The Russian Orthodox Church Under the Soviet Regime 1917-1982
by Dimitri Pospielovsky. Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984

This work is a very sound and unusually well-documented account of the tragic events which began with the October 1917 revolution, affecting and transforming religious life and the church establishment in the newly-created Soviet Union, and opening a new era for the Russian Orthodox Church, an era of martyrdom, schisms and struggle for survival.

The author shows little sympathy for the tsarist regime and its handling of the Orthodox Church. The post-Petrine period is described briefly but sharply and the lay administration headed by the tsar's representative and court interferences are pointed to as the obvious causes of the church's lack of independence and the semi-enslavement of its bishops.

Pospielovsky gives an excellent account of how the Soviet regime, from the very beginning, tried to destabilise the Orthodox Church by suppressing its legal existence as a national institution and by inciting the intellectual leftist clergy and laity to go into schism with the traditional church authorities. He describes two major schisms, calling them the schisms of the Left and of the Right. Recent history is notoriously hard to assess objectively and these chapters of Pospielovsky's work are the ones most likely to arouse controversy, especially in émigré circles, as some of the issues are still subject to heated debate.

The main group of schismatics on the Left, the so-called "Renovationist" or "Living Church" of Alexander Vvedensky has already been described in detail by Anatoli Levitin-Krasnov (who was a sub-deacon in the Renovationist Church) and Vadim Shavrov in their Ocherki po istorii russkoi tserkovnoi smuty (Essays on the History of the Discord in the Russian Church) (G2W, Küsnacht, Switzerland, 1978). Pospielovsky also touches upon the lesser-known "autonomous" churches, such as the self-consecrated Ukrainian churches, which were
encouraged by the GPU (secret police — Ed.) in order to undermine the traditional church. The author may find that Ukrainian church circles will dispute his claims on this matter.

It is in Pospielovsky's treatment of the "schismatics of the Right" — in essence, what has resolved into today's Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) — that personal bias surfaces in what is otherwise a laudably objective work. While formally acknowledging the intricacies of this highly complex post-revolutionary period, he gives no quarter in his assessment of the ROCOR. Pospielovsky is not the only author to question, quite legitimately, the influence of the Russian monarchist movement abroad on the debates of the Karlovtsy Synod and its decisions and declarations. He is highly critical of the Karlovtsy Synod's attitude toward Patriarch Tikhon's administration and, more specifically, toward the Patriarchal Exarch in Paris, Metropolitan Yevlogi (Georgievsky), qualifying opposition to his authority as canonical error. In fairness to the ROCOR it ought to be noted that, from the canonical point of view, there is precedent for the situation in which the Russian emigration (and its church) found itself: when the archbishop of Cyprus, with clergy and laity, fled to the province of Hellespont before the advance of the Muslims in the 7th century, the Sixth Ecumenical Council decreed that "... the privileges conferred ... on the see of Cyprus are to be preserved unaltered ... the customs of each church are to be retained" (canon 39). An acceptable claim for legitimacy by the ROCOR may be found in Patriarch Tikhon's decree No. 362 (7/20 November 1920), paragraphs 2 and 3 of which sanction the creation of church administrations should there be loss of contact between bishop(s) and diocese(s). While not issued directly in favour of the chief administration of the church abroad, it could still be considered one of its legal or canonical bases. It is a pity that the author's bias against the ROCOR leads him to making an error about such a revered figure as Archbishop Ioann (Maximovich) of Shanghai who, according to Pospielovsky, tried to persuade his Russian and Chinese flock to join the Moscow Patriarchate. In fact, Archbishop (then still Bishop) Ioann refused to do so and for this was forbidden to exercise his duties by Archbishop Viktor, at that time head of the Russian Orthodox Church in China (see The Blessed Ioann Maximovich, Brotherhood of St Herman of Alaska, Platina, California: 1971, pp. 22-23).

Still on the subject of Orthodoxy outside Russia, Pospielovsky gives an interesting historical and legal analysis of the multi-national Orthodox church in America, which traces back to the missionaries who came to Alaska from the Valaamo monastery in 1794. Comprehensive coverage is given to the contentious issue of the role of the Russian Orthodox Church during the Second World War and the relations between the church hierarchy and the Soviet leadership. The conflicts faced by senior
churchmen are given careful, meticulously researched treatment. Equally detailed and well-researched is the account of the post-Stalin era (which saw, among other things, the emergence of the church into the international arena as an arm of Soviet foreign policy) and the murderous anti-religious offensive under Khrushchev.

One could have wished for more concrete information in the chapter devoted to the “catacomb” church; the latest document cited is dated 1971. However, the author cannot be blamed for the dearth of data on this shadowy face of contemporary Russian Orthodoxy. One cannot help doubting, however, that the testimony of young urban intellectuals (such as Goricheva, quoted by the author) can be considered the final word for, no matter how devout, these adult converts come from circles which are unlikely to come into contact with the “bedrock” from which the True Orthodox seem to draw the bulk of their adherents.

It is greatly to the author’s credit that throughout his entire work he provides much valuable insight into the personalities who have led the Russian church, both at home and abroad; under his pen, both the priest and the man emerge as living figures.

Regrettably, in this reviewer’s opinion, too little space is devoted to what has become known (rightly or wrongly) as the “religious renaissance” of the 1970s, and the growth of articulate dissent among the laity and clergy: this is a fact of church life which should not be underestimated. Little more than passing reference (within the entire scope of the book) is devoted to this phenomenon, which is surprising, when one considers the mounting degree of concern expressed about the growing influence of religion among young people in the Soviet media.

This complaint aside, it must be said that Pospielovsky has not only written a significant historical work, but also given a vivid illustration of the martyrdom and struggle of the Orthodox faithful, from hierarchs to laity. He has demonstrated beyond doubt that despite all efforts, the Soviet regime has been unable to destroy the Russian Orthodox Church and her faithful for, in the words of St Luke, “they cannot die, for they are the sons of the Resurrection”.

SERGEI VON BENNIGSEN

Soviet Jewish Emigration
The book under review examines the decade of mass Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union between 1971 and 1981. Although the book has only just been published, it takes no account of the sudden ending of Jewish emigration three years ago, with its severe consequences for the morale and future of those Soviet Jews who had wished to leave. This omission is unfortunate, not only because the current plight of Soviet Jews is so much worse than that described in the book, but also because it
undermines the book's conclusion. Studying the decade of mass emigration, the authors are tempted to make what they call "the imposing claim" that "if Jewish emigration continues to be supported as part of a general and concerted push towards democratising the USSR, it may even come to have world historical significance." Alas, such hopes were dashed more than two years before the publishers and printers were preparing this book. In 1981, the Soviet authorities decided to end the ferment which the mass emigration had caused. They did so in such a way that there are, today, more than 12,000 "refuseniks", Soviet Jews whose repeated requests to leave have been turned down. There are also more than 350,000 Jews who have asked for the basic "invitation from" Israel without which the process of seeking an exit visa cannot even be begun.

The authors, one from Newfoundland, the other from Toronto, write from a sociological standpoint, and therefore in language which the general reader may find at times quite difficult to follow. But somewhere behind "motivations and precipitants", "basic causes" and "structural context" lie the Jews themselves, always isolated from Soviet society, despite many attempts at assimilation and participation. The authors reproduce several powerful quotations from other studies. One Jewess whom they quote states emphatically: "I am accustomed to the colour, smell, rustle, of the Russian landscape, as I am to the Russian language, the rhythm of Russian poetry. I react to everything else as an alien . . . And nevertheless, no, I am not Russian. I am a stranger today in this land."

During the decade of mass emigration with which this book is concerned, when 250,000 Jews left the Soviet Union, it was possible for the "stranger" to search for a new national base in Israel, or for a more acceptable Jewish base in the United States. These two possibilities forced a difficult choice upon Soviet Jews. It was argued that those who chose to go from Vienna, their exit point, to the United States, were harming the movement itself, by giving the Soviet authorities the possibility, whenever they wished, to argue that those given visas to Israel were not honouring their declaration that they wished to go to Israel. This was in many ways a disingenuous charge, since it was only by asking to go to Israel that a visa could be granted in the first place. No visas were ever granted for the United States. Nor, as the authors point out, did the Soviet authorities curb the exit rate when the majority of those leaving were seen to be going to the United States. The curb came later, and for different reasons. The authors analyse the unprecedented decision by the Soviet authorities in 1971, to reverse, albeit only for a decade, the ideological and practical ban on emigration which had been in force since the communist revolution of 1917. One reason which they believe was important was the growing jealousy of other national groups at the success of Soviet Jews within Soviet society. Ironically, that success was only
available to most Jews after they had given up any specifically Jewish aspirations, whether religious, linguistic, or cultural. By another irony, which the Soviet policy makers do not seem to have anticipated, the ferment of successful emigration spread Jewish national aspirations. The Zionism which had been crushed so ruthlessly in the 1920s burst out anew. Many Jews, including those from assimilated and even actively communist families, sought to learn the Hebrew language as a prelude to living in the Jewish State.

Parallel with the upsurge in Jewish emigration to Israel, the Soviet authorities persisted in a continuing press and television denunciation of Israel and Zionism. This too, by pointing a hostile finger at those Jews who wished to go to Israel, accentuated their desire to learn something about a country which was under such vicious and sustained attack. While the venom of anti-Zionism frightened some Jews away from national aspirations, others were drawn to find out more, and to commit themselves, even by public demonstrations, on Israel’s behalf.

In dealing with the Israeli perspective, the authors refer to a report of March 1980 which “revealed the shocking degree of hostility towards immigrants to Israel who are seen as undesirable parasites living at the Israelis’ expense”. It is interesting to note the enormous change which the past five years have seen in this respect, coinciding perhaps with the drastic closing of the doors of emigration. In the past year, the Israeli public has become much more alert to the harshness of Soviet policy and the plight of those who are trapped behind the Iron Curtain. There is particular concern in Israel today for those Soviet Jews who, having been refused their exit visas, are now portrayed as undesirable parasites within the Soviet Union itself.

The authors have done an important service in examining the decade of Jewish emigration under such a careful microscope. But it is strange that, in such a detailed work, they make no reference whatsoever to the activists among the emigration movement, some of whom suffered considerably for their efforts, among them, Dr Viktor Brailovsky, who in 1976 helped to organise a Jewish scientific seminar in Moscow, was sentenced to five years in exile in Kazakhstan, an exile from which he has only just recently returned to Moscow, but is still denied an exit visa to join his brother in Haifa. Also missing from this volume is Ida Nudel’, the champion of those Jews who had been sent to prison and labour camp, herself a refusenik for ten years and a victim of the Siberian exile system, and now banished to the remote Moldavian town of Bendery, and Josef Begun, a Hebrew teacher sentenced in October 1983 to 13 years camp and internal exile.

Surprisingly, although the Helsinki accord is mentioned twice in this book, albeit briefly, there is no mention of Jewish participation in the Moscow-based Helsinki monitoring group, one of the leaders of which,
Anatoli Shcharansky, is at present half way through a 13-year prison and labour camp sentence. The authors join together a single phrase the “persecution” of Sakharov and Shcharansky, but they do not say what form this persecution took, nor give any indication of what part Shcharansky had played for five years in the very emigration movement which is the subject of their study. Nor do the authors mention Shcharansky’s trial, although it served as a turning point in the campaign by the Soviet authorities against all would-be emigrants. These are serious omissions, which hopefully may be put right by the authors in any future editions, or in any further study which they might undertake. The prisoners, and the long-term refuseniks, deserve more precise recognition and support.

MARTIN GILBERT

Von Gott zu reden ist gefährlich. Meine Erfahrungen im Osten und im Westen

(It is dangerous to talk about God. My experiences in the East and in the West) by Tat’yana Goricheva. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1984, 127 pp.

It is dangerous to talk about God. Regular readers of *RCL* will have no difficulty in relating this statement to the situation for believers in the USSR. But what are we to make of the next phrase, “My experiences in the East and in the West”? How can it be dangerous to talk about God in the West?

The answer lies in Goricheva’s reaction, as an émigrée, to seeing her first religious television broadcast in the West, a broadcast that was, she felt, far more likely to keep people well away from the church. “Thank God that we’ve got atheism and there’s no ‘religious education’ . . . For the first time I understood how dangerous it is to talk about God! Every word must be an offering, filled to the very brim with sincerity. Otherwise it’s better to remain silent.”

This book traces Goricheva’s own path to faith, through existentialist philosophy, a reckless lifestyle, Eastern philosophy and yoga to her conversion to Christianity as a direct result of a yoga exercise based on the Lord’s prayer. Her conversion is an experience shared by a growing number of young intellectuals from atheist backgrounds and Goricheva is anxious to explain this phenomenon.

After the story of her own conversion, Orthodox spirituality forms the backbone of the book, and Goricheva writes about the value for her, as a new convert, of confession, about the role of the priest, the importance of church traditions, the monasteries and the startsy (elders). She also describes the development of the Christian Seminar*, first in Leningrad

*See article in *RCL* Vol. 8 No. 2, 1980, pp. 92-112 — Ed.
and later in Moscow, and of the pressures put on the members of the Moscow Seminar in particular. She discusses the difference between the two groups and offers her own analysis for the harsh treatment meted out to the members of the Moscow Seminar while the Leningrad Seminar continued to meet. There are several interesting references to inter-denominational interaction.

In September 1979 Goricheva became one of the four co-editors of *Woman and Russia*, the journal of the first free, unofficial women's movement in Russia. For almost a year the KGB stayed its hand, but the week before the Moscow Olympics began the four co-editors were arrested and presented with the ultimatum of emigration or imprisonment. They chose emigration.

Gill Ablitt

*Gottes Volk im Sozialismus: wie Christen in der DDR Leben*


There are a number of works about the churches in the GDR available to specialists. Some readers, however, may have found themselves utterly confused by the complexity of the subject-matter, and wish that a recognised expert would produce a brief book which would give the poorly-informed foreign Christian a bird’s eye view of East German religion.

*Gottes Volk im Sozialismus* is just such a book. True, the author concentrates throughout on the eight main territorial Protestant Churches, but because of this fact the work has gained in clarity and straightforwardness. Indeed, many of the author’s comments apply also to the Roman Catholics and to the smaller Free Churches.

*Gottes Volk im Sozialismus* is based on a series of talks given on West German radio in late 1982, and is obviously produced with the needs of West German readers in mind, but so many elementary features of the GDR religious scene are explained that any English reader who is familiar with the German language could not but find the book immensely helpful and instructive. The approach is prosaic, and it in no way dramatises or exaggerates the role played by Christians in society. Indeed, the churches’ feet of clay are perhaps given undue prominence. However, such stress in a work of this kind represents a fault on the right side.

We read about aspects of the church which generally receive little consideration. It is well known, for example, that interested foreigners are extremely reluctant to take the step of becoming formal members of the church; the various reasons for such hesitation are convincingly explained. A wry joke, which Henkys quotes, sheds light on the situation. A GDR citizen, asked if one can be a Communist and a Christian at the
same time, answers: “In principle, yes — but why make life twice as difficult?” The reader is also given a clear understanding of the long-standing conflict over confirmation and the State’s Jugendweihe (Youth Dedication).

The fact that the churches are the only organisations in the GDR which do not owe allegiance to the party or to Marxist principles is generally understood. “Democratic centralism” is met with in every aspect of the country’s life — except in the affairs of the church. The church is the only home of genuine democracy. It governs itself, and is responsible to itself and to the Lord.

The function and influence of the Christian Democratic Union (the “anti-fascist progressive party” set up allegedly to represent Christians in the context of the National Front) is briefly but competently sketched. Something is also heard of the changing policies of the Socialist Unity Party. The reader is warned that the relationship between church and state is a constantly fluctuating quantity.

Practical details, of the kind that are often neglected, such as the status and work of ministers, the part played by lay workers, the church tax, the meaning of church membership and financial details of running an average parish are well dealt with. Details of other kinds are missing: the reader is not confused by footnotes or other learned references. Although the book leaves a great deal unsaid, the reader gains an excellent grounding, and a short bibliography opens the way for further study.

ARVAN GORDON


The Co-operation of Church and State in Theory and in Practice is the current official Marxist-Leninist account of church-state relations in Poland since 1945. It is neat, thorough, dry and of course, heavily peppered with righteous commentary preaching Lenin as the Way, the Truth and the Life, and Marx as the initiator of all correct thinking. In common with all history published legally behind the Iron Curtain, it is written in line with an established determinist pattern that ensures that every fact slips into its rightful place.

Since the end of the war, relations between church and state in Poland have been complex and paradoxical enough to merit volumes. The Polish Church holds a position unique in the eastern bloc in that it has managed to maintain a considerable degree of independence in its policy, although it has had to tread carefully in its dealings with the atheist regime. It survived the Stalinist terror of the 1950s relatively well thanks to the remark-
able leadership of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, and to the sheer numerical support of the population. The position of the church was further enhanced by Cardinal Karol Wojtyła's accession to the papacy in 1978, and since then it has become increasingly a platform for the public expression of political and social views, which would otherwise be confined to guarded private conversation.

The Polish state is understandably concerned to have the church on its side, and while the clerical hierarchy co-operates, there is some chance that the faithful will go along with it. If the church were to declare itself in active opposition then, given the support it has and the mood of the country as a whole, any credibility which the communist cause still claims would be lost. It comes as no surprise, then, to see Stanislaw Markiewicz giving numerous assurances that the communists mean the church no harm, and that religion will be understandingly tolerated as a regrettable symptom of class struggle until the day the public has been fully re-educated.

Passive submission to authority for the sake of expediency is one thing; active cooperation is quite another. Persuading the public to cooperate as well as submit is one of the hallmarks of political propaganda. The butt of Markiewicz's argument is, unanswerably, St Paul's epistle to the Romans (13, 1-7) which teaches that authority must be obeyed on the grounds that "the powers that be are ordained by God". It is therefore claimed to be any citizen's Christian duty to cooperate with the state, and render unto Caesar what is rightfully his. This is now a standard argument for upholding government policies in a situation where collaboration is often morally questionable from a Christian standpoint. "One cannot render what is God's at the altar of Caesar," Cardinal Wyszynski once observed in response. In other words, individual conscience cannot be justifiably suppressed in rendering service to the state, and temporal necessity or advantage should not, in Christian terms, be allowed to rule any aspect of human activity. Markiewicz naturally follows a different line which can be rendered as: Catholics should be free to practise their faith if they really must — on condition that it is in private or within the strict confines of the church — but they should also be educated into "practical" and "realistic" collaboration with state authority, by threats of physical coercion if need be.

The Catholic Church in Poland is presented as an institution gradually gaining in reason, though on occasion still disrupted by retrograde elements which will not allow it to flow with the times (Father Jerzy Popiełusko was no doubt one such). This, Markiewicz reflects, can make the church a lamentably awkward partner in negotiation, although the party, ever constant to its cause, remains eager to conduct dialogue and put its partner on the right lines in an atmosphere of cordiality and paternalistic concern.
Even during martial law, we are reminded, the church was granted the privilege of holding Masses, and church-state understanding was never better. Primate Cardinal Glemp is quoted from a hurried statement made on the day martial law was declared in December 1982, when in order to pacify the nation he remarked that “there is no higher value than human life”. No doubt the Cardinal had reason to fear the consequences of too much excitement among the population, but the phrase was unfortunate and it provided a golden opportunity for Markiewicz who sees it as evidence of the increasingly enlightened attitude of the church hierarchy since Cardinal Wyszyński’s death in May 1981. Cardinal Glemp’s willingness to negotiate and his public expressions of trust in the party during the Solidarity era earn him considerable praise in the book, as do his frequent warnings on the potential “dangers” (presumably of Soviet intervention) overhanging the population if it should overstep the bounds of “reason” in its demands for greater civic freedom.

The bee in the bonnet of the state is not the church hierarchy as it now stands, but Solidarity — organised, we are told, by a minority of extremists masquerading as Catholics, determined to undermine the foundations of socialism and the authority of the government. In 1981, according to the official line Solidarity “went too far”. It was seeking to disrupt the political status quo, and in order to protect the country from Soviet intervention, martial law had to be introduced. It was a “realistic necessity”; “order had to be restored” (though the degree of anarchy and lawlessness in the country was far less significant than official reports implied, and the government did for the Poles what the Soviet army would have done in a more forceful way). The “Soviet threat” argument is another standard official entry, and it is worth commenting here that although the Soviet Union did apparently avoid any direct intervention in the Polish crisis, numerous Poles have reported that soldiers patrolling the streets of Warsaw in December 1982 could often be heard chatting in Russian.

Markiewicz’s book also contains a substantial and glowing section on the development of state-supported Catholic organisations for the lay population (some of which have, at various times, been notoriously infiltrated by communists and lost all semblance of independence), and finally some “personal” thoughts on the position of Catholics within the party structure itself. The author recommends that Catholics should be positively encouraged to join the party in order to be drawn into the spirit of the communist programme, provided that they do not let their faith interfere with their work.

The church, Markiewicz concludes, is now “actively engaged in defending the socialist foundations of the Polish People’s Republic, with all its international commitments”. The fact that tens of thousands of Catholics all over Poland regularly attend special “masses for the homeland”, with sermons deploiring Soviet communism and its effects on the
quality of life, is clearly not considered significant. The episcopate, we are
informed, is working with the party in an atmosphere of warmth and
understanding. The fact that the episcopate regularly publishes declara­
tions denouncing the values and methods of the authorities is apparently,
in the author's view, irrelevant to his subject.

To anyone unfamiliar with the thought patterns of official publications
from the eastern bloc, and the language in which they are expressed, this
must be a deeply disturbing, if turgid, read. It is human history turned on
its head to fit political abstraction, to propagate half-truths, and ulti­
mately to persuade people that they have no room left to think for them­selves.

IRENA KORBA

Geschichte der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche im Ausland von der
Gründung bis in die Gegenwart
The book calls itself a "history", but only about a quarter of the book is
given up to historical matters in the narrow sense. This section concen­
trates on the origin and history of the Russian Orthodox Church abroad
from 1919 to 1949, but continues up to the present. There is a full descrip­
tion of the relevant Bishops' Synods, Bishops' Councils and General
Councils. The life and work of the various Russian Orthodox com­
munities in different parts of the world are dealt with, and a good deal of
space is devoted to topics such as publishing activities, monastic life,
Church schools, theological education and missionary effort. The author
also considers the relationship of the Russian Orthodox Church abroad
with other Christian communions. There is a very full "Who's Who" of
Bishops. Two significant documents are printed: the Ordinance of the
Most Holy Patriarch, the Holy Synods and the Supreme Ecclesiastical
Council of the Russian Orthodox Church; and the provisional Constitu­
tion of the Russian Orthodox Church abroad.

ARVAN GORDON

Ateisticheskij slovar' (Atheist Dictionary)
The dictionary contains more than 2,500 terms and concepts as well as
numerous entries on individuals. Most of the former are basic elements in
"Soviet atheistic vocabulary" and their treatment reflects the ideas and
methods of the anti-religious policy of the state as it was formed in the
middle and late 1930s. At the same time — and it is important to note this
fact — the terms and notions denoting more modern concepts and ideas
are explained and interpreted in a considerably more objective and
neutral way. This applies also to some prominent figures in the history of religion and even to some religious philosophers. So, for instance, if Franc Buchmaki is still described in the traditional way as an anti-communist and militantly clerical figure, Carl Jaspers is characterised far more objectively as an existential philosopher, and is not even described as a “reactionary”. The dictionary includes several hundred factually valid and concise articles devoted to ancient gods and deities. The worst articles are those devoted to the explanation of artificially formed and specifically atheistic concepts. One of the main deficiencies of the dictionary in general is a complete neglect of the data and methods of the modern anthropology of religion, a neglect which helps to render some of the articles completely nonsensical.

ALEXANDER PIATIGORSKY

Books Received

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


