

News in Brief

AFGHANISTAN

Karmal Woos Muslims

Since assuming power in December 1979 President Babrak Karmal has made a number of gestures aimed at winning acceptance for his regime from the Muslim population. The People's Democratic Party proclaimed 14 January a "day of mourning" for all those killed by the country's former ruler, Hafizullah Amin, and books of condolence were placed in mosques for people to sign. A number of political prisoners were released in January and revolutionary slogans in Kabul were painted over on Karmal's orders as being of Leftist character and "not in conformity with the present state of national and democratic revolution".

In an attempt to mollify Muslim guerilla leaders who had declared *jihad* (holy war) against the revolutionary regimes and the Russians, President Karmal broadcast a message to the nation in January beginning with the words "In the name of Allah, the Compassionate and Merciful". He wanted to guarantee freedom of worship and said that any religious leaders who had fled could return without fear of persecution provided they did not "take any action against national or state interests". He concluded his message with the following: "Long live the Muslim, free, noble and brave people of Afghanistan. Victory to the glorious Saur (April) Revolution. May Allah enable us to fulfil our tasks." The broadcast was evidence that the President and his Soviet advisors think it would be tactically wrong to continue the repression of Islam carried out under Tarakki and Amin. (This repression had led to the declaration of holy war which succeeded

in bringing some unity to the dissident Afghan tribesmen.)

Karmal's government has recognized the tendency to link nationality with religion and earlier in the year it was reported that all ministerial speeches — even by Cabinet members known to be lifelong Marxists — were beginning with references to the Koran. On 2 March Radio Kabul reported that a new Constitution was to be drafted which would embody individual rights and a legal system based on Islamic Shariyat law. On 21 April President Karmal also reintroduced the tricoloured Afghan flag. (It had been replaced by a red one in April 1979 under Tarakki's regime. In a country that is 90 per cent Muslim, this was an affront to Islam which traditionally includes green in its national flags.) The new black, red and green flag shows two features of a mosque: the pulpit and the *mihrab* niche that guides worshippers in the direction of Mecca.

The mosques, aware of their potential influence, have reacted cautiously to the new regime. No general call has been issued for a holy war or the expulsion of the Soviet troops, but events in Kabul are being carefully watched. Mosque attendance is reported to have increased slightly since the Russians entered Afghanistan, but the mullahs appear to be studiously avoiding politics. There was one exception in early January when a mullah in Kabul called for a holy war to fight the new left-wing government and expel the Soviets: the mullah was arrested and has not been seen since. According to a devout Muslim in Jalalabad, worship has become a hurried affair: "The people are frightened and the secret police are keeping a careful eye on the mullahs." The majority of

Muslims in Afghanistan are Sunni, with little tradition of political opposition, and their ranks have been systematically decimated since President Daoud seized power in 1973. The closure of bazaars in various cities is believed to have followed orders from the *Mojaheddin* (holy warriors: i.e. the guerillas) and not from the mosques. However, a number of violent anti-Soviet protests have taken place after the Friday midday prayers, and the regime tends to view mosques and mullahs as the focus of anti-communist agitation. In February the mullahs in Kandahar ventured to make a discreet but unprecedented reference to the Soviet intervention when they told the city's 80 per cent Sunni population to be "aware of events".

The Soviet Union, attempting to ward off hostile reactions in the Muslim world, claimed in January that its intervention in Afghanistan had saved Islam from profanation. Mr Abdul Aziz Sadiq, chairman of the Council of Ulemas in Afghanistan, was quoted by Tass (the Soviet news agency) claiming that Muslims throughout the country welcomed Soviet assistance. (*Daily Telegraph*, 29 February 1980; *Guardian*, 29 January 1980; *Newsweek*, 16 April 1979; *Times*, 3, 4, 15, 29 January, 18 February, 22 April 1980)

Afghan Prisoners in USSR

In late January evidence reached Kabul that several hundred Afghan political prisoners were being held in the Soviet Union. Mullah Waez, an Afghan Shiite mullah who was arrested after the April Revolution in 1978, managed to smuggle a letter out to his family. He said that he and hundreds of other Afghans were being held prisoner in Russia, working in a steel mill in Tula, 140 miles south of Moscow. Many Shiites were victims of Amin's purges and some are still popularly believed to be imprisoned in Polechowkri (Afghanistan). Those who knew mullah Waez in Afghanistan were convinced that his letter was genuine. (*Times*, 30 January 1980)

Conference of Ulemas

According to a report in the Soviet paper *Turkenskaya iskra*, a conference of ulemas and other Muslim clergy took place in Kabul on 30 June. Over 800 delegates from various provinces met to discuss the clergy's role in "the strengthen-

ing and development" of the country.

The conference was addressed by President Babrak Karmal, who stressed that there is full religious liberty in Afghanistan. He stated that the aims of the April Revolution are in total harmony with the wishes and ideals of Muslim workers. Karmal professed "a deep respect for the holy faith of Islam" and claimed to defend it from all those "who attempt to use Islam in order to further their dirty aims against the interests of the people". He called upon all Muslim patriots in Afghanistan to unite against "the connivings of the foes of Islam" and to defend their country from the forces of imperialism and reaction. He praised the Soviet Union for the aid it had given Afghanistan for more than 60 years and for helping the country even now to defend itself against aggression. He stated that this aid would be "remembered for ever by every Muslim in Afghanistan". In closing, Karmal pledged to build "a new Muslim society" in Afghanistan, based on the principles of justice, equality and deep respect for the holy faith.

The delegates approved a Revolutionary Council decree concerning the formation of a central administrative department on Islam attached to the Council of Ministers and adopted a resolution to institute a supreme council of ulemas and clergy. They also passed a resolution condemning "the subversive activities of imperialist mercenaries" as being "contrary to the principles of the Islamic faith". (*Turkenskaya iskra*, 2 July 1980)

BULGARIA

Polish Metropolitan Visits Bulgaria

Metropolitan Vasili of Warsaw and All Poland visited Patriarch Maxim from 25 January to 4 February 1980. Services and receptions were held in Metropolitan Vasili's honour. He visited Plovdiv and the monasteries of Bachkovo and Rila. In an address given after the liturgy on 27 January at the Alexander Nevsky Memorial Church, Sofia, the Metropolitan said that he had come to Bulgaria to be strengthened spiritually as things were often difficult for Orthodox believers in a predominantly Roman Catholic country. He added that he greatly valued the prayers of the Bulgarian Orthodox

Church. In another address on 29 January, he said that after many terrible religious wars Poland had at last reached the stage where there was complete religious freedom and no persecution on religious grounds. (*Tsurkoven vestnik*, 11 April 1980)

Symposium of Bulgarian and Greek Theologians

A Symposium on "Bulgarian-Greek Ecclesiastical and Cultural Contracts during the Middle Ages" opened on 21 May in Sofia, in honour of the 1300th anniversary of the foundation of the Bulgarian State. The Symposium was organized by the Kliment Okhridsky Theological Academy and the Church History and Archive Institute of the Bulgarian Patriarchate. The opening ceremony was attended by Patriarch Maxim, Lyubomir Popov, the Minister for Religious Affairs, and Pavel Matev, chairman of the Slavonic Committee in Bulgaria. Antoan Nomikos, the Greek ambassador, was also present. (*Otechestven front*, 22 May 1980)

Delegation Visits Vatican

A conference on "Sources of Bulgarian History in the Vatican Archives" was held in the library of the Vatican on 23 May 1980. The conference was in honour of SS Cyril and Methodius (whose saint's day — 24 May — was renamed Bulgarian Literacy Day in 1944) and of the 1300th anniversary of the foundation of the Bulgarian State. The Burgas local paper *Chernomorski front* reported that an official Bulgarian delegation, in Rome for the celebration of 24 May, was present at the conference. However, the paper did not mention clergy, although it is customary for a delegation of Bulgarian clergy to visit Rome every year for these celebrations. (*Chernomorski front*, 24 May 1980)

New Metropolitan Elected

A new Metropolitan, Ioaniki, was elected in April 1980 by the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to replace Metropolitan Nikodim of Sliven, who died on 23 January after 33 years in office. A detailed report on Metropolitan Ioaniki's election and enthronement, Patriarch Maxim's speech welcoming him into the ranks of the Metropolitans and Ioaniki's reply, and a short biography of the new

Metropolitan appeared in the church paper *Tsurkoven vestnik*.

Ivan Georgiev Nedelchev was born on 2 March 1939. He studied at the Theological Seminary and Academy in Sofia and became a monk in April 1960. He was made a hierodeacon in 1961 and a hieromonk in 1963. In 1964 he was sent to study at Moscow Theological Academy where he was awarded the degree of Candidate Theologian. In August 1966, shortly after his return to Bulgaria, he became Co-adjutor of the Sliven Metropolitanate and in 1968 he also became Co-adjutor of the Stara Zagora Metropolitanate. He was elevated to the rank of Archimandrite in 1968. From 1970 to 1971 he studied at the Catholic Theological Faculty in Berne, Switzerland. He then returned to Sliven diocese and was made a bishop in April 1975.

Sliven diocesan council elected Ioaniki as the new Metropolitan on 23 March, and this was confirmed in a second election on 13 April by Patriarch Maxim and the Holy Synod. Lyubomir Popov, the Bulgarian Minister for Religious Affairs, was present at the reception following Metropolitan Ioaniki's election and congratulated him on his new office, expressing his approval of this "young, educated and enlightened Metropolitan, full of fine feelings and good intentions". The enthronement took place in Sliven Cathedral on 19 April. (*Tsurkoven vestnik*, 21 June 1980)

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Suspended Sentence for Slovak Jesuit

After failing to appear in court on four previous occasions, Fr Oskár Formánek was finally sentenced on 26 June 1980 to 18 months' imprisonment for "obstructing state supervision of the Church". The trial took place despite an unusually strong protest to the Czechoslovak government in February this year from the Jesuit headquarters in Rome, condemning the charges against the priest and protesting at the repression of Christians in Czechoslovakia (see *RCL* Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 146). The Slovak court in Presov found him guilty of celebrating Mass in his flat without state permission, producing and disseminating religious literature and holding theological seminars. His sentence was suspended for four years. Mária Kožárová, his co-defendant, received a one-year sentence,

suspended for three years. Most of the 90 witnesses examined during the trial were people who had attended services at Fr Formánek's flat because they were afraid of reprisals if they went to church openly. After confessing this at the trial one of the witnesses, the teacher Mesároová, was immediately dismissed from her job. A Catholic priest, Fr Lesník, gave evidence against Fr Formánek, revealing the names of individuals who had taken part in his seminars and celebrations of Mass and of his contacts among the clergy. The West German Catholic News Agency, the recipient of the report on the trial, speculates that Fr Lesník may have been subjected to pressure by the secret police, as he was sentenced last year for embezzling church funds.

Fr Formánek and Mária Kozárová have been released but are under constant police surveillance. If the priest were to resume his former activities he would be faced with immediate imprisonment in view of the suspended sentence.

EAST GERMANY

Preparations for Luther Jubilee

A Martin Luther Committee was established on 13 June 1980 in preparation for the 500th anniversary of Luther's birthday in 1983. An elaborate jubilee is to be held in the town of Wittenberg where Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the church door. The 104-member state committee, headed by Erich Honecker, includes leading Party, state and religious figures. Addressing the inaugural meeting of the committee in East Berlin on 13 June, Honecker stated that the GDR would be "honouring the historic achievements which Luther brought about for social progress and world culture by launching the Reformation . . ." He also praised Luther's contributions to classical German literature, philosophy, the German language and musical traditions. Luther's translation of the Bible was described as "one of the greatest cultural achievements of our history".

Four senior clergymen of the Evangelical Church are included in the state committee. They are Bishop Werner Leich of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Thuringia, Bishop Werner Krusche of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Saxony, Dr Joachim Rogge, President of the

Council of the Evangelical Church of the Union, and Dr Helmut Zeddies, President of the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in the GDR. These four are also members of the separate church Luther Committee, which was established in December 1978 and is headed by Bishop Werner Leich. The church committee will examine the theological implications of the forthcoming anniversary and also hopes to foster a better appreciation in the GDR of the current relevance of Luther's ideas. (*Radio Free Europe Research*, Vol. 5, No. 27, 25 June-1 July 1980)

Vietnamese Protestants Visit GDR

The East German church newspaper *Der Sonntag* reports that a delegation of Protestant Christians from Vietnam, led by Pastor Bui Hoanh Thu, visited the GDR in March. This was in response to the visit to Vietnam of church leaders from the GDR (*Oberlandeskirchenrat* von Brück and *Oberkirchenrätin* Lewek) in December 1978, when they went to hand over a consignment of goods bought for Vietnamese flood victims with the proceeds from a special collection organized by "Brot für die Welt". (*Der Sonntag*, 30 March 1980)

Bishop Voices Criticism

Dr Hanns-Joachim Wollstadt, Bishop of Görlitz diocese, called for a more tolerant attitude on the part of the SED (the ruling Socialist Unity Party) towards East German Christians during an address to the diocesan Synod. He stressed that participation in the atheist youth dedication ceremony (*Jugendweihe*) should be on a totally voluntary basis. He also expressed criticism of the term "communist education" in the new school regulations which came into force on 1 January 1980. When communist education was the only goal, the role of parents in bringing up their children was dismissed as being of little value. Christian parents disapproved of this development. The Bishop emphasized that to conform to the environment was no way for Christians to live. (*Idea*, No. 17, 28 April, pp. 1-2)

Church Leaders Express Concern

On 22 January 1980 the Federation of Protestant Churches of the GDR issued a "Statement on the Current World Political Situation". The Statement expressed grave

concern at the deterioration of international relations and called upon the Churches, as partners in the ecumenical community and as servants of men, to contribute to world peace. The Federation urged the WCC to call its member Churches to decisive and specific action and suggested that the Churches should together discuss how they could help to ensure that the SALT II Agreement comes into force, that the Vienna MBFR discussions are continued, that the programme drawn up by the tenth UN special session of the General Assembly on disarmament in May/June 1978 is realized, that the second CSCE review conference in Madrid is constructively prepared and takes place in an atmosphere of openness and moderation, and that bilateral political contacts are made in the spirit of détente.

The Federation stated that its contribution would be to point out the paths opened by the Gospel, which are often lost from sight to those in the midst of political action. It has in mind forgiveness, which makes it possible to make the first move even if a risk is involved; the privilege of encouraging freedom from prejudice, openness, trust and moderation in negotiations and discussions, without being anxious about oneself; the admonition of God's Word to see oneself, the Church and also one's country critically; and prayer, which leaves the final decision to God.

This statement met with a favourable response during the discussions between representatives of the WCC and the Churches in socialist countries, who met in Budapest 28-31 January 1980. (*Potsdamer Kirche*, 2 March 1980)

Interview with Bishop of Mecklenburg

Dr Heinrich Rathke, Bishop of Mecklenburg, was one of the three East German delegates who attended the gathering in Budapest in January which met to discuss the special witness of the Churches in socialist countries and their particular contribution to the ecumenical movement. In an interview with the *Mecklenburgische Kirchenzeitung* Bishop Rathke pointed out that the Churches were still in the process of assessing their role in socialist society and that because of historical developments the situation varied widely from country to country. The question of the Church's witness in the world had led to a discussion on

human rights. Many delegates pointed out that religious freedom was guaranteed in their country, the Churches were able to function within the existing legal framework, and so human rights were respected. However, the Bishop queried whether the continued existence of a Church resolved the question of human rights for "Christians should go beyond their own sphere and care for the rights and dignity of others". It was not just a matter of the rights of the individual (which, he said, led to the danger of a one-sided human rights debate, such as frequently takes place in the West), nor of the Church ensuring its own existence by guarantees of religious freedom. Human rights had to be seen within the context of one's own socialist society. "What contribution are we making, what suggestions are we giving, what critical questions are we asking to see that in our society man . . . is central and his dignity is maintained?"

All the participants had expressed concern about the world situation and had named the specific problems of Iran, the threat to détente in Europe, and Afghanistan. The Bishop felt it was significant that church representatives were able to discuss these problems freely and consider them from one another's point of view. While church representatives clearly could not assume the role of politicians, Christians should engage in dialogue with one another and seek a common path. This was one reason, he explained, why the East German Federation of Protestant Churches had been seeking more contact with West German Christians. Prayer, too, was a real contribution to peace and should be the spiritual continuation of all dialogue. Christians needed to know about one another in order to be able to pray for one another. (*Potsdamer Kirche*, 9 March 1980)

HUNGARY

School Curriculum to Include Bible

Hungary's educational authorities have decided to permit the study of the Bible as literature in academic secondary schools. This new step was signalled by an article in the ministry of Education and Culture's weekly *Koznevelés* (16 May 1980). In the article Gyorgy Versenyi indicated that selections from the Bible would be included in the literary curriculum of *lycée*-type

schools (vocational schools were not mentioned) to expose the students to one of the most splendid masterpieces of Occidental literature in ancient times. He added that the introduction of Bible selections would not be used "to intensify differences between the Churches' [position] and our own [atheistic] attitude". He considered it necessary to stress this point because a significant number of today's teachers were educated at a time when text books of "a vulgarizing level" were used whose purpose was to refute the Bible.

Those in charge of public education appear to have been persuaded that knowledge of the Bible is an integral part of general culture and that world literature — including a large number of poems by the most eminent Hungarian writers — as well as great works of art can be understood only if one has knowledge of the Scriptures. The introduction of the Bible into the school curriculum appears to be the result of a compromise: the Church decided not to object to the fact that the Bible is to be introduced to pupils as literature, a "profane" cultural work and one of the supreme treasures of universal culture, and is to be examined scientifically and analysed; the State, as indicated in Versenyi's article, for its part has indicated willingness to avoid mixing presentation of the Bible with the teaching of an atheistic outlook. The Catholic weekly, *Uj Ember*, has welcomed the inclusion of the Bible in the school curriculum. (Radio Free Europe, *Hungarian Situation Report*, No. 14, 17 July 1980)

Official Account of Religion

The issue of church-state relations in Hungary was recently raised in two official publications. The June issue of the Party's ideological quarterly *Partelet* stated that co-operation with religious groups was among the "long-term tasks" of the Party. Meanwhile, the government newspaper *Magyar Hirrlap* featured a study on religious practice by a social scientist. The study showed that 50-60 per cent of the population hold religious beliefs and that about one-third of the adults attend church regularly. The proportion of believers rises to 70-85 per cent in the villages, but in Budapest, the capital, only some 35 per cent are believers. The study also showed that 86 per cent of children born to the country's six million Catholics are christened and that 86 per cent of

funerals were conducted by the Church. (*Keston News Service*, No. 102, 10 July 1980)

Seminarians Penalized

Students at the Theological Seminary in Budapest are being punished for participating in religious group activity and carrying out pastoral work among university students. One such seminarian was refused ordination by Dr Istvan Bagi, Auxiliary Bishop and Rector of the Seminary. An appeal on his behalf was sent to the Hungarian Episcopal Conference by 15 other seminarians. As the case had caused a sensation among believers, the bishops decided to avoid further controversy by allowing the ordination. However, the 15 seminarians were penalized by being sent back to their dioceses and banned from further study at the Seminary. (*Keston News Service*, No. 103, 23 July 1980)

POLAND

Autocephalous Orthodox Church Council

The Council of the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church, headed by Metropolitan Vasili of Warsaw and All Poland, met in Warsaw on 18 March 1980. The participants discussed ecumenical relations, and in particular issues connected with the Roman Catholic Church. The Council meeting was preceded by a Conference of deans of the four Orthodox dioceses.

The Orthodox Church is the second largest Church in Poland with over 450,000 believers, 200 priests and five bishops. It is divided into four dioceses (Warsaw-Bielsk, Białystok-Gdansk, Łódz-Poznan and Wrocław-Szczecin) and has two monasteries, one in Jabłeczna and the other in Grabarka. Priests are trained at the Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw and in an Orthodox Seminary. The Church was granted autocephaly in 1948. (*ChSS Information Bulletin*, 4 April 1980)

"L'Osservatore Romano" Published in Polish

The first issue of the Polish-language edition of the official Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, appeared in Rome on 5 April. Its editor is the Pope's long-

standing friend from Kraków, Fr Adam Boniecki, who served as a university chaplain and was a member of the editorial board of *Tygodnik Powszechny*, the Catholic weekly. In June 1979 he was invited personally by the Pope to join the Vatican staff, but he was not allowed to go until October. His assistant-editor is Stefan Frankiewicz, a well-known journalist from the monthly *Wież (Bond)* and a lecturer at Lublin Catholic University (KUL).

It is estimated that some 40,000 copies of the paper are to be sent to Polish dioceses, but Boniecki believes that with appropriate financial support the circulation could easily be increased. However, only some 6,000 copies of the first issue were sent to Poland without government objection. Already the three-month delay in publication suggests that there have been some delicate negotiations behind the scenes in Warsaw and Rome. After all, this will be the only paper not subject to censorship. Its non-political character assumes a different connotation in Poland, where even episcopal communiqués, which the paper aims to publish, have not formerly been allowed to be published in full. For the time being the dispute seems to be over: Jerzy Kuberski, the new Minister for Religious Affairs, announced on 2 May that the Church could distribute as many copies as it wished.

The paper aims to bring papal teaching and Vatican affairs closer to Catholics in Poland since the Catholic press available in the country, restricted as it is by censorship, limited circulation and small format, cannot possibly satisfy the people's insatiable demand for information. It will also contain discussions of current church issues, such as "the delicate matter of the Church's status as a legal entity" which was included in the first issue. Only time will tell how far the discussion of contemporary Polish problems can go without jeopardizing this new window on the West. (*The Christian Science Monitor*, 12 May 1980, p. 4; *RFE-RL Research Paper*, 28 April 1980)

Protest Fast for Release of Chojecki

A protest fast calling for the release of Miroslaw Chojecki, the chief organizer of the unofficial publishing enterprise "Nowa" who was detained on 25 March, and 12 other people who were in prison for

political offences, was held 7-17 May in the parish church of Podkowa Leśna near Warsaw. Seventeen members of the two main opposition groups (KSS-KOR and ROPCiO) participating in the fast were soon joined by another nine people, including Fr Tadeusz Stokowski and Róża Wozniakowska, a well-known Catholic student activist from Kraków. The protesters helped to encourage public demands for the release of Chojecki and the others as thousands of leaflets with their names were circulated throughout the country. The bishops also joined the protests and publicly called on the government to stop reprisals against people who held different views or worked for the good of the community. Chojecki was then released, and on 11 May he joined protesters at the Mass celebrated by Fr Leon Kantorski, parish priest of Podkowa Leśna, for all who were unjustly prosecuted. The parishioners gave Chojecki an enthusiastic welcome, and local children who had come earlier in the day to pray for him offered to give all their pocket money in aid of the *samizdat* press.

The protesters were attacked in the Polish Parliament for misusing churches for political purposes by Andrzej Pilecki, a representative of PAX (the group of government-backed Catholics). Ignoring the fact that priests had participated in the fast and that the bishops had also protested, Pilecki warned that such small but vociferous groups of irresponsible people jeopardize the good relations between Church and State in Poland.

Chojecki Sentenced

On 12 June 1980 the Warsaw Municipal Court sentenced both Miroslaw Chojecki, chief organizer of the unofficial publishing enterprise "Nowa", and his close associate Bogdan Grzesiak to 18 months in jail and a fine of 15,000 zloty for illegally obtaining a duplicating machine from a state printing establishment. Both sentences were suspended for three years. At the same time Wiesław Kunikowski and Jerzy Ciechowski, two printers employed in the state firm, were given suspended 12-month jail sentences and fined 10,000 zloty each for stealing and using state-owned equipment for their private purposes. The duplicating machine in question had been discarded by the state firm and destined for scrap. It was then given by the printers to "Nowa's" publishers.

The arrest of the defendants provoked an intense protest campaign which received the support of the Polish bishops. Although the specific goal of the campaign was to obtain the release of Chojecki and his associates, it was also directed more generally against the state monopoly over all forms of communication. The final verdict is open to varying interpretations. The sentencing of the defendants might be seen by some, particularly state officials, as an affirmation of the government's right to treat dissidents as common criminals. Some have interpreted the suspension of the sentences as a sign of a possible government desire for conciliation with the dissident and literary communities, and others have seen in this decision an indication that censorship is yielding to the pressure of public opinion. (*Radio Free Europe Polish Situation Report*, No. 13, 24 June 1980)

173rd Plenary Conference of the Polish Episcopate

The 173rd Plenary Conference of the Polish Episcopate, which took place in Warsaw 6-7 May under the chairmanship of Cardinal Wyszynski, has issued a communiqué expressing the hierarchy's deep concern about the increased repression in Poland.

"As we are concerned that all national efforts be directed towards the common good — be it in the sphere of moral, cultural, economic or political life — we would like to state that in order to overcome the present ills of our society, reforms should be introduced to enable people to participate in and influence public life. Without an atmosphere of peace, mutual trust and dialogue, our society cannot be united in its fundamental aims. One of the most important elements of such a climate is a real, not just a formal, rule of law, together with respect for human rights. The recent wave of repression has heightened tensions in our society. Therefore in the name of internal peace the Episcopate demands that no one be persecuted for his views or even fear such persecution for undertaking socially beneficial actions. There must be no political prisoners in Poland! The Church supports all sensible efforts to pass on to the young generation the full, undistorted heritage of our history and culture."

The bishops have again stressed the need for continuing discussions between Church and State. However, they emphasized that if co-operation were to be meaningful, the government would have to refrain from using administrative sanctions against believers and misusing public institutions to further atheism. The bishops condemned the government's attempts "to blur the distinction between Sundays and working days" by forcing people to work when they should rest and give praise to God. They also protested about discrimination against Catholic children who participate in state-sponsored summer camps during their holidays: they are often forbidden to pray and not allowed to attend church. Parents are exhorted to insist on their children's rights by writing letters to the camp organizers. The bishops expressed their satisfaction over the news that seminary students are to be exempt from military service. Herbert Bednorz, the Bishop of Katowice, was nominated as head of a new commission to study the pastoral problems of working people. The communiqué was read out from the church pulpits.

New President for Baptist Union

At its 24th Congress the Polish Baptist Union elected the Rev. Piotr Dajludzionek as its new president. A graduate of the Polish Baptist Seminary in Malbork and of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Rüschiikon, Switzerland, the Rev. Dajludzionek is pastor of the Baptist church in Białystok. The Rev. Michael Stankiewicz, the former president, was elected as the general secretary and the Rev. Adam Piasecki as vice-president.

Between 1968 and 1979 the Church's membership increased by 13.8 per cent. There are now 2,539 members and 7,500 sympathizers, giving a community of about 10,000. (*European Baptist Press Service*, 23 May 1980)

Archbishop Poggi Visits Poland

Archbishop Luigi Poggi, the main Vatican negotiator with East European governments, visited Poland from 27 May to 6 June. He had extensive talks with representatives of both the church hierarchy and the government, but no precise information has been provided on either the nature of Poggi's visit or the subject of his discussions. In the communiqué of the

174th Plenary Conference of the Polish Episcopate, the bishops state that the talks failed because the government was unwilling "to discuss any specific issues of church-state co-operation". In fact, the bishops say they have noted "an increasingly negative attitude by the local state administration towards various initiatives taken by local churches to raise the moral and religious standards of society. Such an attitude creates an atmosphere where mutual trust is difficult and even leads to conflicts."

174th Plenary Conference of the Polish Episcopate

The 174th Plenary Conference of the Polish Episcopate was held 27-28 June at the Franciscan Convent of St Ann (Silesia) on the occasion of its 500th anniversary. The bishops note in their communiqué that the talks between Luigi Poggi, the Vatican nuncio, and the Polish government in May were completely fruitless, as the authorities persistently refuse to talk about "specific issues" of church-state relations. (The Church's demands include granting the Church legal status, allowing Mass on radio and television, permitting Catholics to set up their own organizations, and lifting restrictions imposed on the circulation of Catholic periodicals.)

The bishops complain that relations with the local authorities in their dioceses are deteriorating as the state administration tries to frustrate various initiatives taken by the bishops to strengthen the religious and moral life of society. In order to overcome the present moral and social problems, the bishops urge the faithful to participate more fully in the public and political life of the country while remaining loyal to the teaching of the Church. "Notwithstanding that Christians have their true home in the life hereafter, the spirit of the Gospel commands that they, more than others, fulfil their temporal duties to society." They want this principle to be particularly emphasized in catechism for young people so that they "form a strong sense of responsibility for their country, their fellow-countrymen and mankind".

The bishops express their concern about the continuing nationalization of land and the moral and religious consequences for the life of farmers now employed by the State. The pastoral programme for

1980-81 was approved under the title "Evangelizing through the family". The annual visit of the revered Jasna Góra icon of the Black Madonna to towns and villages throughout Poland was to conclude on 12 October. For 23 years the "visitation of the Black Madonna" has brought spiritual conversion and renewal to many lapsed Catholics. In 1982 the icon will begin a tour of Polish cathedrals to mark the 600th anniversary of its installation in the monastery of Jasna Góra, Czestochowa.

SOVIET UNION

New Superior of Russian Monastery on Mount Athos

On 14 July 1979 Archimandrite Jeremiah wrote to inform Patriarch Pimen that he had been elected by the brothers of the St Panteleimon Monastery on Mount Athos as their new superior. He replaced *Skhiarkhimandrit* Abel (Makedonov), who returned to Russia on 19 June 1979. Patriarch Pimen and Metropolitan Yuvenali sent congratulatory telegrams on 1 August 1979. (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, No. 10, 1979, p. 4)

Leningrad Branch of Department for External Relations Opened

On 3 August 1979 a branch of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations was opened in Leningrad under the direction of Metropolitan Antony of Leningrad and Novgorod. (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, No. 10, 1979, p. 5)

Vatican-Orthodox Dialogue

A delegation from the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity arrived in Moscow on 12 March for a dialogue with representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church. The delegation came at the invitation of the Moscow Patriarchate and the theme of the meeting, due to last until 23 March, was "Local and Universal Church". Theological discussions between the Russian Orthodox and Catholic Churches began in 1967 and since then there have been four meetings: the last of these took place in Trent in 1979, when various aspects of the contemporary theology of both Churches were examined. (*AKSA*, 21 March 1980)

Dudko "Confession"

On Friday, 20 June the Soviet current affairs programme "Vremya" ("Time") televised Fr Dimitri Dudko reading a statement admitting to "systematic fabrication and dissemination abroad of anti-Soviet materials". He then answered a number of leading questions posed by an interviewer who was introduced as a journalist but whose full name was not revealed. On Saturday Fr Dudko was allowed to return home. Friends of Fr Dudko who saw the programme were surprised by his apparent good health, his total calm and his radiant smile as he admitted to charges which could result in seven years' imprisonment plus five years' exile. He even appeared to have gained weight.

However in early July a reliable source in the Soviet Union reported that Fr Dudko was in a state of deep depression and had lost more than 40 pounds in weight. (*Keston News Service*, No. 102, 10 July 1980)

Leading Adventist Arrested

The evangelist Rostislav Galetsky (32), one of the youngest leaders of the All-Union Church of True and Free Seventh-Day Adventists, was arrested in Moscow at the beginning of July 1980. Galetsky had been living in hiding for some time and the KGB had been searching for him for over five years. Galetsky was a close associate of Vladimir Shelkov, the leader of the True and Free Adventist Church who died in a Soviet labour camp in January (see *RCL* Vol. 8, No. 3, 1980, pp. 201-10). Galetsky was denounced in *Izvestiya* on 13 May 1979 as an "agent" of Shelkov and accused of passing "slandorous" materials about Soviet religious policy to western journalists. (*Keston News Service*, No. 103, 23 July 1980)

Estonian Methodist Arrested

Herbert Murd (26), a registered Methodist from Tallinn, has been arrested by Soviet police in their pre-Olympic clean-up campaign and held without charge since 26 March 1980.

Murd was a self-avowed atheist during his university days when he studied theatre and drama. He was especially interested in western rock and roll music and started a rock band at this time. The band ran into difficulties with the authorities. In 1972

Murd became very disillusioned with what he called "the nonsense" of his life and after meeting a group of Christians he and his wife became believers. He brought his interests and expertise in music and drama to his newfound faith and was active in promoting contemporary forms of Christian music in evangelism wherever possible in the Soviet Union. Periodic attempts have been made to discredit him in the local and national press.

After their conversion his wife came under pressure from the KGB and was told to persuade her husband to stop his activities. Murd refused and his wife, fearing KGB recriminations, then left him, taking their two sons with her. Since Murd's disappearance in March the State has granted his wife a legal divorce (Murd had refused to file a petition for divorce although his wife has been living with another man for the last two years). Murd continued to send his wife child maintenance during the last two years, although she denies receiving it. Friends speculate that this may be due to KGB pressure on her. Murd may therefore be charged with failure to provide child maintenance. Alternatively, he could face trial for "unlawful spreading of religious propaganda" or for "parasitism". Estonia is one of the few Soviet States which does not have a law on "parasitism", but a legal loophole exists because Murd does not receive an "official" salary for his freelance English translation work at the University of Tartu.

Significant Amendments to AUCECB Constitution

The official Baptist journal *Bratsky vestnik* (*Fraternal Messenger*), Nos. 1-2, 1980 is devoted exclusively to a report on the All-Union Congress held in Moscow last December (see Michael Rowe, "The 1979 Baptist Congress in Moscow: A Western Observer Reports", *RCL* Vol. 8, No. 3, 1980, pp. 188-96). The account of the Congress fails to mention the arguments put forward in favour of changing the method of electing the Presidium (the executive body of the Union), and most of the critical contributions from delegates are either suppressed or glossed over. Another distortion is in the presentation of the membership of the All-Union Council and Presidium. The *Bratsky vestnik* report implies that the complete membership of both bodies was announced to the Con-

gress: in fact, the All-Union Council was one member short following the refusal of the delegates to elect P. K. Shatrov. The journal does not even hint at this unfortunate incident. The gap has now been filled by B. I. Bilas, the Pentecostal senior presbyter for Lvov region. His name was clearly added after the journal had been set as it is in slightly heavier type and is badly aligned with the other names. The Presidium has acquired not only the two Pentecostal members who were to be nominated by the Pentecostals (a matter which was not resolved before the delegates dispersed), but also two other members, K. S. Sedletsky, senior presbyter for Moldavia, and I. V. Bukaty, senior presbyter for Belorussia. One of the two Pentecostal members, D. L. Voznyuk, has become a vice-president. Although the All-Union Council is fully entitled to make these changes (apart, perhaps, from co-opting a replacement for Bilas who was a former candidate member of the All-Union Council), they were not announced at the Congress.

The most serious changes relate to the text of the Constitution. The *Bratsky vestnik* version makes four small amendments which do not appear in the draft first circulated to delegates or in the version circulated immediately after the Congress, which corresponds exactly to the draft approved by the delegates. One amendment seems to be purely stylistic, but the others have a far wider significance. In two cases the removal of the word "but" from clauses dealing with the election of the All-Union Council and the auditing commission has changed the requirement that candidates must receive the votes of two-thirds of the delegates to a requirement that two-thirds of the delegates must cast a vote for the election to be valid. The new wording is in contradiction to the will of the Congress (which rejected one candidate because he did not receive the support of two-thirds of the delegates) and could make it possible for the next All-Union Council to be elected by a simple majority, with abstentions of no more than one-third of the delegates discounted.

The remaining alteration concerns the qualifications for membership, a matter which was discussed at some length. Clause 24a was drafted and approved as follows:

"A person who has believed in Christ as

his personal Saviour, has experienced rebirth through the word of God and the Holy Spirit, has received believer's baptism and has attained the age of majority may be a member of the local church."

The order has now been reversed, placing the attainment of the age of majority before baptism. Dukhonenko's speech introducing the draft Constitution is abridged and omits completely his arguments in favour of Clause 24a as drafted. The renewed linking of baptism with membership (which is in fact normal Baptist practice) makes the baptism of young people under the age of 18 illegal. It is bound to alienate the youth in the churches still further, despite the desire of the Congress to help young Christians.

Since amendment to the Constitution is the prerogative of the Congress (Clause 5b), one can only conclude that these changes must have been made under pressure from outside the Union.

YUGOSLAVIA

Interview with Mitija Ribičič

Vjesnik of 16 March carried an editorial interview with Mitija Ribičič, president of the Socialist Alliance of Slovenia, in which he said:

"The Socialist Alliance must realize that it is not made up only of people with a Marxist orientation, but that there are many people who are religious, or if they are not religious are still not Marxist-orientated but nevertheless support self-management, the policy of non-alignment and in general are favourable to our system . . . Local organizations must adopt a policy of association with these elements. Religion must not be an obstacle to equal participation of people in socialist life and society. We must tell people quite clearly that the private religious life, or attendance at religious rites, is in no sense clericalism.

Putting religious feelings on the same plane as clericalism is not only inhuman but creates needless mistrust towards people in our system. There is no aspect of our local self-management, including the security of our country, its territorial defence and Partisan units, in which believers cannot actively co-operate. We must have faith in our citizens. We must

not divide people into believers and atheists, but into honest citizens, patriots, self-managers on the one hand—and the great majority of people are in this group—and on the other the parasites, and those who deviate from our society.”

He went on to except those who tried to bring their faith into politics and into matters where religion had no place; just as it was also forbidden to offend the religious feelings of believers. In Slovenia, he said, relations with religious communities were more settled except for some individuals or groups who wanted the churches to have certain privileges, in particular in the schools and in the media. This minority has no wish to be included in the country's social development.

“Our principles in matters concerning the churches are very simple. The Church should be separated from the State, and, as Kardelj said, the Church is a private organization which decides for itself the limits of its dimensions, makes its own frontiers for its activities, while the State does not concern itself with the religious life. But separation of the Church from the State does not mean that it is separated from society. We are ecumenically inclined to the churches, all religious communities are equal and so we make the possibility for a free religious life.”

There are some problems where the interests of society and the interests of religious communities overlap. Religious communities, for example, are interested in building, but like everyone else they must conform to (municipal) planning and to the laws:

“It is quite certain that we do not need new cathedrals, but we must take into account that where there are groups of believers who have no building, it must be made possible for them to build them. There are also problems concerned with church buildings as cultural monuments; these are historic facts which must be accepted.”

Concerning the struggle against sectarianism, Ribičič said that it was first of all necessary to create a climate in the Socialist Alliance in which various problems could be patiently resolved; it was not important whether individuals were believers or not in order to reach a mutual agreement. There were fewer misunder-

standings where there was no sectarianism. The Church must not be equated with clericalism, nor atheism with socialism. It must be made possible for believers to cooperate in the widest possible way with self-management democracy, as this leads to the de-politization of people's interests. The believer-politician in these conditions does not have the possibility of creating unacceptable aims. Every believer of goodwill will know how to draw the limits between religion and politics.

“On the other side, we must recognize the point of view of the Church. They have an influence on one part of the people and this must be taken into account. Church dignitaries also have their point of view, and in the end we must take into account that basic religious principles can be an influence for the active co-operation of believers in building a just humanity, which is the basic idea of our self-management socialism. We must behave like a modern, progressive society.” (*AKSA*, 21 March 1980)

Church Response to Tito's Death

A special issue of *AKSA* was published on 5 May 1980 to cover the response of religious leaders to President Tito's death, and the issues of 9 and 16 May continued the coverage. Apart from telegrams of condolence from religious leaders abroad (including the Pope and Patriarch Pimen of Moscow), all the Catholic and Orthodox bishops in Yugoslavia sent messages of condolence of varying degrees of warmth. Telegrams were also sent by the heads of the Protestant and Muslim religious communities.

Representatives of all the religious communities were present at the memorial meetings for Tito held in most principal cities in Yugoslavia, and at the President's funeral the Patriarch, three Catholic archbishops, the Reis-ul-ulema of the Muslim community and two leading Adventist clergy occupied special reserved places.

The theological association *Kršćanska Sadašnjost* held a commemorative session at which the association's president, Dr Tomislav Šagi-Bunić (the leading Yugoslav theologian), gave an address on aspects of Tito's thought and work which were of particular historical and theological interest. He concentrated on Tito's work for international peace, and the high

regard which Popes John XXIII and Paul VI came to have for him in this respect. Only towards the end of a long address did he refer to the tensions which exist between the Church and the communist government. But here he concentrated on the ways in which the Church in Yugoslavia is in a more favourable position than in other communist countries: there is no interference in the appointment of bishops, no licensing of priests by the State, no *numerus clausus* in the theological schools, and no requirement for state permission to establish new parishes. While some problems remain, e.g. the building of new churches, the development of religious instruction and public pilgrimages at home and abroad, these problems are not mainly created by the State. One had to remember, he said, that it was under a communist regime that a religious event of such importance as the International Mariological and Marian Congress was held in Zagreb in 1971. The Catholic press has been able to develop considerably during the last two decades. Towards the end of his address he referred to the establishing of the Theological Association Kršćanska Sadašnjost from the former private body, which had given much offence to the hierarchy. The hierarchy had feared that its new existence as a recognized self-managing association would take it entirely out of their control, but Dr Šagi-Bunić said that they hoped to take their place in a self-management society while remaining true to the Church, the principles of Christian theology and the demands of the Church Universal.

Mass Broadcast on Television

Zagreb television broadcast three of the special Masses for the homeland said in all Catholic churches on the occasion of President Tito's funeral. Those shown were from the cathedrals of Zagreb and Šibenik and the parish church of St Theresa in Zagreb. Part of the sermon preached in St Theresa's was also included. (AKSA, 16 May 1980)

Reply to Pastoral Letter

In an article entitled "Atheism is not Atheisation" (*Vjesnik*, 25 March 1980), N. Ivanković replies to the last pastoral letter of Archbishop Kuharić of Zagreb.

The Archbishop has complained that atheism is present throughout the public education system, from kindergarten to university. He sees this as a grave assault on the rights of believing families, for in schools which are the possession of the whole people their children are led towards unbelief in the name of a materialistic ideology. Ivanković comments that the Archbishop identifies the basis of social ideology with militant atheism, whereas in fact atheism, in its strict sense of a negation of God in the name of mankind, is a necessary hypothesis for the establishing of socialist social relations, but is not a constituent part of socialism as such. He denies that "neutral schools" exist anywhere in the world and argues that society is naturally interested in the promotion of a Marxist and scientific understanding of the world and its phenomena. There can be no concessions, he says, about this. (AKSA, 25 March 1980)

Archbishop Appeals for Unity

An article by the new Catholic Archbishop of Belgrade, Mgr Alojz Turk, which appeared in the diocesan journal *Blagovesti* (May 1980) is a pointer to the direction which the new Archbishop will give his work. Turning to the Serbian Orthodox Church, he calls on their mutual heavenly Mother, the most holy Mother of God whom Catholics and Orthodox equally venerate. It is clear to us all, he writes, that our common Mother binds us together, even though we are juridically and formally still divided, and leads us to her Son, Jesus Christ, who is one and undivided. The Archbishop places all his work, his apostolate and his ecumenical endeavours under her protection. He urges all Catholics, particularly those spread throughout Serbia among their eastern Orthodox brothers, to represent the Catholic Church worthily by their works of brotherhood and service, co-operation and helpfulness, wherever the need shows itself. He calls on the two Churches to see which can do most to build true brotherliness on the road to full unity in Christ under the intercession of the Mother of God. The Archbishop concludes his article by sending his blessing to all the inhabitants of the diocese, regardless of their faith or nationality. (AKSA, 18 April 1980)