

Volokolamsk, editor of *JMP*, while on a visit to West Germany. He is quoted as saying that the article, which had been written by "legal experts", reflected not a comprehensive revision, but a "binding interpretation" of the law. He stated that the situation described in the article corresponded to the actual practice of the Russian Orthodox Church over the past few years. This applied both to the concept of a religious association being a juridical person (including the right to own property), and to the participation of children under the age of 18. Pitirim's words make it clear that the long-rumoured revision — if it is really going to come — has not yet taken place. Yet the "interpretation" is more of a reinterpretation, perhaps a precursor of better things in store. Pitirim is quoted as saying that it gives grounds for certain hopes.

On the other hand, Baptist leader Ivan Bukaty, superintendent for Belorussia and a member of the Baptist Union's presidium, told British journalist Brian Cooper that an important change in Soviet law now allowed all new churches to be owned outright.

There are three possible explanations for this apparent contradiction. Firstly, Pitirim does not exclude the possibility of recent changes: he speaks of the status of religious associations as described in the article being in accordance with instructions on the application of the legislation on religion (no such instructions issued since 1975 are known in the West), and his

denial of comprehensive revision does not rule out minor alteration. Secondly, what Pitirim regards as an alteration of little practical importance, Bukaty might well consider to be an important change, especially in view of the fact that the Baptists have a far more substantial building programme than the Orthodox and would, therefore, stand to benefit far more from the security of outright ownership of new buildings. Thirdly, Bukaty could be referring to a change that so far is applicable only to Belorussia.

None of these changes, alterations, or interpretations necessarily make a great deal of difference, except psychologically, though the importance of that should not be underestimated. In a legal system still affected in many aspects of its operation by political control, to enjoy the rights of a juridical person may not make it any easier to redress unconstitutional measures taken against the church. The right to own property can be taken away just as easily as it is granted. Only lifting of the restrictions on religious activity which limit the life of the congregation to public worship, and a genuine separation of church and state resulting in renunciation of state interference in the internal affairs of the churches, would make a real difference. Such sweeping change — unlikely though it is — would lead to a genuine normalisation of church-state relations and an end to the divide between registered and unregistered churches.

MICHAEL ROWE

Irina Ratushinskaya

The Russian Christian poetess, Irina Ratushinskaya, is now in her fifth year of imprisonment, much of which she has spent in the Barashevo camp for women in Soviet Mordovia. Now 32, she is said to have been the youngest prisoner in the camp, and latest reports indicate that she is critically ill because of the treatment she has suffered there — including long periods of solitary confinement, force-feeding, and violent beatings. The medical attention she has received appears to have been negligible. In July 1986 she was transferred from Barashevo, for an

unspecified period of "re-education"* at the Investigation Prison in Kiev.

Irina was originally arrested in September 1982 while working with her husband on a collective farm near Kiev. They were apple picking. She was questioned by police, and held in a KGB prison for several months before standing trial in a closed court for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda". She received

*A standard procedure for political prisoners, usually lasting about two months.

the maximum penalty — seven years' camp and five years' internal exile — an exceptional sentence for a woman, and one which, according to her husband Igor Gerashchenko, was "based on five poems as remote from politics as the Lord's Prayer".

Irina was born in Odessa in the Ukraine in 1954. She was brought up in the usual Soviet fashion, without religious teaching, but came to develop an interest in her high-born Polish ancestry, and particularly in the Catholic faith of her grandmother, who was frequently "hauled in by the KGB" (Irina writes), as a result of her beliefs. Her parents discouraged these subversive inclinations; they forbade her to learn Polish and to talk to her grandparents about "any religious or 'un-Soviet' subjects".

In 1971, she went to study physics at university in Odessa, although her personal interests lay rather in poetry and literature. She began to write her own poetry shortly before graduating, under the influence of the works of Mandel'shtam, Pasternak, Tsvetayeva and Akhmatova — all of whom had suffered at the hands of the Soviet authorities because of their writing. Her own poems have a quality of urgency which has been noted by Western readers, and have been particularly praised by the Russian émigré poet Josif Brodsky, who has described her as "a poet with faultless pitch . . . with a voice of her own, piercing but devoid of hysteria".**

Irina graduated in 1976, and took up a post as a physics teacher in a school in Odessa. She went on to be appointed to the staff of the Odessa Teacher Training College, and shortly afterwards to its Examination Board. When she refused to obey instructions to discriminate against Jewish candidates, she was dismissed. In 1979, she married the human rights activist Igor Gerashchenko, and moved to Kiev. The couple were refused emigration visas in 1980, and in 1981 were warned to stop appealing against human rights violations in the Soviet Union. In December 1981 they were arrested at a demonstration in Moscow in support of

Dr Andrei Sakharov. They were held for ten days in separate prisons, and then released. They both lost their jobs and were obliged to resort to casual labour. Within nine months Irina was again under arrest, this time for considerably longer.

The Barashevo labour camp is known for its harsh administration, described in *samizdat* reports smuggled out of the camp zone. Its head, Major Shorin, has been quoted to have remarked: "We don't shoot you any more now, but we have other methods of ensuring that you won't leave the camp alive." Between late 1983 and summer 1984, 193 strikes and 218 personal strikes were reported in the camp in protest against the way prisoners were being treated. Irina was actively involved in all of these, and her resistance made her a prime target for repression by the camp authorities. Between March 1983 and August 1985 she spent 138 days in punitive isolation cells with winter temperatures as low as -10° Celsius. She was not permitted to see her husband.

In summer 1985 she underwent a spell of "re-education" at the KGB prison in Saransk, and in August spent a week in an isolation cell in Yavas — the "capital" of the Mordovian camp network. She was transported there in a pick-up van without shock absorbers, and was knocked unconscious when her head hit the iron railings of the "cage" as the van went over a rut. On arrival at the camp, the medical officer diagnosed concussion and prescribed treatment, but on the same day Irina was beaten unconscious by four warders (three female, one male), and left in the corridor to be dragged into her cell by other women prisoners. She spent the rest of the week lying on the stone floor of an unheated cell during the day; a bunk was available for the night. Despite all this she continued to receive her prescribed drug for concussion.

On her return to Barashevo Irina sought to initiate legal proceedings against the warders who had beaten her in Yavas. As a result, she was given a six-month term in an isolation cell, with a maximum of one hour's exercise per day, a bread and water diet of about 1,750 calories (gruel once every two or three days in winter) and manual labour separate from other prisoners. When her husband and mother arrived to visit her in

**Introduction to English translation of Irina Ratushinskaya's poems by David McDuff: *No I'm Not Afraid*, (Bloodaxe Books, 1986).

April 1986 they were refused admission. The official reason given was that Irina "... had not stood up when the doctor came to see her". Private reports suggest that she had been too ill to do so. She was suffering dangerously high blood pressure with considerable risk of a stroke, or heart or kidney failure. It appears likely that the visitors were refused admittance because of the authorities' reluctance to allow confirmation of reports of her deteriorating physical condition.

Unofficial information released shortly before Irina's transfer to Kiev in July indicated that she had developed angina and was suffering frequent loss of consciousness. The camp infirmary lacked the necessary equipment and medication to help her, and relatives were not permitted to supply medicine. She had not been released from compulsory labour, and had to report daily for work

despite having temperatures of up to 40° Celsius.

In the Kiev Investigation Prison, her condition is said to have improved slightly. Food is better, and she has been allowed two visits from her mother and a further two from her husband, both of whom she had not seen since September 1983. She has been under pressure from the authorities (possibly as a result of publicity in the West) to plead for clemency to secure her release, but she has refused to do so or to permit relatives to act on her behalf. She continues to hold that she was tried illegally in the first place and that any appeal would be inappropriate, irrespective of the seriousness of her heart condition.

Irina Ratushinskaya has 3½ years of camp and five years' internal exile still to serve.

IRENA KORBA

The Hare Krishna Movement in the USSR

One of the more recent manifestations of the revival of interest in religion amongst Soviet youth has been the spread of Eastern religions and associated practices such as yoga. Of these teachings, perhaps the most influential has been that of the Hare Krishnas. The origins of this movement in the USSR can be traced back to 1971 when their spiritual leader, Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, visited Moscow. Though refused permission to lecture, he was able to initiate one young Russian into the teachings of Krishna Consciousness. For the rest of the 1970s this man, Anatoli Pinyayev, was to travel the Soviet Union spreading the teachings of the movement.

Added impetus was given by the 1979 International Book Fair held in Moscow, where a considerable quantity of Krishna literature was on display and was eagerly examined by many Muscovites. The following year Swami Visnupada, the Krishna leader responsible for the Soviet Union, paid a visit to the USSR. Adherents of the movement were able to organise a meeting in the Riga House of

Culture, but the meeting was broken up by the KGB and those present were interrogated.

The first arrest came in 1981 when Yevgeni Tretyakov from the town of Krasnoyarsk was sentenced to one year in camp on charges of "parasitism". In a report on his trial appearing in *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya* (Socialist Industry), it was claimed that he had been introduced to the teachings of Krishna Consciousness by Anatoli Pinyayev.

Such an attack in the press usually ensures that sooner or later the person mentioned will be arrested, and in April 1982 Pinyayev also was charged with "parasitism". The investigating authorities, however, sent him to Moscow's Serbsky Institute for psychiatric examination, and the doctors ruled him not responsible. Interned in an Ordinary Psychiatric Hospital in Moscow, Pinyayev escaped in May and spent nearly a year in hiding before being recaptured. This time he was placed in the Smolensk Special Psychiatric Hospital (SPH), and was forcibly treated with drugs. Krishna supporters claim that such treatment affects them to