chernomorski Front* is shorter and more cynical.

All three articles are at pains to state that the trial was not an attack on the Pentecostal Church. Both *Anteni* and *Otechestven Front* report that Pastor I. Zarev, President of the Pentecostal Union, made a statement at the trial to the effect that the Pentecostal leadership did not approve of the defendants' activities. (*Otechestven Front*, 31 October 1979, p. 4; *Chernomorski Front*, 31 October 1979, p. 4; *Anteni*, 31 October 1979)

Exhibition of Dimitur Rizov's Art

The first independent exhibition of the art of Dimitur Yordanov Rizov, an artist-restorer at the Central Church Historical and Archaeological Museum of the Holy Synod, was opened on 24 September 1979 in the town of Blagoevgrad by G. Tomalievsky. Various local Party officials were present, including Sandev, the regional secretary of the Communist Party.

Dimitur Rizov was born in the town of Veles and studied at the Brussels Academy of Art before entering the service of the Synod. Apart from his work as a restorer, he is best known for his etchings, which often portray incidents from Bulgarian history (e.g. nationalist uprisings during Ottoman rule). Fifty of his etchings were on show at the exhibition, which continued until the end of October. On 13 October an appreciation of Rizov's work by Tomalievsky appeared in the Blagoevgrad local paper *Pirinsko Delo*. Entitled "Art in Which the National Spirit Moves", it commends Rizov because he not only portrays history accurately but also captures the psychology of the moment. (*Tsurkoven Vestnik*, 22 November 1979, pp. 7-8)

CHINA

Cardinal Etchegary Visits China

Cardinal Etchegary, Archbishop of Marseilles, who arrived in China on 27 February, met the vice-president of the Chinese National Assembly on 1 March and discussed, among other things, relations between the Vatican and China, the problem of Taiwan and the undisturbed enjoyment of religious freedom guaranteed by the Constitution. During his 14-day visit the Cardinal had talks with the president of the Ministry for Religious Affairs and spoke about the Catholic Church to the members of the Council of the Chinese People for Friendship between Peoples. He referred to the Second Vatican Council, developments since then and the pontificate of John Paul II. This was the first occasion in communist China when a Catholic Cardinal has spoken to a Chinese audience. At an official luncheon Cardinal Etchegary met two members of the Chinese Patriotic Association, Michael Fu Tieshan, the new Bishop of Peking, and Bishop Mangteh Yang Gaojian, who were consecrated without Vatican permission. Cardinal Etchegary also visited the university and the place named after the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci, "the apostle of China" of the 16th century, in order to witness to the continuity of the church presence. He then left for central China.

Cardinal König, president of the Vatican Secretariat for Unbelievers, left for China on 9 March for an official visit lasting about two weeks. He was to have talks with members of the Academy of Science in Peking and representatives of the National Catholic Church in China and with Catholic believers. (AKSA, 14 March 1980)

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Primate Speaks Out

The 81-year-old Primate of Czechoslovakia, Cardinal František Tomášek of Prague, is a man who has witnessed the suffering and decline of his Church on a scale unparalleled in modern European history. He was ordained bishop on 12 October 1949 shortly before strict laws were passed curtailing church activities. All Catholic schools were then closed, monasteries dissolved and the numerous Catholic organizations either banned or

taken over by the communist State. He was arrested on 23 July 1951 and imprisoned in a hard labour camp (in Želiv), a fate shared by about half the priests in the land (i.e. approximately 3,000), 12,500 religious and hundreds of Catholic writers. Unlike them, however, he was released as early as 1954, whereupon he took charge of a small parish in Moravia. Since then, in a position where one wrong move would mean dismissal and new imprisonment, he has had to witness communist attempts to destroy the Church from within. He has worked without the leadership of the hierarchy, as the posts of the bishops were taken over by weak or ambitious priests answerable to the Office for Religious Affairs rather than the Vatican. Meanwhile the Catholic press has become a tool of political propaganda, preaching a gospel of the revolutionary State and treating religion as a mere relic of the past. The two remaining seminaries have not merely been unable to take many candidates because of the *numerus clausus* imposed on them, but have also had to choose the worst among the candidates. The state-run organization of "peace priests", now known as *Pacem in Terris*, was to ensure intimidation of the clergy from within. Any priest who would not neglect his duties would lose his state licence to exercise his ministry.

Cardinal Tomášek has mastered the art of surviving without becoming personally compromised. He has even managed to stay away from the "peace priests" organization. During the short-lived freedom of the Prague Spring he was engaged in the process of liberalization between Church and State; but he trod perhaps too carefully, and it was soon too late: a new wave of restrictions and harassment swept away the few gains of the period.

Accustomed to being under pressure from the State, he was surprised when in 1977, soon after he had become a Cardinal *in pectore*, he was heavily criticized by Catholics who did not appreciate his silent battle for survival in the rapidly disintegrating Church. They demanded that he speak the truth and defend persecuted believers—a demand which ran counter to his conviction that nothing could be achieved by open opposition to government policies. Dr Josef Zvěřina, a prominent Catholic theologian, addressed

the following words to Cardinal Tomášek:

"What could make a situation already so bad any worse? What could you or the Church lose? I implore your Grace, try to understand in your episcopal conscience that in our country all means available, usually those that are evil, are used to liquidate the Church. Any concession on our part means helping in this liquidation. There is only one way: consistent, lawful resistance. There is no other way, such is the iron logic of the situation" (see *RCL* Vol. 8, No. 1, 1980, pp. 48-51).

There has been a modest religious revival among young people in the '70s, corresponding to a complete decline of the official ideology as a credible system of thought. But the church hierarchy could give no lead: the four other bishops are members of *Pacem in Terris*. Young people have, however, found a great champion in the Pope, whose encyclical is banned and whose words seem to be clear: stand up for your faith, do not be afraid! The failure of the Vatican-Czechoslovak negotiations in January 1980 carried a clear message to all. The Pope will resist the use of the institution of the Church as an instrument to suppress the legitimate rights of believers or stifle religious revival. No more weak and compromised bishops will be appointed.

Then on 15 April an interview with the aged Cardinal Tomášek was published in the Bologna paper *Il Regno*. The Cardinal has spoken out, calling for more bishops and seminaries and for the restoration of religious orders. "The government has refused to grant permission for a permanent diaconate, yet there are many people who would like to become deacons." Speaking about *Pacem in Terris*, the Cardinal stated:

"It depends totally, I emphasize, totally, on the State. Its programme is inspired by slogans of brotherhood and co-operation but in reality it does nothing for the Church . . . It has no dialogue with the hierarchy. I am in total disagreement with it because it does not have the approval of the Vatican. On the contrary, I can tell you that the Pope is very worried about it!"

The Cardinal still maintains that open campaigns against the regime are senseless. He has criticized the exiles for

intransigence and strong words while not bearing the cross and responsibility of living in the country. However, when asked what the greatest problem was in Czechoslovakia today, his reply was very forthright:

"The presence of Moscow suffocates everything and people are angry. How do you expect things to go well for a country which is watched over by the Red Army?"

The Cardinal emerges from the interview as a man of deep personal faith, a man convinced of the ultimate victory of Christ. He believes in quiet diplomacy and quiet suffering. Although he has retained a strong fear of the "omnipotence" of the totalitarian State as a result of his personal experience of the physical terror of Stalinist times, his words, even if prompted by the concern of the Pope, will remain a difficult testament for the government to ignore and a hopeful sign for Christians who believe in the future of their country and the Church. (*Keston News Service*, No. 98, 15 May 1980)

Pope Prays for Believers in Czechoslovakia

It is perhaps not surprising that the harsh suppression of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia occupies the attention of Vatican diplomats as well as the Pope's personal time, though for diplomatic reasons their concern is rarely brought before the public. However, Cardinal Tomášek, in an interview published in the Italian fortnightly *Il Regno* (see above), recently made it very clear how much the Pope is concerned about state restriction, harassment and manipulation of the Church in Czechoslovakia. There is yet another aspect of this situation which worries the Pope. Particularly since his election, Czech and Slovak Catholics have found greater courage to organize clandestine theological study circles, and there has been a prolific growth of *samizdat* religious literature, often very critical of the official hierarchy. More important still has been the emergence of secretly-ordained priests and clandestine religious orders. This testifies to a revival of faith even at the risk of greater persecution and without this development the Church would face almost certain death—only about 16 priests are to be ordained later this year for the whole of the Czech

Republic. However, there are hidden spiritual dangers in this development. The unofficial Catholic activists may begin to think that they alone are "the salt of the earth"; they may be affected by a martyr-complex; and they may see their officially-recognized brothers in the faith as traitors, forgetting that some of them are trying very hard to keep their consciences clean. The unity of the Church would then be threatened.

Addressing the faithful at St Peter's Square on Sunday, 18 May, after his return from Africa, the Pope unexpectedly recalled the country from which his own "native land received the Christian faith 1,000 years ago." Reminding people of the feast of St John Nepomucene, a Czech priest and martyr who died almost 400 years ago for defending the Church against state interference, the Pope said: "Let us pray that the Christians in Czechoslovakia may be united in confessing Christ and may enjoy full religious freedom in all areas of life, including the possibility of receiving normal theological training in accordance with their priestly or religious vocation . . . Let us pray also for the well-being of Czech society and the State which always depends on respect for the rights of all citizens." (*Keston News Service*, No. 99, 29 May 1980)

Cardinal's Statements Denied

The Czechoslovak Press Agency (ČTK) claimed on 21 May that Cardinal Tomášek denied having made some of the statements attributed to him in an interview published by the Italian fortnightly *Il Regno*. However, the fact that ČTK does not specify which particular statements were denied is indicative of the situation in Czechoslovakia. The reader might wonder whether the Cardinal's reported denials resulted from state pressure, and whether ČTK's omission of details is due to the agency's reluctance to repeat statements which, although officially denied, are too painfully true.

EAST GERMANY

New Secretary for Church Affairs

Klaus Gysi (b. 1912) has succeeded Hans Seigewasser as State Secretary for Church Affairs. Since the Second World War Mr Gysi has held a number of key posts in editing and publishing. He has also

served as Secretary of the Cultural Alliance for the Democratic Renewal of Germany (1949-51), Minister of Culture (1966-73) and East Germany's first ambassador to Italy (1973-79).

Mr Gysi took up his appointment as State Secretary for Church Affairs in November 1979. He made his first public comments on church-state relations in the course of talks with leaders of the Thuringian Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Eisenach at the end of February. He reassured church leaders in Eisenach that the current "constructive" relations between the Party and the Federation of Protestant Churches would continue. (*Digest des Ostens*, No. 3, 1980, pp. 10-13; *The Tablet*, 8 March 1980, pp. 243-4)

HUNGARY

Pope's Letter to Cardinal Lékai

On 9 and 10 May Vatican Radio broadcast in two parts the text of a letter stated to have been sent in Hungarian by Pope John Paul II to Cardinal Lékai, the Primate of Hungary and Archbishop of Esztergom, and to the Hungarian bishops, clergy, members of monastic orders and the faithful. The letter, published in Italian translation on 9 May in *L'Osservatore Romano*, discussed the catechism at length. After dealing with the tasks of the clergy and family in this field, it then mentioned schools:

"The school also provides indispensable facilities in this area. I refer, of course, in the first place, to the eight Catholic schools in your country. However, I also bear in mind the state schools, and it is my dearest wish that Catholic parents, making use of the opportunities provided by the legal regulations, should ask that their children be given religious education in state schools . . . I am firmly convinced that respect for the Catholic faith of the young, reflected in consent to their religious education . . . will bring honour to your civil authorities."

KAMPUCHEA

Persecution of Christians

According to a letter from Kampuchea received on 25 June 1979 by the Cambodian Catholic mission in Paris, several Christians have been killed. Those named were brothers Bernard Chaunsar, André

Romchuor and Dany Nimith (monks of La Pierre-qui-Vire), a Fr Damien and nuns of La Providence de Portieux who were at Battambang (a Sister Lydia is mentioned), and Mgr Joseph Chmar Salas, vicar apostolic of Phnom Penh. Two other priests have also disappeared. The cathedral at Phnom Penh and churches at Battambang, Kompong Kho and Kampot have been razed to the ground. (*Chrétiens de l'Est*, No. 24, April 1979)

Aid from WCC and Lutheran World Federation

The East German church newspaper *Potsdamer Kirche* reports that the WCC and Lutheran World Federation have been giving large quantities of material aid to Kampuchea. Pastor Jean-Louis Clavaud is the permanent representative of the WCC and Asian Christian Council in Phnom Penh; and a representative of the Lutheran World Federation who is working as an agriculturalist has recently visited ten provinces to see that the aid was fulfilling its purpose. His own observations as well as conversations with the Ministry of Agriculture have convinced him that further aid is essential, above all in the agricultural sphere. (*Potsdamer Kirche*, 16 March 1980)

POLAND

Polish Ecumenical Council Meets

A General Assembly of the Polish Ecumenical Council was held in Warsaw on 29 November 1979 under the motto "Preserve yourselves in God's love". The meeting was presided over by the Rev. Professor Woldemar Gastpary, Rector of the Christian Theological Academy, and Barbara Enholc-Narzynska, Director of the Polish section of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The Assembly was attended by members of the presidium and board of the Polish Ecumenical Council and by delegates of the Churches affiliated to the Council. Mr Kakol, then Minister for Religious Affairs, and Tadeusz Dusik, Director of the Office for Religious Affairs, were present as guests of the Assembly.

Mr Kakol spoke on current church-state relations and on the activities of the Polish Ecumenical Council. This was followed by a paper on ecumenism in the epoch of secularization by Bishop Zdzisław Tranda,

head of the Reformed Church. A report on the work of the Council's board during the past three years was then presented by its President, Professor Witold Benedykto-wicz. In the course of the day a new board was elected: the Rev. Witold Benedykto-wicz, head of the Methodist Church, remains President; Metropolitan Bazyl, head of the Orthodox Church, and Bishop Janusz Narzynski, head of the Lutheran Church, are deputy presidents; the Rev. Zdzisław Pawlik, deputy chairman of the main Council of the Baptist Church, is Secretary; and Bishop Tadeusz Majewski, head of the national Polish-Catholic Church (which is quite independent of the Roman Catholic Church), is Treasurer. (*ChSS Information Bulletin*, November-December, 1979, pp. 18-19)

Increase in Vocations

Statistics released by the Episcopate's Press Office (31 December 1979) reveal that there is now a record number of priests working in Poland—20,198, a net increase of 282 priests in the past year. The figures also show a dramatic increase in the number of vocations—5,845 students are studying currently in the Catholic seminaries—520 more than in the previous academic year. The number of vocations has been rising steadily since 1975. The latest figure also shows a marked increase in the number of students accepted for training. There are almost half as many students in the first year now compared with 1977-78. This increase may be the result of the election of a Polish Pope; at all events, the Pope's personal impact during his visit in June 1979 caused a last minute rush of young men for the priesthood.

Polish bishops have welcomed the rise in the number of seminarians as there is still a severe shortage of priests in the overpopulated urban parishes. In some seminaries (Kraków, Tarnów) there is not enough accommodation, and students are sleeping in overcrowded rooms and even in corridors. The authorities are unlikely to grant permission for new dormitories to be built.

172nd Plenary Conference of the Polish Episcopate

The 172nd Plenary Conference of the Polish Episcopate, which took place in Warsaw 27-28 February under the

chairmanship of Cardinal Wyszynski, has issued a communiqué expressing the hierarchy's deep concern about social problems and rapidly deteriorating moral standards in Poland and stressing the need for a national revival. The bishops point out that the process of revival can begin only if the life of the country is based on freedom and truth.

"We must bring truth back into our society, not only into political organizations and the mass media, but also into our everyday life. It should be the fundamental duty of every Pole to witness openly to his beliefs and moral convictions. We realize that this calls for tremendous civil courage and a strong will, but it is the only way to restore public confidence."

The bishops attack the government for hampering opposition groups and stress that nobody should be prosecuted or fear prosecution for holding different opinions to those of the Party, or for being involved in activities intended to contribute positively to public life. The State's obligation, the bishops maintain, is to stimulate and protect every honest initiative which leads to the solution of social problems, to increase the powers of the few independent organizations which still exist, and to promote the establishment of new ones. It is essential for the Church to establish cultural, educational and religious institutions and to increase the publication of religious literature if the Church is to further its work in the field of public morality.

The bishops are particularly concerned by attempts to hamper pastoral work with young people. They demand permission for priests to visit youth hostels, boarding schools and university halls of residence, and strongly condemn the pressure put on young Catholics to join political organizations which inculcate an ideology incompatible with Christianity. "Such pressure hampers the spiritual formation of young people and leads to hypocrisy as a way of life."

The Conference was informed that preparations to mark the visit of the revered Jasna Góra icon of the Black Madonna to all the parishes in Czeszowa diocese were being hindered. Special units had been organized to threaten people actively involved in the

preparation of the festivities and decorations were being pulled down after dark. Never before in the 23-year history of this annual pilgrimage had the celebrations been hampered so openly and so brutally. The bishops condemn these acts of violence and demand that people should be able to practise their faith freely.

The hierarchy also express concern as to whether the authorities will abide by the agreement published by the Polish Press Agency on 8 February (see *Keston News Service*, No. 92, 18 February 1980), which guaranteed free access to the shrine of Jasna Góra by rerouting the four-lane ring road which would have separated the shrine from the town. (*Gazeta Niedzielną*, 30 March 1980)

New Minister for Religious Affairs

On 4 April a new Minister for Religious Affairs was appointed. He replaces Kazimierz Kakol who had held the post since 1974 and was notorious for his hatred of the Church. The new Minister, Jerzy Kuberski, was formerly Minister of Education and has already clashed once with the Church over a school reform which adapted Polish schools more closely to the Soviet pattern. It is expected that he will continue to pursue the government policy of restricting the Church to its present limits. However, growing pressure from believers to be accorded their rights as citizens (such as access to the mass media) will probably make his job even more uncomfortable than it traditionally has been.

ROMANIA

Appeal to Re-establish Hungarian Baptist Association

An appeal dated 5 September 1979, addressed to the Department of Cults and the Romanian Baptist Union Council, asks for the re-establishment of a Hungarian Association within the Romanian Baptist Union of Churches. It describes conditions at eight Baptist churches in Transylvania with Hungarian membership, which require urgent permission to rebuild or repair their premises. Some of the churches have been waiting over 20 years for building permits. A Hungarian Association based in Cluj could assist the Union Council in caring for such needs.

The author of the appeal is Ludovic Osvath, a member of the Christian Committee for the Defence of Religious Freedom (ALRC), who was expelled from the Baptist denomination on 5 September 1978 for his participation in ALRC. Osvath states that 26 of the 27 Hungarian Baptist pastors, including Mike Bela, the Hungarian Vice-President of the Union Council, support the appeal. However, none of them have signed it.

The appeal also asks for the publication of a Hungarian Baptist periodical. A similar request was made at the 27th Congress of Baptist Churches in Romania, held in February 1977.

Hungarians were among the first Baptist missionaries to Romania in 1856. They were organized under their own Association within the Baptist Union from 1935 to 1954. (*European Baptist Press Service*, 28 September 1979)

New Buildings for Hungarian and German Baptists

The congregation of the First Hungarian Baptist Church in Cluj and the German Baptist Church in Sibiu dedicated new church buildings in the autumn of 1979. Dr Gerhard Claas and Dr Denton Lotz, representing the European and American Baptists respectively, attended both ceremonies. The 250 members of the Hungarian Baptist church received building permission in 1977 and worked on the construction under the direction of Pastor Francis Denes. The new building seats 650, which is adequate for their present attendance of 400 believers. The Germans worked for seven years on their new building. Pastor Friederich Teutch led the dedication of the new church, which seats 200.

Romanian Baptists report an increase in church membership. By the autumn of 1979 6,000 baptisms had taken place. Official figures give a membership number of 200,000, which includes 13,000 Hungarians and 1,300 Germans. (*European Baptist Press Service*, 28 September 1979)

Arbitrary Law

The Romanian government's policy on granting permission for church repairs and new buildings appears from recent evidence to be quite arbitrary. While some congregations, such as the church of

Baptist Josif Ton in Oradea, were able to obtain building permission recently, several other churches were heavily fined during the summer of 1979 for attempting to renovate their dilapidated premises. It is estimated that in the Cluj region alone 155,000 lei of fines were levied on Baptist and Pentecostal congregations. In August, for example, the Pentecostal church in Livada was fined 12,000 lei for beginning renovations. Even more severe were the fines of 22,000 and 51,000 lei imposed on the congregation of the Girbau Baptist church near Cluj. Although they had received permission from their Baptist officials to rebuild the crumbling walls of their church, which was built in 1905, they were fined by the police on 25 July and 24 August 1979 for starting work.

SOVIET UNION

Baptist Woman Suffers in Psychiatric Hospital

51-year-old Olga Sevalneva from the village of Fryazevo (Moscow region) has been subjected to possibly harmful psychiatric treatment. In April 1978 she was dragged from her bed suffering with anaemia and confined in a psychiatric hospital, although she had no previous record of mental illness. This was probably an attempt to discredit the appeals she had made on behalf of sane persons confined in psychiatric hospital. Medical personnel have given her a series of injections which have caused her tongue to swell and have distorted her jaw. While under the effect of these injections she has been questioned about church affairs and has been told: "We will make you talk". She is not receiving any medical attention for her anaemia or for gynaecological problems resulting from previous ill treatment in hospital. (*CPR Bulletin*, No. 64, 1979, pp. 13-15)

Bibles on Sale in Irkutsk

Bibles are on sale in Irkutsk, according to reports from a visitor. Their date of publication was 1979 and they were printed by the Russian Orthodox Church. Each copy (7 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high by 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide by 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick) costs 85 roubles, which is far below the normal price at which Bibles change hands.

Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate Criticized

Yuri Belov, apparently an Orthodox layman, has written to the editor of the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate (JMP)* complaining that it ignores "the most urgent and vital problems of our life". Belov believes that the *JMP* concentrates too much on the official life of the higher clergy and ignores the religious life of laymen. It also ignores completely the hundreds and thousands of prisoners in the USSR, many of whom are well-known Orthodox believers, claiming that it does not get involved in politics—although it takes quite a different line in African countries. Belov has also written to Patriarch Pimen requesting him to urge that the Kremlin churches should be re-opened for worship. He points out that they are visited by hundreds of thousands of tourists from different countries and asks: "What will they think of a people which has turned its greatest holy places into side-shows at a fair?" (*Documents of the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights in the USSR*, Vol. 7, pp. 856-7)

Women in the Church's Training Institutes

At the beginning of September 1979 the Russian Orthodox Church admitted women to its training institutes for the first time. After completing a three-year course of study at the Church's newly created advanced school of music in Leningrad, the 25 women (aged between 18 and 32) can become directors of church music. The future choir leaders from all over the Soviet Union have at least a secondary education, and the majority have musical experience. The faculty with 13 professors and assistants offers courses in musicology, the art of singing, and theology. Scholarships are provided by the Moscow Patriarchate. Archbishop Kirill, Rector of the Leningrad Theological Seminary and Academy, handles the administration. The programme may be seen as a result of the International Congress of Orthodox Women held in Agapia, Romania, in 1976. (*Ecumenical Press Service*, No. 24, 13 September 1979; *Episkepsis*, No. 217, 1 October 1979)

Fashion of Wearing Crosses Attacked

Ye. Dobrovsky, Executive Secretary of the journal *Nauka i religiya (Science and*

Religion), responded to a letter from a *Pravda* reader who contended that the wearing of crosses was harmless because some of his atheist friends wore them because it was the fashion. Dobrovsky argued that although the cross might not be significant to the wearer, it still evoked harmful religious emotions in many people. Every atheist must struggle actively against the religious prejudices of the minority. Religious propaganda coming from the West also needed to be countered. Many young people were blind to the harmfulness of wearing crosses because they had not been prepared properly in school; there were still teachers who did not take seriously the call to spread atheism. (*Pravda*, 18 January 1980, p. 3)

VIETNAM

News of the Evangelical Church

Governmental restrictions on the Evangelical Church of Vietnam have been reported by members who have recently escaped from Vietnam. According to their reports, spiritual leaders of the Evangelical Church meeting with overseas delegations are briefed by police the day before, and government agents act as interpreters during the meetings. The authorities have closed down about 100 churches in rural areas saying that not enough people attend the services. Peasants are forced to work and attend re-education classes on Sundays. A special delegation wishing to visit a country church on a Sunday. City churches remain open as their closure would be noticed by foreigners. Church meeting hours are heavily restricted and sermons censored. Youth and prayer meetings are forbidden. The Bible Institutes at Dalat and Ban me Thuot as well as the Bible College at Nha Trang have been closed, along with church primary and high schools. So far two Evangelical church leaders have been executed, two are missing and 20 are imprisoned. (News of the Evangelical Church in Vietnam, undated report from Australia, received June 1979)

YUGOSLAVIA

Archbishop Kuharić Explains Prayers for Tito

Prayers said in Zagreb Cathedral for President Tito appear to have elicited

some private grumbles. Archbishop Kuharić evidently felt the need to explain them to the congregation, and *AKSA*, the weekly Catholic news service issued in Zagreb by Kršćanska Sadašnjost, published his words as a supplement. He began by saying "... let us remember in this sublime sacrifice all priests, present and absent" and then continued: "We are followers of Christ. He taught us to love. The Church is a praying church. It prays for all mankind and for every man in distress. Let us remember in our prayers the present condition of the leader of our State, Josip Broz Tito. Let us pray to God our Saviour to help him. This is an obligation of our faith and an act of love which Christ preached to us. We are going to hear in today's gospel 'God so loved the world that he sent his only son into the world that the world might be saved.' Jesus Christ died for the salvation of all mankind and for every man. Let us pray." After reading I Tim. 2:1-4 the Archbishop added "Our prayers are in obedience to the word of God. This is noted for the sake of history and conscience." (*AKSA*, 8 February 1980)

Croatian Response to New Laws

Vjesnik of 8 February carried interviews with religious leaders in Zagreb about recently enacted laws on religious communities in Croatia. They were asked for their opinion on the working of the new laws. Archbishop Kuharić did not give an interview, but the Orthodox Bishop Simeon replied that working people and citizens were the ones best fitted to respond. They were working everywhere together, but they did not identify each other as theists or atheists. They mixed and made friends not according to a particular vision of the world, but according to whether someone was a decent and honourable friend. This healthy acceptance "from below" should be brought into a structure where there is still sectarianism on both sides. Bishop Simeon went on to say: "We must all free ourselves of mutual mistrust, we must not back away from an atheist, or deprive anyone of respect in life or in death, because he is a believer." The imam of the

Muslim religious community in Zagreb said that they were completely satisfied with the two years' experience they had had of the new laws. Many problems had been mutually resolved, particularly the question of building a mosque. (*AKSA*, 15 February 1980)

Discussion on Criteria for Important Positions

At a session of the Socialist Alliance on 19 March, it was suggested that it is no longer necessary to include an item on moral-political suitability in the text of social agreements concerning political cadres in the federation. Moral-political suitability is one of the criteria for important social-cultural-political positions. In practice this is understood as a requirement by which, apart from his qualifications for the post, the candidate must be a member of the League of Communists and should not be a believer. The discussion was reported in *Borba* of 20 March. Branko Mikulić and Stane Dolanc, members of the central committee, argued that what matters is adherence to socialism and professional qualifications, and not being a non-believer; otherwise citizens would be divided according to whether or not they belonged to a religious community. (*AKSA*, 21 March 1980)

Horak Re-elected President of Baptist Union

Dr Josip Horak of Zagreb was re-elected president of the Baptist Union of Yugoslavia at the conference of church delegates held in Padina recently. Other officers re-elected were the vice-president, Andrija Korcok of Erdevik; the secretary, Josip Sudar of Karlovac; and the treasurer, Karlo Lehotsky of Novi Sad. Vinko Peterlin of Zagreb and Simo Ralević of Peć were re-elected to the executive committee while David Ogrizović of Petrinja was chosen as a new member.

It was reported that there had been 10 baptisms in 1979, but deaths and emigration to western countries caused the total membership to remain at about 3,500. (*European Baptist Press Service*, 17 April 1980)