

Reviews

Beton ist Beton: Zivilisationskritik aus der DDR

eds. W. Büscher and P. Wensierski, Hattingen: Scandica Verlag, 1981.
223 pp. n.p.

Friedensbewegung in der DDR: Texte 1978-82

eds. W. Büscher, P. Wensierski and K. Wolschner, Hattingen:
Scandica Verlag, 1982. 329 pp. n.p.

VEB Nachwuchs: Jugend in der DDR

by Haase, Reese and Wensierski, Hamburg: Rohwolt Taschenbuch
Verlag, 1983. 250 pp. DM 10.80

Null Bock auf DDR

by W. Büscher and P. Wensierski, Hamburg: Spiegel Verlag, 1984.
189 pp. DM 16.00

These four West German paperbacks are invaluable sociological studies of "the alternative society" in East Germany. One volume has appeared each year since 1981. Sociological studies, yes; but not in an academic sense. What we have is skilful, readable journalism. Each volume is also a collaborative achievement. Peter Wensierski is a co-author of all four, Wolfgang Büscher of three. Four further names are involved.

The first volume, the title of which can be translated as "Concrete is Concrete: a Critique of Civilisation in the GDR", is something of a manifesto of the ecological movement in the GDR, the eastern "Greens". The editors have succeeded in getting GDR citizens to write for this volume, describing their own situation. And most of them are people with strong church links. Dr Heino Falcke, Dean of Erfurt, is the star contributor,

especially with his address on the environment to the Church and Society Conference at MIT in Boston ("Critical Participation in Socialism as it is Practised: Science and Technology through Christian Eyes.") This book makes clear that concern for the environment and for more humane lifestyles is alive and well in the GDR, especially among critical Christians. The degree of church involvement in ecological questions illustrates the possibility — in the GDR — of Christians acting as a pressure group of considerable influence in an area that is outside the more immediate realms of political controversy.

The volume on the peace movement in the GDR documents (up to 1982) the remarkable commitment of the church leadership and especially the young generation of Christians to peacemaking and, most emphatically, peacemaking that is wholly autonomous from the ruling Party and State and at many points on collision course with them. Here is East German Protestantism discovering its own role and putting its theology of critical solidarity into practice and — incidentally — winning the hearts of large sections of the young generation. This whole development has no parallels in either East or West. It points to a maturity of a rare kind — and to courage without recklessness. It makes clear why Secretary of State Gysi was right when he stated, while on a visit to Britain, that Church and State were in the midst of a unique experiment, with considerable risks for both sides should things go wrong. A Soviet official — or churchman, for that matter — reading this book would wonder whether this could possibly be happening in the same Marxist-Leninist camp he inhabits. The Church's onslaught on militarism — and primarily militarism in the GDR — is truly astonishing. To this the role of women is crucial. The GDR has its (very different) versions of Greenham Common.

The other two books deal solely with the young generation in the GDR, and especially with its disaffected elements. The 1983 RoRoRo paperback lets them speak for themselves in interviews, extracts from letters and diaries, in poems. Above all there are excellent illustrations which manage to convey feeling and atmosphere very well. The young people (17 to 25 age group) range from secretaries of the Party youth organisation FDJ (Free German Youth) to active Christians and hippy-style dropouts. No paperback known to me better illustrates that the GDR is, in many ways, a kind of no-man's-land between the East and the West. It is utterly different from West Germany and yet in so many ways closer to the West (not only geographically and historically) than to anywhere else in the East. Everyday reality is quite unlike the western image of the GDR. It is equally unlike its own official view of itself. To all this, religion is just slightly less marginal than in the cities of England.

The most recent paperback *Null Bock auf DDR* (roughly: "You Can Lump It GDR" or "I Don't Care a Damn for the GDR") concentrates on

the alternative youth scene and is a chapter-by-chapter analysis of why a sizeable proportion of young people have kicked over the traces and simply refuse to live by the standards of "socialist morality". Some opt out altogether and resemble the western hippy scene of the sixties. Some opt for a "green" alternative, some for religion (not the kind appreciated by a very middle class church, Protestant or Catholic), some for feminism. There is a gay scene. And a punk scene. And there is the alternative peace scene which overlaps all the others. Indeed they all overlap with each other and equally with official "straight" society. There are no tidy demarcations. The army and (for a few) prison are the only places where things are completely predictable. The revolt of youth is seldom against the political system as such. It is against stuffy bourgeois attitudes (which characterise so much of the official GDR), it is against boredom, it is against hypocrisy of the older generation. And it is — as young people's movements tend to be — rather self-righteous. It gets really interesting in the world of the arts where the official and the unofficial overlap and collide. And when it comes to the music scene from rock to blues, jazz and Bach, even these authors cannot wholly cope with it. Only in the GDR will you find churches packed with teenagers listening, for hours on end, to organ recitals ranging from Buxtehude to Hindemith.

A pity these books exist only in German. They are worth translating.

PAUL OESTREICHER

China Revisited

Title of the Spring 1984 issue of the periodical *China Update*
edited by J. J. Spae, Dennenlaan 8, B-3031 Oud-Heverlee, Belgium.
\$10 a year

The author of this report is a Belgian Roman Catholic priest who first entered China as a young missionary in 1937. He reads Chinese without difficulty. Though modest about his command of Cantonese, he is obviously fluent in Mandarin.

China Revisited is the record of a three-week trip in October 1983 organised by the China Travel Agency. The author had one travelling companion, the Reverend Gust Stoops. They kept a detailed diary and took some 1,400 photographs.

All those who publish reports of this kind are faced with problems. Most such authors are worried that the significance of a good deal of what they write will be obscure to the average reader unless a measure of explanation is given. Fr Spae declares unashamedly that a fair knowledge of present-day China is expected from the reader; having explained that, he lets facts and words speak for themselves. The great majority of visitors, indeed most experts, go to China expecting that the utmost discretion will

have to be used in quoting opinions and names and addresses. Not so Fr Spae. All his contacts were told that all they might say was on the record, and his notes were taken in their presence. (Only once did this policy lead to any kind of conflict with authority; only once, therefore, has a name been censored.) The comment of a Protestant pastor from Nanking is most illuminating: "Tell the whole world what you hear from me and make sure you mention my complete lack of fear. I'll put it in writing for you." *China Revisited* is in no sense confidential.

One of the most attractive features of the report is the author's ability to describe, most vividly, all kinds of everyday scenes. Thus "we pass Democracy Wall of blessed memory; now it's covered with ads, including one for Coca-Cola." Or (on a visit to a Buddhist site): "I walk as far as the last inner court in the driving rain. A man is doing his laundry. 'Are you a monk?' With a broad smile: 'Me a monk! there are no monks here. In 1949 they all ran away to the mountains and never came back.'" In addition, there are scores of photographs of interesting scenes: the Guilin Xinhua bookshop, a commune leader answering questions, a lady wrestler demonstrating her art, a notice giving the names and photographs of criminals condemned to death, children doing homework, and so forth. Constantly one comes across the names and addresses of ordinary citizens, the words of current slogans, the texts of short poems, all photocopies from the pages of the author's notebook.

Naturally, a good deal of space is taken up with descriptions of visits to pagodas, mosques and Christian places of worship (both Protestant and Catholic). The Protestant representatives at both Xi'an and Nanking proved most willing to talk freely, and the information they provide is significant — as long as it is remembered that they are not making pronouncements about Chinese Protestantism as a whole. Over a quarter of the space in the report is taken up with Roman Catholic themes — descriptions of buildings and conversations with bishops, priests and lay people. A number of questions are in the forefront of the reader's mind, as they must have been present in Fr Spae's: Is the Catholic Church under the direct control of the regime? How much support is there for the Pope? What sort of men are the active bishops? As has been made clear earlier, the author records questions and answers — some very telling indeed — without comment. The reader must judge for himself.

It will be quite clear to the careful reader that the report proper ends at page 109. Thereafter Fr Spae moves on to comment and evaluate (although there are also a number of important pictures and documents). The arguments contained in this section need very careful consideration.

China Revisited is an excellent piece of work, and can be strongly recommended.

ARVAN GORDON

The Jews of Hope

by Martin Gilbert. London: Macmillan, 1984. 237 pp., £8.95

A book about "refuseniks" can never be a substitute for visiting them, but this one comes close.

The historian Martin Gilbert embarked on a trip to the Soviet Union in the Spring of 1983 against the background of the closing of the doors of Jewish emigration, perhaps to see if these courageous people were going to be quite so heroic under these new conditions. He met people who have lived through sixty years of Soviet anti-semitism. He tells this history through their stories, evoking much sympathy for their present plight. However, he comes home with the impression that these are "Jews of hope", after seeing how rich they have made their lives with their love of Judaism and how that richness of life under the most difficult conditions is, at the same time, the corollary of and a reason for that hope. Incidentally, he also brought with him several hundred photographs of these Jews, but the Soviet authorities developed and then confiscated them.

He was helped in his study of this history and of the Tsarist period which led up to it by Misha Beizer, a Jew aged 32, who took him on a three-hour Jewish history tour of Leningrad. We move from the spot where, 250 years ago, a Jew was burned at the stake, to the present day, when we learn that Beizer's wife, Tat'yana, and their six-year-old son, Sasha, wait for him in the Israeli city of Beersheba. Misha knows so little about them as he waits for his exit visa.

The threads of Jewish history are woven into a tapestry through the life of Bertha Sokolovskaya, born in 1921 in Polish Białystok. She has heard nothing of her two cousins who left her birthplace for Palestine just before the Second World War, nor of her brother who moved to Minsk in 1939, nor of her sister who left Białystok the same year. On her 18th birthday Bertha found her town part of the Soviet Union. Then the Germans came and forced Bertha into the ghetto, where she spent her 20th birthday. After witnessing many savage crimes she was deported to Majdanek. On the way she tried to slash her wrists but only fainted. As the Red Army entered Poland she was deported to Auschwitz and as they swept westwards she was driven on foot to Buchenwald. The approach of American troops caused her move to Belsen. On being liberated, Bertha made for the Soviet Union to find her only living relative, a distant cousin. Bertha married and is now a widow, waiting with her daughter and her family for visas to Israel. She feels she has suffered enough, and asks "Help me to realise my dream".

Martin Gilbert conveys to us something of the religious renaissance going on amongst Soviet Jews in his story of Grigori Vasserman, mentor to those who wish to study the Bible or to learn Jewish religious observance. Vasserman has never concealed the venue of his seminars, which are held in his own flat and are open to all, despite being beaten up by

“hooligans” in the street in 1982 on the way back from giving a Hebrew lesson. A friend of Vasserman tells Gilbert how the young vodka-drinking student “changed — and changed — and changed in front of my eyes and became more striking in his conscientiousness” as he became a religious leader. Vasserman says that the souls of Soviet Jews are “squaloring in the morass of the material” as a result of generations of assimilation, but he has discovered the existence of a soul in those Jews who appreciate their Jewishness as “their holy privilege, their honourable destiny and duty”. He sees “eager Jewish eyes which reflect the soul’s longing for Light and Truth”. He wants to “open the eyes of the Jews to the grandeur of their own people and their elevated spiritual ideas”.

If the book has one failing for me it is that, whilst Martin Gilbert reports accurately the words and deeds of Irina Brailovsky and Yuli Kosharovskiy and consummately tells their stories, he fails to convey some of their other qualities. Irina Brailovsky, 47 at the time of the book, is the wife of Dr Viktor Brailovsky, recently returned from three years’ exile in connection with the journal *Jews in the USSR* which he had published until 1979. At the age of 17, we learn, she went with Viktor to the Lenin Library to read the Bible, only to be refused on the grounds that it was “religious propaganda”. Her yearning to go to Israel started then. All through Viktor’s incarceration Irina was an inspiration to the refusenik community. But when I visited Viktor and Irina in February 1980 I saw another side to her character — resignation. At the age of 44 she told me: “My life is over, but I want Leonid (her 19-year-old son) to have a life — in Israel.”

Yuli Kosharovskiy, to whom, with Aba Taratuta, Martin Gilbert has dedicated the sixth part of his biography of Churchill, was the “principal” of the unofficial refusenik school of Hebrew in Moscow until a couple of years ago when all his Hebrew books were confiscated. When I last saw him in 1982 he was learning Japanese. The book tells us of his wait since 1971 for a visa, of his harassments and detentions and the frequent efforts of the authorities to frustrate his yearning to teach Hebrew. But we are not given a full impression of the philosophy of the man who told me, a good part of the way down the cul-de-sac along which the Soviet government had steered him, “When we all get to Israel we shall look back on this time as our golden age, the time when we were able to fill each day with the joys of Hebrew and Judaism and to explore and discover it to our hearts’ content.” Here is a man who sees the refusal of his visa as a tacit gift from the Soviet people to the Jews. He has truly found virtue in the midst of adversity.

The book is a plea by all those whom Martin Gilbert met and that plea is the title of the final chapter — “Do Not Forget Us”. Martin Gilbert has shared with us the privilege of meeting them and asks that we do not fail

them. His book has brought from the Soviet Union the spark of courage and love of Judaism that will kindle flames in many souls.

ALLAN MYERS

*The Resistance of the Catholic Church in Lithuania against
Religious Persecution*

by Rev Pranas Dauknys. Rome: Pontificia Studiorum Universitas
A. S. Thoma Aq. in Urbe, 1984. 183 pp., n.p.

Fr Dauknys has produced a welcome addition to the very small number of works on Lithuania and its Church, from the point of view of a Lithuanian Catholic priest and theologian. He gives a survey of Lithuanian church history up to the present, ending with the amazing growth of the Catholic religious rights movement since 1972, on occasion pausing for digressions on points of moral or theological relevance.

Fr Dauknys begins with St Casimir, Lithuania's patron saint, whose anniversary is being celebrated this year, and who brought Lithuania into the fold of European culture and Latin Catholicism. He points out that St Casimir's Church in Vilnius is now a Museum of Atheism. Lithuania's adherence to Western Catholicism brought its Church and people into conflict with the Russian Empire, of which it became part after the break-up of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania-Poland.

The Tsarist campaign against the Lithuanian Church and language mirrored the present in many ways and Fr Dauknys recalls the bloody confrontations between Catholic believers and Cossack troops during attempts to close Catholic churches in the 1860s — at Kražiai, for example, where there is still a shrine to the victims.

It is salutary to recall again how much the Catholic Church in Lithuania suffered as a result of the Soviet takeover in 1940-44 — not only the loss of national independence and the atrocities against priests, but the reduction of numbers at the seminary from 549 (1939) to 56 (1984), and the large number of churches closed — 448 out of 1,022.

The Catholic religious and human rights movement in Lithuania which began at the end of the 1960s is depicted by Fr Dauknys with instinctive knowledge of its close association with national feeling and some surprise at the lack of solidarity for the persecuted church from fellow Christians abroad — a situation which has been remedied to some extent by Pope John Paul II.

One small criticism might be made: Fr Dauknys does not always distinguish sufficiently between the past and the present, sometimes giving the impression that state policy towards religion remained the same throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

MARITE SAPIETS

Political Psychiatry in the USSR (Bukovsky Paper No. 1)
by Robert van Voren. Amsterdam: Stichting Comite Vladimir
Boekovski, 1983. 66 pp.

Vladimir Bukovsky was one of the first to draw the world's attention to political psychiatry in the USSR when in 1971 he smuggled testimonies from a Moscow hospital to the Fifth Congress of the World Psychiatric Association in Mexico. Since then opposition to the political abuse of psychiatry has gained ground and in 1977 the Sixth Congress of the WPA condemned the practice.

In this booklet Robert van Voren, an associate of the Bukovsky Foundation in Amsterdam, argues the case for the WPA to expel the Soviet Union at its Seventh Congress in July 1983. As it happens, events overtook him and the Soviet Union resigned in February.

Van Voren is interested in *opposition* to political psychiatry and the best section of his book is thirty pages devoted to the work of a group which for four years was one of the most important sources for evidence of psychiatric abuse in the USSR. The "Working Commission" was set up in Moscow in 1977 by a handful of individuals who drew on the help of a lawyer and two psychiatrists. Together they gathered and checked reports of abuse and published their conclusions in *samizdat*. The group worked openly, and by 1981 all six of its active members had been imprisoned. Robert van Voren draws on his own meetings with the group and its prolific output to produce an account which contains much unusual detail.

His anecdotal style recommends the book to the non-expert — but for one shortcoming. By focussing on opposition to political psychiatry the author neglects the abuse itself. He nowhere defines what is meant by the political abuse of psychiatry nor analyses the legal procedures which enable it to persist. His book speaks to the converted, but is a valuable record of a brave attempt to protect human rights in the Soviet Union.

MARJORIE FARQUHARSON

Die Rettung der Verlorenen
by Tatyana Goricheva. Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1982
(2nd ed. 1983). 94 pp., 5.95 DM

This book is a very personal testimony, not always clear in its chronology and concepts, but highly evocative of people, places and trends. Goricheva tells of her own childhood, an unhappy one, of her early political activism, and then of her discovery of philosophy. Existentialism was fashionable among the intelligentsia in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and it was this that gripped her. She became part of a kind of drop-out culture that centred on the café nicknamed "Saigon" in Leningrad — and

gives a fascinating pen-portrait of this group and its scandalous pranks. Many of these young people, like Goricheva, later became Christians.

From existentialism, she passed to yoga. But already she sensed the hand of God. And one day, while walking across a field, she was meditating on the Lord's Prayer (Christianity was considered a lower form of yoga) and suddenly met God in a personal way. Whereupon she did what most Russians would do in a similar situation — she sought a monastery and a priest.

A whole chapter is devoted to her experience of monastic life, which clearly made a deep impression on her. She loved the places (the convent at Riga, the monastery at Pechory), the people, the faces, the singing, the prayers. She speaks of casual visitors who became believers; of pilgrims who wanted to stay, but could not, and so were secretly ordained for service in the world; of fellow intellectuals who followed the same path to the monastery, and wished to renounce the world, but were directed back again by the priests in order to carry Christian culture into their own milieu.

Apparently it was in 1973 that Goricheva became a Christian. The following year she married the poet Viktor Krivulin, also a recent convert. In their flat, No. 37, were founded both a seminar and a journal taking the name "37".* The seminar formed a focus not only for Orthodox, but also Catholics and even *Initsiativniki* Baptists (this latter fact, says Goricheva, caused the KGB considerable concern). Naturally participants were harassed, but Goricheva says they overcame the KGB by ignoring it. This was because they had lost fear — the overriding malady of Soviet society. And so, she declares, a new type of person has arisen in the Soviet society: a person who is totally free, and at the same time willing for any sacrifice.

In 1980 Goricheva was forced into the choice between emigration and imprisonment. Her priest advised her against the latter, and blessed her on her path into exile. It is clear that in the West she has found a very different church life, and it is to be hoped that she will be able to find her place here, and also that her friends still in Russia will find their total spiritual destiny.

KATHY CARTER

Papieskie Lato w Polsce

by Adam Biela. London: Veritas, 1983. 133 + viii pp.

This book represents a rare psycho-social study in depth of the first pilgrimage of John Paul II to his native country in June 1979. Although it

*See *RCL* Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 230-32 and Vol. 9 No. 3-4, pp. 160-61 — *Ed.*

was ready for publication in Poland in April 1980, it was finally only able to appear abroad, just before the second papal visit to Poland in 1983. This delay, caused by censorship, also points to the intrinsic value of the study itself.

The author, a younger member of the teaching staff of the Catholic University of Lublin, has tried to analyse in this book the psychological and emotional reasons for the phenomenon which he calls "the Papal Summer in Poland". By this he means all the characteristic changes in the souls and minds of Poles that took place after the totally unexpected election of a Polish Cardinal to the Papacy, culminating in the events of that hot summer visit to Poland which "renewed the face of that land".

This book is, therefore — unlike the majority of publications on the subject of Pope John Paul's visit to his fatherland which have aimed at a pictorial and narrative presentation of the events — an introspective study of its impact on the people of Poland. It is not so much concerned with the religious, patriotic or even political content of the Pope's homilies and addresses, although these always remain as a background, but with the reflections and intimate accounts of individual Poles on the way they lived through that unique week in the history of the nation. The author's observations are well documented from the archives of the Catholic University and what makes these pronouncements exceptionally interesting is the fact that the author not only analyses the accounts of adults, but also oral and pictorial accounts of small or very small children. These authentic statements help us to understand the specific atmosphere of that hot summer, which made it possible for "that gradual change of socio-moral attitudes of the society" to come to fruition in the social renewal which led to the events of August 1980.

Dr Biela's book is a serious attempt at an evaluation of the "Papal Summer" of 1979 and the fact that a second pilgrimage of the Pope to Poland took place in 1983 does not make it out of date. The author has written here about some perennial changes in the psyche of the Polish people which were brought about by that visit, and it calls rather for a sequel, if only to verify the validity of his statements and check his observations in the light of what followed.

ZDZISŁAW WAŁASZEWSKI

Books Received

Listing of a book here neither implies nor precludes review in a subsequent issue of RCL.

Dunlop, John B., *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983. 363 pp.

Garton Ash, Timothy, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity 1980-82*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1983. 386 pp.

- Havel, Václav**, *Lettere a Olga*. Bologna: Centro Studi Europa Orientale, 1983. 128 pp.
- Hayward, Max**, *Writers in Russia: 1917-1978*. London: Harvill Press, 1983. 340 pp.
- Henkys, Reinhard**, *Gottes Volk im Sozialismus: Wie Christen in der DDR leben*. Berlin: Wichern-Verlag, 1983. 127 pp.
- Hewryk, Titus D.**, *The Lost Architecture of Kiev*. New York: The Ukrainian Museum, 1982. 64 pp.
- Kaminskaya, Dina**, *Zapiski advokata*. Benson, Vermont: Khronika Press, 1984. 345 pp.
- Laurentin, René and Rupčić, Ljudevit**, *La Vierge apparaît-elle à Medjugorje? Un message urgent donné au monde dans un pays marxiste*. Paris: Oeil, 1984. 192 pp.
- Luskačová, Markéta**, *Pilgrims*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1983. 128 pp.
- McCauley, Martin**, *The German Democratic Republic since 1945*. London: Macmillan, 1983. 282 pp.
- Ordass, Lajos**, *Válogatott írások* (Selected Writings). Edited by István Szépfalusi. Bern: Az Európai Protestáns Magyar Szabadegyetem, 1982. 413 pp.
- Orłós, Kazimierz**, *Pustynia Gobi*. London: Puls Publications, 1983. 99 pp.
- Podróż, wiary, nadziei i miłości — Druga pielgrzymka Jana Pawła II do Polski*. New York: Bicentennial Publishing Corporation, 1983. 104 pp.
- Reddaway, Peter and Bloch, Sidney**, *Soviet Psychiatric Abuse: The Shadow over World Psychiatry*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1984. 288 pp.
- Stankovič, Andrej**, *Význam Josefa Floriana*. Mnichov: Opus Bonum, 1983. 207 pp.
- Vajta, Vilmos**, *From Generation to Generation: The Lutheran World Federation 1947-82* (Dedicated to the memory of Bishop Lajos Ordass, Vice-President of the Lutheran World Federation 1947-1952 and 1957-1963). Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag Erich Breitsohl GmbH & Co., 1983.

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