

## **Book Reviews**

*Nicholas Charnetsky, CSsR, Bishop-Confessor* by Stephen Joseph Bachtalowsky, CSsR (translated by George J. Pereira, CSsR). Yorkton, Saskatchewan: Redeemers Voice Press, n.d., 272 pp.

This book is both valuable and frustrating. Bishop Nicholas was a pivotal figure in the history of the Greek Catholic Church between the wars. He organised the Greek Catholic revival in Eastern Poland under very difficult, oppressive conditions. He is the first Redemptorist Greek Catholic bishop, and two of the Redemptorists whom he formed became archbishops in the underground Church in Soviet Ukraine: Archbishop Vasyl' Velychkovs'ky and Metropolitan Volodymyr Sterniuk. When Bishop Nicholas was released from prison he returned to L'viv and secretly ordained a considerable number of priests, some of whom are still serving in Ukraine today. Throughout the last three decades of the Soviet regime, Bishop Nicholas's grave in L'viv was a place of pilgrimage; it still is. This book is the only biography available in English, as the original is the only biography available in Ukrainian. Anyone interested in Bishop Nicholas, in the Greek Catholic Church, in Orthodox-Catholic relations, or in the religious history of Eastern Europe in the twentieth century needs to read this book.

Still, the book is frustrating. It was written (and apparently printed) well before the collapse of the Soviet Union, so the author did not have unimpeded access to persons or archives in Ukraine (or even in Poland). Thus there are serious gaps in the biography. One hopes that the Redemptorists in Ukraine will compile and publish a fuller biography of Bishop Nicholas, perhaps based on this present book, but supplementing it with the abundant materials now available.

Another lacuna is much harder to account for. Bachtalowsky refers to Bishop Nicholas as 'apostolic visitor', and gives the impression that the bishop's responsibility came to an end in 1939. However, late in 1939, Metropolitan Andrei (Sheptyts'ky), by virtue of the faculties he had received from Pope Pius X, appointed Bishop Nicholas Exarch of Volhynia, Podlachia, the Kholm region, and the Soviet-occupied section of Polesie. On 22 November 1941 Pope Pius XII confirmed this appointment and made Bishop Nicholas an apostolic exarch. That appointment was never rescinded; at Bishop Nicholas's death in 1959 he was still the lawful Bishop and Apostolic Exarch of Volhynia, Podlachia, the Kholm region and parts of Polesie. Bachtalowsky knew this; the information appears in Cyril Korolevsky's biography of Metropolitan Andrew, which Bachtalowsky cites several times in his footnotes. The knowledgeable reader can only wonder why Bachtalowsky chose to suppress any reference to the matter.

More positively, Bachtalowsky has had access to important private letters, some of which he quotes at length to bring out aspects of Bishop Nicholas's life and work. He also quotes the chronicals of the Redemptorist houses at Kostopil and Kovel'. These

sources add greatly to the value of the book.

Bishop Nicholas grew up in the Stanyslaviv (Ivano-Frankivsk) diocese, and had a warm friendship with Bishop Hryhory (Khomysyn), who sent him to Rome to study theology, ordained him to the priesthood in 1909, made him professor of Philosophy and Dogmatic Theology in the seminary in Stanyslaviv in 1910, allowed him to enter the Redemptorist novitiate in 1919, and eventually consecrated him to the episcopate in 1931. Bishop Nicholas and Bishop Hryhory held diametrically opposed views on the liturgical tradition and destiny of the Greek Catholic Church, and one would very much like to know how this matter (which was hotly debated throughout the period) affected the relationship between the two. Unfortunately, Bachtalowsky gives us no information.

Bishop Nicholas' work, as priest and later as bishop, in the areas of Volhynia, Podlachia, Polesie, and Belarus', where the Greek Catholic Church had been suppressed in 1839 and 1875, but where he and his fellow-workers were able to organise at least 40 parishes despite oppressive Polish restrictions, is of interest, and Bachtalowsky gives some vital information in chapters 3 and 4, but one wants much more. The Poles were bitterly opposed to the Greek Catholic revival; why did they suddenly change their tactics in the middle of the 1920s and permit this restricted apostolate? Bachtalowsky mentions various localities, mostly villages, in which the Greek Catholic revival was successful; one wants a complete list. In a letter of 23 March 1933 (which Bachtalowsky cites on p. 85) Bishop Nicholas wrote that he had 46 parishes, and more villages were asking. At the Church Unity Conference in L'viv in December 1936 Bishop Nicholas stated that he had 50 parishes (p. 250). According to Polish sources, there were 40 parishes in 1939 (list on p. 73, *Kościół Katolicki W Polsce 1918-1990* (Główny Urząd Statystyczny Zakład Socjologii Religii SAC, Warsaw 1991); surely there is a discrepancy to be accounted for.

Above all, Bachtalowsky tells us nothing about the fate of these parishes during and after the Second World War. At least fourteen of the parishes remained in Polish territory after the Yalta boundary changes, but only one parish continues to function: the Church of Saint Niketas the Martyr, Kostomłoty. Bishop Nicholas' signature appears a few times in the parish record-books, and the parishioners still honour his memory. Bachtalowsky does not mention the parish anywhere, even though he seems to have consulted Father Julian Habrusevych, a priest ordained by Bishop Nicholas who served in Kostomłoty before the Second World War and then emigrated to Canada.

Bachtalowsky mentions the Polish 'revindication', by which the Polish government and the Polish hierarchy collaborated in the interwar period to deprive the Orthodox of large numbers of church buildings and properties, on the pretext that these properties had once been Greek Catholic; on pp. 93–94, he gives a partial translation of the text of Metropolitan Andrei's pastoral letter denouncing this programme of the confiscation of Orthodox churches and the forced conversion of Orthodox villagers to Roman Catholicism. One would like further information. Cyril Korolevsky, writing in 1956 and 1957, hinted that he knew more than he was telling; 20 years later Bachtalowsky might have unearthed and revealed some of the details.

Bachtalowsky's chief aim is to support the movement for the eventual glorification of Bishop Nicholas among the saints (in which this reviewer heartily concurs). He devotes special attention to Bishop Nicholas' difficult life in L'viv during the Second World War, and his ten years in the Soviet prisons. Bishop Nicholas was arrested with the other Greek Catholic hierarchs in the Soviet Union on 10 April 1945. He underwent 18 months of interrogation in Kiev, and was sentenced to five years' hard

labour. It was difficult for his friends and monastic brethren to keep track of him; Bachtalowsky did not have a complete itinerary of where Bishop Nicholas served his sentence, and how long he was in which prison, but he does give some valuable quotes from other prisoners who were eventually released and had encountered Bishop Nicholas during their incarceration in the Gulag Archipelago. The bishop was certainly in Mariinsk, Vorkuta, Vyatka, Inta, Pot'ma and Mordovia, and may have been in other prisons as well.

The expiry of the five year sentence did not bring about the bishop's release, but in 1956 Bishop Nicholas was ill with jaundice, dropsy and other diseases and could hardly walk; the communist authorities released him and allowed him to return to L'viv, although of course without authorisation to function as a minister of religion. Fortunately, the Sisters of St Vincent were still working in the Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'ky Hospital in L'viv (although they no longer owned or administered the hospital, and the name had been changed). The sisters were able to arrange the bishop's admission to the hospital, and he recovered to some extent.

The bishop and another Redemptorist took a small apartment in L'viv. The police watched them closely, but the bishop was able to serve the liturgy in a corner of his room behind a curtain. He was also able to ordain priests; he was the only Greek Catholic bishop able to function at all in L'viv since 1945. Many priests asked the bishop to ordain another bishop, but he refused, pleading that he had no authority to do so. He nominated Father Vasyl' Velychkovsky for the episcopate and secretly forwarded the nomination to Rome; eventually Metropolitan (later Cardinal and Patriarch) Iosyf Slipyj consecrated Father Velychkovsky in Moscow in 1963, just before Metropolitan Iosyf left the USSR after John XXIII had obtained his release from prison.

In January 1959, Bishop Nicholas again fell ill; he returned to the hospital and was operated on for intestinal cancer. The operation was successful, but nevertheless on 2 April 1959 the bishop had a relapse and died, very peacefully. He was vested, and the underground clergy came to conduct the funeral; an enormous procession, fully 2km long, accompanied the coffin to the cemetery.

Bachtalowsky, the author, knew Bishop Nicholas personally and revered him. He was well placed to write this biography, and gives a wealth of detail which other authors would not have known. Unfortunately, Bachtalowsky allows his distaste for the Russian Orthodox Church to embitter his writing in some passages, and extends the Ukrainian nationalist agenda rather beyond its limits (he speaks repeatedly of the 'Ukrainian Catholic Church', in places where that term was never used and would not have been appropriate, and he almost completely ignores the Belarusian component of the Greek Catholic Church). It is doubtful whether Bishop Nicholas would have condoned such expressions, and they will detract, unfortunately, from the solid value of the book. Still, the reader should be prepared to overlook these lapses and accept the wealth of information which the book provides. The English translation is uneven, and the translator does not use standard terminology for some expressions (the reader who is unfamiliar with Eastern Europe will be puzzled, for example, because the translator constantly speaks of Halychyna while the map on p. 73 shows Galicia).

Redeemer's Voice Press has made little or no effort to promote this book; I discovered its existence quite by chance and succeeded in obtaining it only through a friend who is a Ukrainian Redemptorist priest. The book deserves to be far more widely distributed. One also wonders at the lack of any publication date. Father Bachtalowsky died in 1984; the most recent publication cited in the footnotes is

dated 1979 so evidently he wrote the book not long before his death. The prologue, by Father Michael Bzdel (then Provincial of the Ukrainian Redemptorists in Canada, now Metropolitan of Winnipeg), seems to indicate that the English translation was completed and printed as part of the observances of the Millennium of the Baptism of Rus'-Ukraine, thus perhaps in 1988. It was certainly printed after 1985, because the map on p. 73 is taken from another book published in that year.

The book is illustrated with a number of interesting photographs. Most of them have appeared elsewhere over the years, but it is useful to have them collected here.

SERGE KELEHER

*Tchèques et slovaques: témoins de la foi* by Didier Rance. Mareil-Marty, Paris: Aide à l'église en détresse, Bibliothèque AED, 1993, 352 pp. Paperback.

The celebrant and dozens of worshippers at the first post-war Levoča pilgrimage were blown up by a bomb planted inside the altar. The regime subsequently proceeded more subtly, making a clear distinction between rank and file church membership, which was permitted, and the church as an institution, which was undermined. Nevertheless, Rance believes, it was more difficult for Catholics to maintain their faith in Czechoslovakia than elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Religion was reduced to being a private matter. Article 178 criminalised all activity outside the four walls of the church. The threat of revocation of their licences hung over the heads of clergy like the Sword of Damocles; after 1968 only 50 per cent were in parishes. Religious orders were suppressed and three quarters of their members incarcerated in concentration convents, where half failed to survive 20 years.

This book is based on interviews with some of those who refused to accept such constriction, mainly, though not entirely, from the Slovak underground. It provides fascinating details of how the underground worked. One activist spent his weekends making round trips through Slovakia by rail carrying clandestinely printed journals, animating groups, collecting signatures for petitions — activities which provided staple fare in this journal and *Keston News Service*. Slovak leaders met Czech leaders four times a year.

The book has its limitation. Rance makes no attempt to be comprehensive. There is one document on the vexed issue of married priests, which is correctly seen as largely a Moravian phenomenon. The ambiguous role of the church under Josef Tiso is not referred to as a contributory factor in the bitter suppression of the Slovak Church. Disappointingly, there is no mention of the Greek Catholics, nor of Hungarians. The first certainly were involved; were the Hungarians? A comparison between Czech and Slovak conditions would have been welcome. Czech Catholics maintain that their faith had to be deeper to resist the greater secularisation and isolation imposed by Czech society; that Slovak religion was more a communal than a private affair.

The stages of the development of the Christian Slovak Movement are traced. Dr Silvester Krčméry emerged from 13 years in prison to find churches almost empty. He and his friend Vladimír Jukl sat in cafes chatting to Bratislava students trying to bring them round to discussing religion. It was two years before they had any response, and that came from students in science, medical and technical institutes, not from law, the humanities or the seminaries. As a group reached double figures,

too large to function as one trusting supportive community, some members would leave to found a new group. The constituencies that the groups were reaching started to diversify: young people, high school pupils, children, families, the handicapped, expectant mothers, alcoholics, drug addicts. Divorcee Ivanka Gregorova started groups for deserted wives and broken families.

A typical meeting would include a period of prayer and meditation based on the Gospel, study led by a priest or trained lay person, and discussion about practical apostolate. Groups continually switched venues and used covers like dance parties and sports holidays; one priest learnt to ski in his sixties so as to participate convincingly! The police would discover and harass a group here and there, but thanks to the determination of the younger people not to be intimidated the movement outgrew the capacity of the police to control it, and eventually had over 100,000 participants. One might have expected that from such an active nucleus a resurgent and renewed church would have grown. Krčméry pinpointed a key failure, however: most members did not become familiar enough with the scriptures. Some of those interviewed have reservations about the way the groups developed.

Today, more than six years after the end of communism, Christian activists involved with various projects may encounter deliberate obstruction from local authorities, which are often still communist-dominated. They may also meet misunderstanding from the church itself, as in the case of dance schools set up by the church to counter 'promiscuous' discothèques. Lazarist Fr Miroslav bewails the tendency of churchgoers to seek to return to the security and formality of the prewar period, particularly in rural areas. 'This involves hypocrisy and duplicity. Ironically, certain regions which prior to 1989 were strongly Catholic are in the process of becoming bastions of nationalist neocommunist and xenophobia'. Communism, argued the late Fr Josef Zvěřina, created a 'spiritual Chernobyl'. Fr Miroslav sees the extent of devastation in his own parish in a suburb of Bratislava: 200 at mass out of 80,000, and parents, still fearing the return of the communists, refusing to enrol their children in school catechism classes. 'Some children even attend without telling them.' Eighty per cent of young workers are said to be addicted to alcohol and drugs. A similar secularisation prevails along the Hungarian frontier where church attendance is down to seven per cent as compared with 60–80 per cent in the north.

'The whole system was built up on lies. This has effected the innate human capacity for trust in one another, for faith. Even children realised this, and didn't believe what adults told them,' says Sister Jana. 'We can do a lot to reconstruct the exterior of the Church but if this isn't done in Spirit and Truth it will lead nowhere.'

This book by Rance is part of a popular-format series called 'Témoins' representing valuable pioneer work by Aid to the Church in Need. The books deserve to be translated into other languages in order to make the heroic record of how ordinary Christians coped under communism more widely available.

JANICE BROUN

*Roumanie: Courage et fidélité: l'église gréco-catholique unie* by Didier Rance. Mareil-Marky, Paris: Aide à l'église en détresse, Bibliothèque AED, 1994, 332 pp. Paperback.

The 1993 Balamand Statement by the Orthodox–Roman Catholic Joint Commission,

that Uniatism is neither a method to be followed nor a desirable model for unity, by-passed those most crucially involved — the Greek Catholic Churches whose feelings of betrayal are understandable. As so often, top-level church deliberations barely impinge at local level, especially in Romania where most Greek Catholic congregations still have to worship in the open air.

Although the Romanian Greek Catholic church re-emerged in December 1989, there is still much to discover about what went on in the catacombs. By what means did the church, in particular the faithful remnant, survive? How far has the church, once 1.6 million strong, been able to reclaim and reintegrate former members and recover its property, including up to 2,000 churches? Rance's book challenges the premises on which the Orthodox hierarchy base their case: that with only 228,000 adherents, the church shows no sign of recovering its constituency. How does a Romanian peasant fill in a census form in which the choice allowed him is Hungarian or Orthodox? A spokesman for the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church instances the disproportion between the declared membership on the one hand, and the hundreds of priests training on the other, as evidence of the creation of 'a long-term permanent army ready to proselytise among the Orthodox'.

Though Rance's remit is to present the Catholic viewpoint, he also interviews Orthodox sympathetically and is patently distressed by the mutual antagonisms he uncovers. The bitter polemics in the five year-long property restitution dispute indicate the extent to which communism has warped people's memories of their fruitful interethnic and interconfessional coexistence in precommunist Transylvania. 'We were all marked, even those of us most opposed to communism', admits the redoubtable Vicar-General Tertulian Langa, but as Vinca Cernea emphasises, '... the conflict isn't between the Churches. It is provoked by a nationalist, neocommunist current unrepresentative of our people as a whole which exploits Orthodoxy to attack Catholics'. Orthodox Bishop Bartolomeu Anania admits that the Orthodox dare not return a single church in Cluj — 'if we did, the people would leave us'.

Some Greek Catholics preferred to worship in the alien tongue and liturgy in Hungarian Catholic churches. Often their children lapsed. Most acquiesced, remaining in churches which had had to become Orthodox. There was a world of difference between, for instance, the backwater of rural Masramureş 95 per cent Greek Catholic, and sophisticated, highly literate Cluj, whose inhabitants switched easily amongst Romanian, Hungarian and German in conversation. In Maramureş the Orthodox Church deliberately erected modern church buildings so as to destroy the peasants' emotional ties with their wooden churches.

The evidence Rance presents suggests that, with rare exceptions where highly motivated individuals have been involved, the Catholics have not regained the villages, where communism destroyed community life and local pride, and where continuing poverty and apathy is furthered by depopulation and intimidation — including physical violence — from an unholy alliance of members of the security services and Orthodox priests. An Orthodox bishop admits that in the sprawling new urban areas, his church attracts only five per cent of the population, and that the Orthodox too lack the buildings and resources to launch reevangelisation. In the towns, too, both Orthodox and Catholics now encounter competition from Protestants. Where the Greek Catholic church scores is in its ardent young intelligentsia, who are drawn by the self-sacrifice and integrity of Greek Catholic confessors, of which Rance provides ample testimony. 'The compromises of the Orthodox hierarchy ensured that most young people regard religion as hypocrisy', testifies one convert.

The popular format and provisional character of much of Rance's book, based as it

is on interviews conducted as he travelled round the dioceses, should not detract from its value. It is the first available study in the West, since their church's rehabilitation, which tries to do justice to the Calvary the Greek Catholics endured. There are many more harrowing memoirs to be recorded, and also a need for constant monitoring of local developments. In the long term, we need a comprehensive survey; but Rance's book is an excellent start.

JANICE BROWN

*Bosnia and Herzegovina: a Tradition Betrayed* by Robert J. Donia and John V.A. Fine, Jr. London: C. Hurst, 1994, 318 pp. £9.50.

The tragedy of Bosnia has led to a spate of books to defend Bosnians and their traditional multicultural society. Academics, who would perhaps have preferred their lectures and research to be limited to university circles, now feel under obligation to clarify the issues and to correct misconceptions which have had appalling consequences. This book and Noel Malcolm's *Bosnia, a Short History* (Macmillan, London, 1994, £17.50) should be compulsory reading for everyone involved in Bosnia, politicians and soldiers in particular. Donia and Fine are more concise, less detailed, drier in style, seeking to discern patterns and key long-term traditions — such as the role of the Franciscans — rather than to describe events. Lucidly and broadly they discuss elements in the social and religious background, in particular, which are relevant to the current strife. Their particular strength lies in the first six chapters, which succinctly summarise Fine's work on the medieval Balkans and the Bosnian church in which he effectively demolishes the accepted belief that Bosnian Muslims are descended from persecuted Bogomils, and Donia's on the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. (See Fine's book *The Bosnian Church: a New Interpretation* (East European Monographs, Boulder and New York, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1975), and Donia's *Islam under the Double Eagle: the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1878-1914* (East European Monographs, 1981). Their joint book is illustrated with well-chosen old drawings, photographs and practical sketch maps.)

Fine defines medieval Bosnia as an isolated mountain-girt no-man's-land in which no faith established a secure foothold. He points out that it was the Hungarians who accused Bosnians of heresy, as a pretext for intervention. In fact, the Bosnian Church accepted an omnipotent God, the Trinity, church buildings, the cross, the cult of saints, religious art and part of the Old Testament, and had amicable relations with the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Any deviations from strict Orthodoxy owed far more to the isolation of the Bosnian Church from mainstream Christian developments than to contact with the dualists of the more sophisticated Dalmatian coastal cities. The Bosnian Church was weak institutionally, based on monasteries, with no political power or leanings. The peasant majority probably had little contact with any church; none of the surviving medieval church buildings are big enough to hold a sizeable congregation. Fine's meticulous examination of Ottoman records shows no rapid large-scale conversions to Islam; indeed, at the time of the Ottoman conquest, many Bosnians joined the Orthodox Church. Muslims were not in a majority until the seventeenth century; by 1878, they were in a minority again. An illuminating comparison is made with Albania, which also lacked any flourishing state church and

experienced changes in confession unparalleled elsewhere in the Balkans during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and whose Muslim landowners were not expelled when the empire broke up.

Fine and Donia stress that Bosnia-Herzegovina had more durable, widely accepted borders than any territory assembled by either Serbia or Croatia. They point out how those familiar with Bosnian history ask how after centuries of tranquil and tolerant coexistence, Bosnians can suddenly turn on each other and commit appalling atrocities. They argue that Bosnia had no history of interethnic or religious hatred or strife, and that in the context of Bosnian history the present crisis is a historical aberration, albeit with a single important precedent, the interethnic slaughter of the Second World War which was initiated and provoked by chauvinist neighbours. Donia argues that the main division in Bosnia's society after the Ottoman takeover was not religious but social and legal. The Austrians, perceiving the Serbs as the group most likely to oppose them, left the agrarian question unresolved, as it remained until 1946, when the communist government handed the land to the people who tilled it. The historical legacy, then, is not a centuries-old ethnic hatred, but something which can be exploited and greatly distorted by leaders with ulterior motives to poison relations between Bosnia's peoples. The fatal division between Serbs and Croats came only relatively late in Bosnian history, under the impetus of outside nationalist influences. The Ecumenical Patriarchate's appointment of Greek bishops instead of Serbs after 1766 discouraged the provision of Orthodox schools and left the lay teachers in urban schools increasingly susceptible to the influence of nationalism in Serbia and identification as Serbs. Meanwhile, Franciscans educated in Croatia encouraged Croat nationalism in their schools.

The authors emphasise the idiosyncratic nature of Bosnia's religious profile and the general tepidity of Bosnians' religious commitment. After centuries of shifting religious allegiance, by the last century Bosnia was divided among entrenched religious groups, each with its own distinct cultural practices, costumes and cuisine. The differences were also reflected spatially, with Muslims dominant in the cities, and towns and villages normally belonging to one religious community.

In his description of Bosnian ethnography, Fine makes no mention by name of the Vlachs, who still spoke a corrupt Latin in the sixteenth century, though he does note their distinctive lifestyle, which moved from transhumance to brigandage and war. Malcolm, by contrast, devotes an entire chapter to them, in which he argues that the one component of the Bosnian population which has a large and identifiable element of non-Slav ancestry, the Vlachs, is, paradoxically, the Bosnian Serbs. To quote Fine, 'they make up a significant part of those who are today shelling Bosnian cities'.

It was only from the beginning of this century that the Serbs and Croats both started claiming Muslims as their allies, since both needed them. 'This was the central reality of post-Ottoman Bosnia until 1992'. The Muslims have been at the fulcrum of political life, adept at seeking a durable political alignment, pragmatic coalition builders, and as a result regarded by other southern Slavs as cynical opportunists. Thus Donia, reflecting a Bosnian Muslim viewpoint and the benefits Tito's nationalities policy and non-aligned foreign policy eventually brought them, perhaps overestimates Tito's success. He notes that most Bosnian Muslims involved in foreign links found Islamic fundamentalism uncongenial. He places President Alija Izetbegovic firmly in the tradition of Mehmed Shaho and other Muslim leaders who, while attentive to the specific interests of their Muslim constituents, often collaborated with broader, multinational political entities. 'For most of the twentieth century the multinational viewpoint has been the dominant trait, the Islamic or

Muslim nationalist the recessive trait.’

It is disappointing, in view of his familiarity with Islamic society, that Donia nowhere addresses the specific role of the wider Islamic world in the present conflict, or the upsurge in (imported) fundamentalist Islam. In view of the ample coverage of religious elements in precommunist Bosnia, there could have been more in the final two chapters of this wise and well argued book.

JANICE BROWN