

about the private discussions, it appears that there were echoes in Dresden of the Protestants' experience with "grass-roots" dissidents. Banners calling attention to issues of, for example, ecology, abortion, peace, and the misuse of power represented the long-standing feeling among some Catholic lay people that the church has failed to take up a clear public stance on social issues.

Cardinal Meisner was reported as stating that "Christians must do their duty as churchmen and as citizens," and "Christians must not turn to the church as a mere place of refuge for pious persons. This land of ours is home for us Christians, as Christ lives in it." Such words, though measured, led to speculation that the Catholic Church might in future co-operate more readily with the state. No doubt too much was made of the Cardinal's pronouncements,

but the fact remains that the "Catholic Meeting" was reported very enthusiastically by the official press, and television news and current events programmes devoted a surprising amount of time to the occasion.

A remarkable degree of co-operation between the Protestant and Catholic Churches was evident during the summer events. For some years there has been no little distrust and misunderstanding between the Catholic and Protestant leaderships; these feelings partly reflect traditional conflicts dating from the Reformation, but spring also from differing attitudes to the state. There is now a much greater demand from the grass-roots for a "common front", and it seems as if there is progress in this direction.

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## Conscientious Objection: The Situation in Yugoslavia

Conscientious objection is becoming an important issue among young people in various countries of Eastern Europe. In the GDR, young men who object to bearing arms on grounds of conscience can now serve as *Bausoldaten* (mostly working on construction sites); in Poland the "Freedom and Peace" movement has taken up the cases of Jehovah's Witnesses who have been imprisoned; the pacifist nature of the Hungarian Basis communities is well known.\* But it is only in the last year or so that the issue has become important in Yugoslavia.

As the law in Yugoslavia stands at the moment, all men over the age of 18 are required to perform

12 months' basic military service, followed by reserve duties. Conscientious objection is not recognised as a right, and there is no provision for alternative civilian service. The only concession made to those who for reasons of conscience will not handle weapons was introduced in 1985: the federal authorities

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\*For recent articles and documents on conscientious objectors in the GDR, the "Freedom and Peace" movement in Poland, and the pacifist stance of the Hungarian basis communities, see, respectively, *RCL* Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 282-97; Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 320-23; Vol. 15 No. 1, pp.96-101.

permitted them to do "auxiliary" duties during their military service, presumably without handling weapons. However, as this takes place within the armed forces and in uniform, it has proved unacceptable and has not dissuaded conscientious objectors from refusing military service completely. The Yugoslav state relies for its defence on the involvement of all the population — all adults up to the age of fifty are required to undertake some form of defence duties, and compulsory military training is carried out in many workplaces. Those refusing military service on any grounds may be prosecuted under any of three articles of the federal criminal code: 201 ("refusal to obey orders"), 202 ("refusal to take up and use arms") and 214 ("not responding to military call-up"). Recently the authorities have published more information about conscientious objectors in an attempt to minimise their significance. The official news agency Tanjug reported on 24 December 1986 that "over the past 15 years, only 152 Yugoslav citizens have been convicted for refusing to carry weapons for religious reasons during military service." It added that of this "very small number" who refuse to perform military service on religious grounds "the majority belong to the Jehovah's Witnesses". There is no independent confirmation of this official figure.

Recently a number of peace groups have emerged in Yugoslavia. One of these, the Ljubljana Peace Working Group, which was created under the auspices of the Conference of Socialist Youth of the northern republic of Slovenia, has brought the cases of imprisoned conscientious objectors (including those objecting on religious grounds) to public notice, the first time details of individual cases have been made known since the release of a group of Nazarenes who

were imprisoned in the 1960s.

Most of the cases brought to light by the group are Jehovah's Witnesses from Slovenia. Jehovah's Witnesses from other republics, as well as Nazarenes and Adventists, have also been imprisoned for the same reason, although details on individual cases are sparse. The Ljubljana group has tried to initiate a dialogue on peace issues with these religious groups, but differences in background and motivation indicate that such a dialogue, though potentially interesting, may never get going.

The broadly-based political groups are concerned with the issue of providing alternatives to military service. While Jehovah's Witnesses and others would welcome this, they would be reluctant to campaign on a political level for such change. The traditional attitude of the Jehovah's Witnesses has been to avoid political action, and, mindful of the period between the wars when refusal to serve in the army led to the outlawing of the Jehovah's Witness Movement in Yugoslavia, the church leadership has made few public pronouncements on the issue of conscientious objection. (When questioned by the newspaper *Borba* (The Struggle) last December, the head of the Yugoslav Jehovah's Witnesses, Husein-Iso Marovic, stated that the church does not compel members to refuse military service, believing rather that it is a matter for the individual's conscience before God. However, he added that those who take weapons into their hands usually leave the Jehovah's Witnesses.) Many of those whose cases have been taken up by the Ljubljana group were at first reluctant to have their plight made public.

Most of the cases now brought to light concern believers serving second or third sentences, and it is the practice of repeated sentencing which has led to the re-emergence of

the conscientious objection debate among believers. Many recognise the penalties laid down for refusing to perform military service as legitimate and unavoidable, but balk at serving two or more sentences on the same charges. Attendance at an establishment of higher or further education used to allow conscientious objectors to delay their refusal until a later age, ensuring that they would only have to serve one sentence, but since 1980 all young men have been required to begin military service immediately on leaving secondary school. Ex-prisoners are called up directly after their release, so objectors can serve up to three sentences before the age of thirty, when call-up ceases. In April 1986 the Committee of Christian Nazarene Communities issued a petition which stated:

In principle, we are not protesting against serving a sentence for [refusal to bear arms] . . . but are protesting against the breach of Tito's decree of 28 October 1960, which ruled out the practice of repeated sentencing.

In October 1986 a group of six Jehovah's Witnesses from Maribor in Slovenia were called up. All six had already served sentences on charges connected with military service. At the call-up office, they all said that they would refuse to travel to their units, fully aware that they might be resented as a result. At the time, however, the question of alternatives to military service was the subject of much discussion in Slovenia, and in mid-December the authorities withdrew the call-up papers. The fact that they were reissued in February 1987 clearly indicates that the December withdrawal was a tactical move prompted by the current public concern. One of the Maribor six, Peter Jezernik, has subsequently had his call-up deferred because of his mother's ill-health.

Others of the group have gone into hiding to avoid arrest.

The case of Jehovah's Witness Ivan Čečko, who was resented for the third time in October 1986 at the age of thirty, also aroused much concern and was a major case for the Ljubljana Working Group. His sentence of five years' imprisonment had been opposed in the press, where it was pointed out that he was being punished three times over for the same offence, and he was released at the end of November 1986, after serving a total of 14 years in prison. Again, this leniency seemed to have more to do with the widespread protests at home and abroad than with any change of heart on the part of the authorities.

When Janko Cehel, one of the Maribor six, was called up it was for the third time. He had already served two sentences and in 1983 had taken up the issue of conscientious objection with the Defence Commission in Belgrade and the International Court of Justice in the Hague. In letters addressed to these bodies he outlined his objection to killing, quoting the Ten Commandments and "Love your neighbour as yourself". He protested at the efforts which had been made to "re-educate" him in prison: "Why should one be re-educated when one stands up for truth and loving-kindness?" But again, the main cause for complaint was repeated sentencing:

I cannot understand why one should be punished two (or even more) times for the same "crime". . . . Why should one be called up into service time and time again and be punished continuously?

His complaints received no satisfactory answer.

Janko Cehel also touched on the question, so widely debated recently in Slovenia, of providing alternative forms of service. He recalled that Jehovah's Witnesses had served

in non-combatant capacities, for example in medical units, alongside Tito's partisans. The Ljubljana Peace Working Group held meetings in December 1986 calling on the authorities to permit alternative service, and collected signatures in support of their cause. They won the support of the Slovenian Party President Jozе Smole, who stated that:

What is significant in those youth peace initiatives is that young people want to join more actively in the question of peace . . . and I think those initiatives deserve every support.

He also criticised those in other parts of Yugoslavia who presented such initiatives as a direct attack on the Yugoslav People's Army.

The initiative, however, met with little success. In this fragmented country, the army is one of the strongest unifying factors. Each army unit includes soldiers from each republic, and the implications of this for general stability make military

issues extremely sensitive. The government and military command are therefore reluctant to discuss even minor changes, and the current unstable situation means that the issue of conscientious objection is unlikely to be resolved soon. The initiative put forward by the Ljubljana group was interpreted by the authorities as a further indication of Slovenia's aspirations towards decentralisation, and was therefore brushed aside without due consideration. Jozе Smole had gone so far as to outline possible alternatives to military service, but these were not examined. On 15 January 1987, the Presidium of the Socialist Alliance (covering the whole of Yugoslavia) decided to reject the calls for an alternative form of civilian service, and stated that "no further debate should be conducted" on the initiative.

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## "The Role of Religion in our Society"

Over the past two years the Hungarian intellectual monthly, *Kritika*, has published a series of articles on religion in Hungary. These have been styled a "debate" under the title "The Role of Religion in Our Society". The series provides an insight into the kind of discussion about religion now current in official intellectual forums.

*Kritika* has a small readership mainly confined to the intelligentsia, and has an editorial policy which operates within the framework of party guidelines, although this framework does permit the question-

ing of party policy on peripheral issues. The contributors to this discussion on religion range from Marxist-oriented Christians to rigidly doctrinaire Marxists. Their tendency is to view religion from the outside as a socially-determined phenomenon subject to rational analysis. The absence of contributors whose views are not broadly in harmony with Marxism and the policies of the Hungarian communist party is one of the salient features of the discussion.

The main concern here is how critical thinkers should relate to religion in the light of Marxist