

# News in Brief

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

### *Resolution on Human Rights*

The National Council of the Churches of Christ (NCCC) in the USA adopted a Resolution on Human Rights and Religious and Political Suppression on 11 November 1977, shortly after the 60th anniversary celebration of the Bolshevik Revolution. Referring to the amnesty proclamation issued by the Soviet government on that occasion, the NCCC appealed to President Brezhnev to release, "in the spirit of Helsinki", all those imprisoned for religious and political reasons. The resolution also appealed to President Carter and all religious communities in the USA to work on behalf of all victims of suppression wherever they may be. The policy base for this resolution is "Approval of Article 13 of the Draft International Covenant of Human Rights", adopted by the General Board on 28 November 1951.

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TIBET

### *Tibetan Leader Reappears*

Second in importance to the Dalai Lama as a Tibetan spiritual leader is the Panchen Lama. He was one of the delegates to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Peking, although no reference was made to his religious position. This was the Panchen Lama's first public reappearance since 1964 when he was removed from his post as acting chairman of the committee responsible for preparing Tibet's new status as an autonomous region. He was dismissed by Chou En-lai, the Chinese

Premier, and reported to have been arrested in China for having opposed "the people, the fatherland and socialism". Since his disappearance contradictory reports have circulated: that in July 1969 he escaped from a Chinese labour camp to Outer Mongolia, that he was dead and then that he had returned to Tibet three months ago from Paris. This reappearance of the Panchen Lama, aged about 40, is the latest of a number of signs indicating a more conciliatory attitude by Chinese officials; but it is unlikely to have any significance for the future of Buddhism in Tibet where there are now only 300 practising monks as compared to one quarter of the male population 20 years ago.

## CHINA

### *Religious Thaw*

According to a report in *Herder Korrespondenz*, there is no evidence to support speculation that the policies of the new leadership in China could result in a thaw with regard to religion. Even indirect references to religion in the press have decreased since 1975, though they still appear in progress reports on Tibet and Sin-kiang. The latter was an Islamic province, and recently there have been reports of conflicts over the toleration of Islamic customs. In the whole of China there are said to be one or two mosques, three monasteries in Tibet, one Protestant church and one Catholic church. Nonetheless, the Vatican has recently expressed optimism about "positive factors" in Chinese society which could lead to a revival of

Christianity. Some of the bishops who were consecrated without Rome's consent are now known to have freedom of movement and to be working on production. But there is still no dialogue between the Chinese government and the Church. (*Herder Korrespondenz*, Vol. 10, October 1977)

### *Survival of House Churches*

An interview with a young Christian from China, Miss Wong, which appeared in a recent issue of *China Talk*, a newsletter published by the China Liaison Office, Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church, Hong Kong, describes her family's experience of religious worship. Coming from a Christian and peasant family Miss Wong says "as far as I know no one in the village suffered" during the time of the Cultural Revolution. Some of the communist cadres are also Christians and "occasionally, they would ask us not to sing too loudly during house worship; but other than that, they did their work and we did ours". One cadre member in Miss Wong's area joked at the baptism of about 100 people during the winter, that if any of the small children and elderly people, who had been baptised, caught cold he might get into trouble with his boss. Miss Wong went on to add that "nothing happened and no one caught cold".

Indigenous house churches observe Saturday as the Sabbath because normally there is no work on that day, and people participate in meetings "when-ever they are free and interested". Miss Wong insists that her church was never related to "foreigners" although "we have some members whose job it is to travel around our country visiting other house churches and shepherding members and recent converts". (*Ecumenical Press Service*, February 1978)

### ANGOLA

#### *Baptist Leader Visits Europe*

The President of the Angola Baptist Convention, Mr Adelino Manuel Chiludulo, returned to Luanda recently after a visit to Portugal where he worked on plans to ship 3,000 Bibles to

Angola for use in Baptist work. (*European Baptist Press Service*, 4 January 1978)

### MOZAMBIQUE

#### *Churches Revive*

The visits to Mozambique of two South Africans took place during October/November 1977. Mrs Contacne Koza, Director of the ASCC Inter-Church Division of the South African Council of Churches was issued with an invitation by the Mozambique Christian Council, the General Secretary of which is the Rev. Mahlahlela of the Methodist Church. The Rev. David Bruno, Director of the Mission Department of the Church of the Province of South Africa, visited Mozambique as part of his routine tours to different dioceses of the Church of the Province throughout Southern Africa.

Both of the visitors were surprised by the relaxed, friendly atmosphere and lack of restrictions during their stays, even though Mr Bruno had to wait several weeks for his visa to enter the country. Mrs Koza attended a church conference, held in a theological school outside Maputo, which is an indication that the direct pressure on churches brought by the Portuguese government has eased considerably over the past six months under the Frelimo regime. "Churches and Christians have recovered their self-confidence and courage; they have tended to stand up more to attempts to pressurize them," says Mr Bruno. Both Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches have increased the scope of their mission activity. The rapid indigenization process which the Roman Catholic Church underwent has paved the way for closer cooperation between churches. For example in a part of the north Anglicans and Catholics now share the same priest.

State policy, however, could be reversed again at any time. The Churches also have internal problems such as a shortage of trained Anglican clergy and the loss of proper training facilities to the government about nine months after independence. In addition communications and structures between and within churches suffered under the Portuguese

era and need to be rebuilt. Nevertheless, the churches have their human resources, the dedicated Christians on the grass-roots level as well as leaders of great stature. One of the emerging leaders is Bishop Dinis Singulane of the Anglican Church who is also president of the Christian Council of Mozambique. Mr Bruno calls him a "superb chairman ... and God's gift to the Church". (*Kairos*, December 1977)

## VIETNAM

*Bishop Arrested*

According to reliable sources in Vietnam, François Yavier Nguyen Van Thuan, the Catholic Suffragan Bishop of Saigon, is under arrest in the North. This is the first news of him since his disappearance in March 1975. (*Herder Korrespondenz*, Vol. 9, September 1977)

## CUBA

*Ecumenical Youth Congress*

The first congress of ULAJE-Cuba (Union of Latin American Ecumenical Youth) was held late last year in the Methodist Home and Church in Vedado, Havana, with about 100 young people attending. They represented Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Salvation Army, Pentecostal Church of God, Society of Friends (Quakers), Evangelical Association, Episcopal and Seventh Day Adventist Churches. Its purpose was to promote ways in which Christian young people could live their faith in a socialist society by uniting effective testimony with a commitment to the construction of a better world.

The three working papers for the study sessions, "Youth and Society", "Youth and Church", and "Youth and Ecumenism", were presented by groups from the towns of Ciego de Avila, Havana and Sancti-Spiritus respectively.

A new National Executive Committee was elected with the Rev. Hector Mendez, a Presbyterian pastor, as the General Secretary. Other members are: Orestes David Gonzalez, a Presbyterian engineering student; Noel Fernandez, a Baptist accountant; Professor Pedro Omar Mirabel, a Methodist professor of English,

and the Rev. Elmer Lavastida, a Baptist pastor. (*Ecumenical Press Service*, 2 February 1978)

## ALBANIA

*Three Roman Catholic Bishops Disappear*

Three Albanian Roman Catholic bishops disappeared after the Albanian government prevented them from performing their religious duties early in 1977. The three are Mgr Ernesto Coba, titular bishop of Mideo, Apostolic Administrator of Shkodra; Mgr Antonin Fishta OFM, titular bishop of Amizone, Apostolic Administrator "ad nutum Sanctae Sedis" of Pult; and Mgr Nicola Troshani, titular bishop of Cisamo, Apostolic Administrator of Durres. Today no one knows where they are living or whether they are still alive. There was a report a few months ago that Mgr Fishta had probably died in 1973 after much suffering, but he is still listed in the *Annuario Pontificio* for 1978. These bishops, never able to fulfil their office, have faced increased troubles since Enver Hoxha's speech in 1967. All the dioceses, seven judicial areas, in Albania are vacant.

*Kremlin Accused of Using Religion to Exploit Workers*

ATA, the Albanian news agency, has accused a "revisionist Soviet clique" of helping distribute religious literature in the Soviet Union. Specifically it states that the collected works of Patriarch Pimen, a third edition of the Bible, New Testament and various prayer books and theological works have recently appeared. The Albanian agency sees in this evidence that "powers in the Kremlin are using the opium of religion to deceive, oppress and exploit the broad working masses". (*AKSA*, 24 February 1978)

## YUGOSLAVIA

*Ecumenical Bible and Liturgy Printed*

The first joint Bible and liturgy for Lutheran and Catholic Slovaks has been printed. This first ecumenical edition of

the Bible in Slovak has been printed by Kršćanska Sadašnost in Zagreb. Various scholars and theological students from both denominations helped prepare the edition. (*Glas Koncila*, 4 December 1977, p. 13)

#### *Baptist Church in Zagreb Enlarged*

In December 1977 work on enlarging the sanctuary of the Baptist church in Zagreb was completed. The amount of space now available has been almost doubled; the back wall has been removed and the church has gained possession of the flat behind it. While the work was in progress, the Baptists used the sanctuary of the Lutheran church in Zagreb. Recently cooperation between the two denominations has developed; this began with the co-founding of the Protestant Theological Faculty in Zagreb, housed on premises of the Lutheran church.

#### *Serbian Orthodox School in Sarajevo*

The Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church has decided to open a theological school in Sarajevo as soon as its buildings are returned to it. (AKSA, 7 October 1977)

#### *Indirect Criticism of Soviet Religious Policy by Yugoslavs*

The Yugoslav news bulletin AKSA reports on the criticism in *L'Osservatore Romano* of the legal ambiguities which exist in some socialist countries: on the basis of unknown and unwritten laws citizens have been imprisoned for actions which, according to their country's official code, are not punishable by imprisonment. In many places, particularly in Russia, the report continues, believers are practising their faith in the manner of the Church of the catacombs. (AKSA, 2 December 1977)

#### EAST GERMANY

#### *Evangelical Synod Elects Lay Chairman*

The Third Synod of the Evangelical Church Federation in the GDR, for the first time, elected a layman as its head. The 62 Synod representatives met from 21-23 October 1977 in Herrnhut at

the United Brethren Centre and elected Siegfried K. Wahrmann, who works in the textile trade, as their chairman. The Executive Committee of the Federation re-elected Bishop Albrecht Schönherr as President. The vice-presidents are the Lutheran Bishop of Magdeburg, Werner Krusche, and the President of the Chancellery of the Church of Saxony, Kurt Domsch.

The Synod heard reports on the activities of the Secretariat, the "Diakonisches Werk", Home Missions and social workers. Mr. Ernst Petzold explained that the Protestant Diaconate in the GDR could not be expanded because of insufficient funds and personnel. Now, he said, it was necessary to consolidate experience and direct it to particular situations and needs. (*Ecumenical Press Service*, 26 October 1977)

#### *Magdeburg Diocese Comments on Emigration*

In a report issued on 2 December 1977, the leaders of the Lutheran diocese of Magdeburg criticized the treatment of would-be emigrants by the East German authorities. Because applications to emigrate are treated as illegal, applicants feel insecure and consider that they are being treated arbitrarily. The report calls for more opportunities to travel to Western countries and for greater freedom of religion in the GDR, particularly in educational institutions. This would make East German citizens more willing to live voluntarily in the GDR.

This report follows remarks by Bishop Werner Krusche of Magdeburg at a press conference at the Evangelical Church Federation Synod in October 1977: he referred to the role of the Church in helping people who wish to emigrate, adding that the Church had encouraged people to stay in the GDR since the 1950s. Christians should not ask what rights they have, he continued, but what their responsibility is to those who are obliged to remain in the country. However, "the State should not concentrate firstly on ensuring security at its borders but on making life easier", Bishop Krusche said. Although some people wanted to leave because of family ties, others had difficulty in integrating into society. The Bishop asked, "If we cannot heal them should

we not let them go?" He concluded that the Church had a duty towards those who had been refused emigration, and should help them to reintegrate. (*Le Monde*, 4 December 1977; *Ecumenical Press Service*, 26 October 1977)

#### *Pentecostal Conference*

The Pentecostal section of the Union of Free Churches in the GDR held its annual conference in Leipzig in September 1977. Foreign guests included Mr and Mrs J. J. Zbinden and Pastor Brian Edwards from Britain, visitors from Hungary and a Pentecostal pastor from Siberia. There was a much greater spirit of unity than on previous occasions and the prejudice and mistrust towards Pentecostals felt by other free churches in the Union seemed to have been overcome. (*Euroflame*, November 1977)

#### POLAND

#### *Bishops' Call for Cooperation*

The Polish Bishops' Conference which met in Czeszochowa in September 1977, associated itself with efforts to overcome Poland's present economic difficulties. In a call for "patriotic unity" the bishops urged all sections of society to conscientious work, self-denial and confidence in the government so as to overcome the difficulties which faced the country. The declaration shows the readiness of the Church to lay aside its disagreements with the State when circumstances demand it. (*AKSA*, 24 September 1977)

#### *New Churches in Warsaw Diocese*

The Polish authorities have given permission for 15 new churches to be built in Warsaw. Negotiations for the new churches have been going on for a long time. Bishop Modzelewski, in announcing the development, welcomed it as a sign of improving relations between State and Church. (*AKSA*, 4 November 1977)

#### *Konstanty Lubenski Dies*

Konstanty Lubenski, a committed Polish Catholic and prominent statesman and public figure, died on 25 September 1977.

Up to his death he was a member of the Council of State and a deputy in the Sejm (Parliament), vice-chairman of the Front of National Unity, chairman of the "Znak" group of parliamentary deputies and president of the Warsaw Club of Catholic Intellectuals. He had been decorated with the Order of the Banner of Labour (2nd class), the Order of the Polish Renaissance and other state awards. (*Kierunki*, No. 40, 2 October 1977, p. 2)

#### *Baptists Sponsor Youth Camps*

Approximately 350 young people from 15 to 22 years took part in youth camps at nine different locations over the summer of 1977 in Poland. The camps were sponsored by the youth committee of the Baptist Union of Poland. About 50 of the young people were said to have made professions of faith during the camp and another 50 to have begun active schedules of worship and Bible study. The Polish Baptists also held two children's camps during the early summer. The one at Radosc had 250 participants. (*European Baptist Press Service*, 18 November 1977)

#### *Anniversary of First Baptist Congregation*

Baptists in Poland will celebrate 120 years of Christian witness since the country's first Baptist congregation was started in Adamow, some 60 km. from Warsaw in 1858. They will observe the anniversary on 6-12 November 1978 with the theme "Faith, Hope and Love". In keeping with their ecumenical stance, representatives from Unions in neighbouring republics have been invited to participate.

In the 18th century as many as 600 Anabaptist congregations were concentrated in southern and eastern Poland prior to their persecution and expulsion by Catholics. The Polish Anabaptist movement was dominated by Faustus Socinus, who lived in Poland after 1579, and was popular among the nobility amongst whom Socinian doctrines were prevalent.

Some 100 years after the Anabaptists disappeared, the first Baptist congregation in Poland was formed when 12 people were baptized by a delegation of

three German-speaking believers from Stoltzenberg, near Königsberg in the Baltic area which was then Polish territory. The three had come in response to correspondence with the school teacher of Adamow who had become convinced of his need for a personal faith in Christ and desired baptism after serious study of the Bible.

From 1858 until the First World War, Baptists were found mainly among German-speaking peoples living in Poland. After the war their witness spread to Ukrainian, Russian, White Russian and Czech, as well as Polish, populations. At one point there were 20,000 baptized church members.

A Slavic-speaking Baptist Union was formed in 1927 and, for a time, there was also a German-speaking Union. Following the Second World War, this large number of Baptists declined to only a few hundred when many returned to their own nations.

The present Polish Baptist Church, often called the Polish Baptist Union, was re-organized after the Second World War and now numbers about 2,500 baptized believers. Growth is slow but membership is increasing yearly. They have a General Secretary and a President working full-time in the Warsaw office. They run their own theological academy, publish a monthly organ, *Slowo Prawdy*, and maintain a radio ministry with active follow-up and correspondence. (*European Baptist Press Service*, 78:52 & 53, 20 February 1978)

#### CZECHOSLOVAKIA

##### *New Archdiocese Created in Slovakia*

After 60 years of waiting, the Catholics of Slovakia welcomed the news that the Holy See had created a new Archbishopric of Slovakia on 10 January 1978. The Archbishopric is centred in Trnava and will incorporate the dioceses of Nitra, Banská Bystrica, Spiš, Rožnava and Kosice. In Czech lands there was a further development with the official installation of Cardinal František Tomášek as the Archbishop of Prague on 6 March 1978. This post had been vacant for 30 years.

Previous to his installation Cardinal Tomášek paid a visit to the Soviet Union at the invitation of Patriarch

Pimen of the Russian Orthodox Church. He spent two weeks visiting the cities of Moscow, Kiev, Leningrad, Zhitomir, Odessa and Zagorsk and returned to Prague on 19 January. The Cardinal said that he was immensely impressed by the numbers of believers in the Soviet Union and by the vitality of their faith. He also described the services in the Russian Orthodox Church as "breathtaking". (*Keston News Service*, No. 50, 30 March 1978)

##### *Meeting of "Pacem in Terris"*

On 10 November 1977 the official Catholic clergy's organization, *Pacem in Terris*, held a session of its augmented federal plenum in Kosice, Slovakia. Three hundred clergymen attended the conference which had as its theme "Peace on earth is the desire of nations". In the main speech Karel Hruza, head of the Secretariat for Church Affairs, emphasized the importance of the October Revolution for the whole of humanity. Among those present were Bishop Josef Vrana of the Olomouc archdiocese and Bishop Josef Feranec of the diocese of Banská Bystrica. Apostolic Administrator of Trnava, Julius Gabrish, left the meeting after 15 minutes. He was later interviewed by the Director of the Slovak Secretariat for Church Affairs, Karel Komola. He then suffered a heart attack from which he has now recovered. Cardinal Tomasek did not attend. (*Lidova Demokracie*, 11 November 1977)

#### HUNGARY

##### *Developments in Church-State Relations*

In an interview with the Hungarian news agency, MIT, Robert Juhacz, a member of the Presidency of the Patriotic People's Front, spoke of the Church's active role in this organization, which represents all political and social forces in Hungary. The interview took place during a session of the Front at which Cardinal Lekaj, the Hungarian Primate, was present and spoke. Juhacz said that about 600 church people were carrying out functions in various branches of the Patriotic Front. Cardinal Lekaj and the archbishops of Kaloca and Eger are all members of regional coun-

cils, while church representatives are particularly active in the fields of culture, family policy, equality of women and in social and charitable works. "The dividing line in the class war does not come between atheists and believers but between the supporters and opponents of progress. There are antagonisms between Marxists and adherents of various religions, but in the building of socialism in Hungary our co-existence will endure for a long time ... The Patriotic Front offers great possibilities for constructive co-operation," said Juhacz.

In a leading article, the Catholic journal *Vigilia* writes that relations between the State, led by communists, and the Church are again moving in a significant direction: "The State respects the Church with no after-thoughts", the journal states and cites among other things Kadar's visit to the Pope. The Vatican equally, with its *Ostpolitik*, shows its respect for the State, while taking into account the wishes of Christians who live in socialist States. Political involvement, continues the journal, forms the basis for positive relations between Church and State in Hungary and the active cooperation of believers in the building of Hungary. It is now acknowledged in Hungary that the withering away of religion is not something which will happen overnight. (AKSA, 3 February 1978)

#### *Diplomatic Relations with the Vatican*

Diplomatic relations between Hungary and the Vatican will soon be established, the Hungarian ambassador to Rome, Reszo Palotas, announced on 21 February. Relations between the two have been developing satisfactorily since Kadar's visit to the Pope, and neither side now objects to establishing diplomatic relations. Palotas said that since 1963 the two sides had met twice a year, and that many problems had been solved to the satisfaction of both sides; thus a "system of relations" already exists. (AKSA, 3 March 1978)

#### *New Bishops Appointed*

The Pope has appointed new bishops to the Hungarian dioceses of Eger, Vac and Veszprem. The present archbishop of Eger, Archbishop Bank (67) has been

appointed to the vacant see of Vac and will continue to bear the title of archbishop. The present bishop of Veszprem, Laszlo Kadar (50), will take over the archdiocese of Eger, and Dr Laszlo Paskai (49), at present rector of the seminary in Budapest, will become apostolic administrator of Veszprem. Dr Ferenc Tosta (64), former professor at the seminary in Veszprem, has been appointed assistant bishop of the diocese of Szekesfehervar.

#### ROMANIA

##### *Ecumenical Centre Planned*

An ecumenical centre, comprising a theological institute for some 300 people with chapel and ecumenical institute, is to be built at Caldurasani about 20 km. from Bucharest. The construction work will take three years and will cost about six million dollars. On announcing the project, the Churches' Commission on Inter-Church Aid Refugee and World Service (CICARWS) of the WCC said that \$1,200,000 is expected to come from CICARWS funds. (*Keston News Service*, No. 49, 2 March 1978)

##### *Baptist Laymen Banned*

At a meeting of the Romanian Baptist Union Council held on 9 February 1978 two lay preachers, Aurel Popescu and Pavel Nicolescu, were banned from preaching because of the "anti-state" content of their sermons. Nicolescu was further reprimanded for sending information about his country to "foreign radio stations". He is not allowed to preach anywhere, but Popescu can at least continue to preach in his home church of Mihai Bravu in Bucharest where he is a deacon. Nicolescu had formerly been the lay pastor of the 23rd August Church, Bucharest. Both men have been prominent in the human rights movement within the Romanian evangelical churches which has sought greater freedom of religion in recent years.

Another influential member of that movement, Pastor Josif Ton, is expecting to receive a preaching ban when the Union Council meets to discuss his case in May. He has received an invitation to study in England at Oxford University

where he graduated in theology in 1972, but so far he has been refused a passport because the Baptist Union will not sponsor him. Two sponsors are required for such research exchanges abroad. Pastor Ton was dismissed from his pastorate in March last year after signing a document "On Human Rights and Evangelicals in Romania", which Nicolescu and Popescu also signed. Offered a job in the Polytechnic library in his home town of Cluj, Ton refused it on the grounds that his life's work was to preach the Gospel. This he has continued to do despite the removal of his pastor's licence. He was given a work contract as a labourer with the Baptist Church in Oradea where he is pastor in his free time. He is also travelling extensively to hold evangelistic campaigns.

The future of these campaigns is now in question since a circular was drawn up and presented to the churches in February by the Romanian Baptist Union. Under pressure from the State, the Union has stated that no preachers or pastors, or even choirs or young peoples' groups may move from church to church without the Union's permission. This order rescinds that of February 1974 when a similar restriction was removed. A large number of young people have been converted through evangelistic campaigns with many of these converts forming preaching teams themselves. The importance of lay leadership for future generations was shown in a statistical paper from unofficial Baptist sources, which calculates that in 1990, in the region of Banat alone, where in 1960 there were 120 pastors, there will be only 12-13. By the year 2000 there will be only one.

#### BULGARIA

##### *Vacancies in Theological Academy*

The Theological Academy in Sofia has announced the holding of entrance examinations for three positions as assistant professor in the School of Practical Theology. The vacancies are in (i) Pastoral Theology, (ii) Homiletics and Catechism, and (iii) Ecclesiastical Archeology and Christian Art. Candidates must be of the Orthodox faith, with higher Orthodox theological education, and under 40 years of age. The suc-

cessful candidate in Pastoral Theology, if he is a layman, will have to take holy orders before being appointed. (*Tsurkoven Vestnik*, 1 December 1977)

#### SOVIET UNION

##### *Soviet Journal Accuses Vatican*

*Nauka i religiya* has accused the Vatican of supporting Lithuanian émigré circles in the West in their "subversive" demands and of intensifying pressure on the Roman Catholic Church in Lithuania to turn it into an "anti-socialist organization". The Vatican, acknowledged the article, had carried out "a few gestures in favour of international relaxation", but, under the pretext of a "struggle against godless atheism and the defence of religious liberty", it has interfered in the internal affairs of socialist states. Rome not only influences the anti-soviet propaganda of Lithuanian émigré clergy but also their choice of leaders, writes the journal. The Vatican supports these émigrés and their "fabrication of slanders about religion and the Churches in the USSR. Their intention is to sow distrust between Catholics and atheists in the Soviet Union, and to arouse the public in the West and in developing countries against the Soviet Union". (AKSA, 24 February 1978)

##### *Fr Romanyuk Appeals*

In a letter addressed to the editor of *Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, Fr Vasili Romanyuk appealed to the western world, especially Christians, to support those persecuted for their religious convictions in the USSR.

Fr Romanyuk describes the sense of isolation which he feels in labour camp because of the situation in his native Ukraine:

... in Ukraine the percentage of believers is higher than in Russia, and the most dirty methods of struggle are employed against the Church. The constant repression, persecution and humiliation have led to there being no solidarity at all between the Orthodox clergy in Ukraine and the believers. If one of their brothers falls into misfortune, then everyone turns their back on him, and if a priest is unknown, his family lives in poverty.



Fr Romanyuk states that his son has been expelled from Lviw (Lvov) University "on the direct instructions of the KGB" and that he himself is "a kind of a scarecrow" to his friends, "especially the priests". None of them writes to him, and only the Russian Orthodox priests, Fr Sergi Zheludkov and Fr Gleb Yakunin, maintain any contact with him. He knows that letters are sent to him from abroad, but the camp authorities do not pass them to him, although sometimes they tauntingly show them to him from a distance.

Fr Romanyuk describes the consequences of this lack of support from Christians:

... the dissidents who are with me in labour camp for their convictions would like to see a model of love and solidarity in the Christian world. But if believers see, yet remain silent, unbelieving dissidents reproach all worldwide Christianity with amorphousness and indifference. They say: "What are these millions of Christians good for? The Soviet Union dictates its will to the world, at the same time crudely violating human rights. It persecutes Christians with unceremonious insolence. And the Christian world does not only remain silent, but even signs various agreements with this country."

A Ukrainian Committee for the Defence of Religion is soon to be formed, according to Fr Romanyuk's letter. He says that it will be ecumenical and that possible participants are Orthodox, Catholics and Evangelical Christians and Baptists. Its aim will be to ask the government not to violate the law on freedom of conscience. He asks international Christian and other organizations to support the committee when it is formed.

#### *Peter Vins Sentenced*

Peter Vins, 21 year-old son of imprisoned Baptist leader Georgi Vins, and member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group, was tried and sentenced to one year in labour camp on a charge of "parasitism" on 6 April 1978. During December and January he was detained for 30 days for alleged "hooliganism" and then for refusing to work, although prisoners do not have to work. Re-arres-

ted on 8 February he was due to be tried on 28 March. This was postponed to 6 April because the President of the Court "could not attend"; but the Vins family believes that the real reason was that on that day the court was full of believers. When the trial was finally held, his family and friends were barred from attending.

#### *Bad Reports for Baptist Children*

Baptists from the Vitebsk region state that school-teachers are deliberately down-grading the work of Baptist children and issuing poor reports to those leaving school. For example, Tamara Plygavko, upon completion of 10th grade, was given a report stating that she was a conscientious and obedient student but that she grew up in a family "of Baptist fanatics", and that all attempts to turn her mind into more materialistic channels ended in failure. The report also notes that Tamara watches no television, attends no dances or similar amusements, and was never a member of either the Pioneers or the Komsomol. Although Tamara's good points, such as her conscientiousness, are noted, the general tone of the report leaves a negative impression of the girl and her achievements. (*Bulletin of the Council of ECB Prisoners' Relatives* No. 47)

#### *President of Campus Crusade Visits Soviet Union*

Mr Bill Bright, President of Campus Crusade for Christ (USA), spent three weeks in the USSR during December 1977. He visited cities which included Moscow, Leningrad, Minsk, Kiev, Tula and Klin and participated in 12 local Christmas services in churches of the AUCECB.

Besides contacting church leaders, Dr Bright met Moscow University officials, members of the Soviet Committee for Peace and representatives of the Council for Religious Affairs.

Reporting on a press conference honouring the American guest, AUCECB leaders, the Rev Alexei Bychkov and the Rev Alexei Stoyan credit Dr Bright with saying, "I am convinced that God lives in the hearts of many Russian people - everything I have seen in the USSR encouraged me". (*European Baptist Press Service*, 78:19, 18 January 1978)