

## Reviews

### *Shcharansky: Hero of Our Time*

by Martin Gilbert. London: Macmillan, 1986. 490 pp. £14.95

The modern state of Israel was founded in 1948; in the same year Anatoli Shcharansky, the “hero of our time” portrayed in Martin Gilbert’s moving book, was born. This frail coincidence seems with a little hindsight to be remarkably fitting, for by the time Shcharansky finally arrived at Ben Gurion airport on 11 February 1986, his name and the name of Israel had become inseparable in the minds of those who knew anything of him.

Martin Gilbert’s book tells the story of how Shcharansky became the spearhead of the most troubled sector of *aliyah* (the “repatriation” of diaspora Jews to Israel) — the Soviet Jewish emigration movement. The fact that “refusenik” is now an accepted word in the western press is a sad indication of how established the phenomenon of “refusal”, in this unique sense, has become. Accepted it may be by the lexicographers and journalists, but, as the characters and events in this book amply show, “refusal” is not accepted meekly by those who experience it at first hand. The heroism of Anatoli Shcharansky lies in his own individual courage and integrity, but derives its greater meaning from the lives of thousands of Soviet refuseniks.

The first chapters give a short résumé of the period of Shcharansky’s childhood and youth, a time of widespread anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union spanning Stalin’s last years (with the infamous “doctors’ plot”) and the 1960s, which witnessed a virulent anti-Semitic campaign thinly disguised as an attack on “economic crimes”. Shcharansky as a boy and subsequently as a student had few personal encounters with anti-Semitism; this came later when, like so many other Soviet Jews, he became increasingly interested and involved in Jewish history and culture, and contemporary events in Israel. In a skilful balance of history and

life-story, Martin Gilbert traces the developments of the late 1960s and early 1970s as they affected the Soviet Jewish community in which Anatoli Shcharansky was to play a leading role.

The Six-Day War perhaps more than any other single event united Soviet Jews in an awareness of Israel, of each other, and of their common heritage. Study seminars sprang up, and applications for visas began to flood in to the Soviet emigration office OVIR.\* One of the seminars was run by Professor Alexander Lerner, whose portrait as a courageous hero of the refusenik community occupies a prominent place in the crowded gallery of this book. Shcharansky's involvement in the Jewish "revival" rapidly grew, and in 1973, following the attack on Israel by Syrian and Egyptian troops, he took part in a demonstration in support of Israel. It was on this occasion that he met his future wife, Avital (then Natasha Shtiglits).

One of the valuable achievements of this book is the number of unannounced but far-reaching insights it provides into Soviet life, not only in the matter of policy towards Jews, but also in wider questions of policy on religion and the judicial and penal system. The difficult position of religious leaders is illustrated, for example, by the account of the problems which Avital and Anatoli encountered in their attempts to arrange their religious wedding. The rabbi of the Moscow Choral Synagogue, Yakov Fishman, refused to conduct the wedding — "it would be a danger for the synagogue" — and it was only through the help of Girsh Manevich, a respected authority on Jewish matters in Moscow, that the marriage was able to take place. Reading this, one is forced to recognise the effectiveness of official policy in creating through fear a rift between the religious leaders, appointed and recognised by the state, and the young active Jewish community — particularly in Moscow. Rabbi Fishman, whose testimony that the marriage was "invalid" was used by the prosecution at Shcharansky's trial, died in 1983.

Avital had been granted her visa days before the wedding, and left less than a day after the ceremony. Anatoli, inspired by the prospect of their reunion in Israel, redoubled his activities in defence of the Jews' right to emigrate. Various factors contributed to his emergence as a leader of the refusenik community, not least the emigration of Alexander Goldfarb, whom he succeeded as spokesman. Another factor was his increasing contact, (because of his good knowledge of English), with US human rights workers and senators involved in the

\*Department of Visas and Registration.

preparation of the Jackson Amendment.\*\* (It is one of the few regrettable aspects of this book that, although it gives detailed and useful coverage of American actions in defence of human rights, and the case of Soviet Jews in particular, there is comparatively little credit given to the tireless campaigns by British and other Western organisations such as the "35s" (Women's Campaign for Soviet Jewry), whose work began over 15 years ago.)

The years between 1973 and his arrest in 1977 were a time of growing tension for Shcharansky as it became clear that he was more likely to go to a Soviet labour camp than to Israel. The author conveys this tension very effectively, so that the reader, even though aware of the eventual outcome, still shares in the mixture of hope and dread which reaches a pitch at this point in the book.

The account of Shcharansky's detention and trial again gives some significant insights which the author allows to speak for themselves. The use of the media to create a slur campaign; the use of transparently false witnesses at the trial; the use of informers who had posed as refuseniks; the use of the trial itself not only as a deterrent to other Jewish activists but also as a platform for a defence of Soviet policy towards religion. Gilbert quotes extensively and revealingly from the trial speeches, including the prosecutor's claims of religious freedom in the USSR. It is interesting to note that in his speech the Prosecutor made full use not only of Rabbi Fishman's statements, but also of those made by an American "church leader" who had spoken of his favourable impression of the situation of religious believers in the Soviet Union.

Large sections of the chapters covering the eight years of Shcharansky's post-trial imprisonment are devoted, justifiably, to his correspondence. Through these letters, the book becomes a window into the remarkable character of its hero: his humour, his intelligence (he played simultaneous games of chess in his head as mental exercise), his utter determination, his loyalty to and unshakeable love for Avital, and the firm religious conviction which strengthens visibly during the course of the book. Examples of inspiring courage alternate in these pages with descriptions of appalling hardship — which would be even more painful to read if it were not for the fact that the triumph of Shcharansky's arrival in Israel is certain knowledge for the reader. For Shcharansky it was always a certain hope.

The story of Anatoli Shcharansky is admirably told here. But the

\*\*The Jackson Amendment to the 1972 United States Trade Reform Act made trade concessions to Eastern-bloc countries conditional on "respect for the right to emigrate". The Amendment was passed in December 1974, but its influence was shortlived since the Trade Agreement was cancelled by the USSR in January 1975.

reader is quite rightly not allowed to forget that Shcharansky is only one of the many "heroes of our time" whose story should be told in the hope that they too may have the same joyful ending.

CAROLYN BURCH

*Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe,*

Vol. V., No. 6 (November 1985), edited by Paul Moizes. 50 pp.

Fresh ground was broken in East-West relations by the Seventh Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, which met in Budapest in the summer of 1984. Never before had the supreme governing body of a major international ecumenical or confessional organisation met in a Soviet-bloc country. The Assembly's election of Bishop Zoltán Káldy of the Hungarian Lutheran Church to the presidency of the Lutheran World Federation marked the first time that an Eastern European churchman had been elevated to such a position of leadership. Beforehand, the Assembly was promoted as an important step in the "bridge-building" process between East and West by the officers of the Federation, most notably the now retired General Secretary, Dr Carl Mau, and the incumbent European Secretary, Dr Sam Dahlgren. Afterwards, Dr Dahlgren confirmed that the "Budapest Assembly will be of great importance . . . for our future bridge-building function." Thus the Assembly was and remains a keystone of the Lutheran World Federation's East-West span. It has relevance not only for the Federation and its 104 member churches, but also for the increasing number of religious organisations — such as the International Conference of Christians and Jews, the Conference of European Churches, and the European Baptist Federation — which have subsequently sought, or plan to develop contacts in the Soviet-bloc by holding major meetings in Hungary.

The entire November 1985 issue of *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* is devoted to the theme of the Budapest Assembly. The main question posed by the Rev. László Terray is expressed in the title of his featured article, "Was the Reality Cut Out?". The evidence presented by Terray, who was an Assembly delegate of the Church of Norway, strongly suggests that some fundamental realities of Hungarian Lutheran Church life were indeed absent. For instance, Terray draws attention to the perpetuation of the image of the 430,000-strong Lutheran Church of Hungary, which is based on outdated statistics. This was done despite the fact that the church's

official baptism figures indicate a sharp decline since 1956. Reliable estimates by sociologists Drs Imre András and Gyula Morel put the number of Lutherans at around 350,000. Lutheran World Federation officers also failed to inform delegates of the termination of the church's historic autonomy by the Hungarian state after the Second World War. Neither did the Federation leadership brief delegates about the commitment of the Hungarian Lutheran leadership to the construction of socialism based on Marxism-Leninism, or about Bishop Káldy's role as a propagator of Hungarian and Soviet foreign policy. Delegates were shielded by the Assembly organisers from reading the contents of the open letter written by the Hungarian New Testament scholar Pastor Zoltán Dóka, which was strongly critical of diaconia theology — the official theology of the Hungarian Lutheran Church — and of Bishop Káldy's arbitrary methods of leadership. Notwithstanding the Assembly's billing, the agenda did not allow for discussion of the situation of the churches in Eastern Europe, which led one East German delegate to remark that the Assembly meant "practically nothing" for East Europeans.

Terray leaves little doubt about the intention of the organisers to "cut out" inconvenient realities. From the days of preparation to the closing act of worship the organisers feared that public exposure of some of these realities might lead ultimately to the "disruption" of the Assembly by the host church or the Hungarian authorities. Terray reports that before the Assembly Bishop Káldy sent a circular letter to pastors threatening those who might "disturb" preparations with "administrative measures", and stating: "Those who do not listen to us must not be surprised if the church leadership takes . . . legal action against them as soon as we get enough time to do this afterwards." From the side of the Lutheran World Federation, Dr Dahlgren threatened one journalist with expulsion from Hungary, and Dr Mau forbade the circulation of Pastor Dóka's letter by the Federation's Department of Communication, while ordering the printing and circulation of Bishop Káldy's counter-attack, which was "ghost-written" by Dr Dahlgren. Terray found such actions excessive in a country which today shows a readiness to improve channels of communication with the outside world.

Regrettably, this issue of *OPREE* does not include an analysis of the Lutheran World Federation's policy towards the Soviet-bloc countries. That is a task that must be fraught with difficulties. The Federation's officers, fearing the disruption of their contacts in the Soviet-bloc, are not very forthcoming in discussing their Eastern policy. Policy statements generally amount to little more than clichés about "bridge-building", and vague talk about working towards the "dream" of a "united Europe" (see Report of the Europe Secretary,

Commission on Church Cooperation Agenda 1985, Exhibit 8.1). It is hoped that Terray's article and the appended "Dóka Case" documentation may encourage the Lutheran World Federation to reconsider whether bridges can be built on firmer foundations than a spirit of fear and mistrust.

JOHN EIBNER

*A Katolikus Egyház Magyarországon 1944-1971*

(The Catholic Church in Hungary 1944-1971)

by Jenő Gergely. Budapest: Kossuth, 1985. 244 pp.

One of the central problems in assessing the relationship of politics to religion is that, while there is a sizeable area of overlap between them, at the extremes the two are irreconcilable. At the ends of the spectrum, each claims that its criteria for perceiving the world are transcendental. For religion, self-evidently, these criteria are derived from whatever the belief system of that particular religion may be. For political ideologies, the equivalent set of criteria are located in whatever the adherents of the ideology insist upon as being the rightful uses of political power to achieve their aims.

Throughout much of the history of Europe, this essential irreconcilability has not mattered. In the lands of Western Christianity, the doctrine of rendering unto Caesar and God respectively has proved to be one of the most outstanding devices for balancing out the counterclaims of politics and religion. Indeed, the coexistence between the two has been very fruitful, in so far as each respected what it regarded as being proper to the claims of the other. When this balance was in being, each could give useful support to the other. The way in which Catholic Universalism and Mediaeval Kingship were inextricably interwoven was an excellent example of this.

The assault on religion — the denial that it had any role in the political order at all — is a relatively modern development. It reached its apotheosis in the doctrines of Marx and Lenin. Lenin's successors in the Soviet Union, and later in Eastern Europe, recognised that, from their point of view, religion represented a philosophically and politically significant set of alternative values, one which was a real competitor for the minds of some sections of the population. In these circumstances, the equilibrium could not persist, because for the first time in the history of Western Christianity, religion faced a political order that was wholly determined to insist upon the total validity of its

claims. In a word, the communist parties were pushing the situation to its extremes.

This is the general background against which the specifics of the post-1944 Hungarian situation are to be assessed. The communists were determined to destroy the churches, which they interpreted as being political institutions, because they felt that these threatened their claim to the total power which they were deploying to bring about the secular utopia of the Marxian vision. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, had become accustomed to enjoying a range of political privileges which had resulted from its closeness to the state.

The situation was further complicated by two other factors. One of these was the personality of József, Cardinal Mindszenty. Mindszenty in many respects forms the axis around which this book is constructed. The cut-off date coincides with his departure from Hungary. He was unquestionably a man of great strength and faith, but it was equally evident, even at the time, to judge from the evidence marshalled in this book, that his understanding of the relationship between politics and religion was simplistic, to put it at its mildest. He lacked any of the perceptiveness and flexibility which might have helped to spare the Catholic Church some of the persecution which it underwent at the hands of the communists. Indeed, by taking up an intransigent position, Mindszenty probably helped the communists to some extent, precisely because when polarisation occurs, it is difficult to adopt a middle position.

This raises the second factor — the strength of Roman Catholicism in Hungary after the war, something which Mindszenty completely overestimated. In Hungary, the Catholic Church had been closely identified with the old order which had suffered a devastating defeat in 1944-1945 and, hence, was associated with the loss of prestige and power that ensued. There was fairly widespread popular support for some of the measures which Mindszenty opposed, like the secularisation of education and the post-war land reform. Even the episcopate, as we learn from this book, was far from united behind the Primate.

Because of these factors, the confrontation between church and state was more complex than Mindszenty appears to have assumed and, correspondingly, his strategy proved to be less successful than one of greater flexibility might have been. Even if it is futile to pursue the might-have-beens of history, the confrontation left its mark indelibly on church-state relations in Hungary. It is sometimes argued that whatever strategy had been adopted by Mindszenty, the outcome — persecution — would have been the same, so that the Primate's confrontation was at least an honourable and sincere position. The

problem with this argument is that it is deterministic, and assumes that there were no alternatives to what actually happened. And it overlooks the legacy of Mindszenty's confrontation. This cannot be underestimated, for it traumatised the church and endowed the communist state with an utter determination to prevent the church from acquiring any influence at all over society. This legacy is still operative, in the period outside the scope of the book.

This is the sense in which Mindszenty's presence, including his brief and much more moderate stance during the 1956 revolution and the 15 years he spent in the United States legation (later embassy), dominated the Hungarian Catholic Church. After his retirement to Vienna, his successor, László, Cardinal Lékai, appeared to adopt a strategy which was the exact antithesis of Mindszenty's, one of vagueness and apparent accommodation in all things, in the hope of preserving the relatively limited concessions which the state had offered.

The book itself is largely a narrative history of events, and is well-researched. The author has taken a relatively detached standpoint, although in parts of the book some readers will unquestionably find his language slanted against the church. But for a Hungarian readership, the function of the book is not so much assessment as the recovery of "lost" areas of the history of post-war Hungary. To this end, the author has succeeded in putting together a valuable account. His readers will, in any case, be able to read the real message between the lines.

GEORGE SCHÖPFLIN

## Book Notes

### *The Hammer and the Cross*

by Sir John Lawrence. London: BBC Publications, 1986.

126 pp. £2.95.

This book was originally written to be published at the same time as the BBC 1 "Everyman" series, but in fact it was released several months later. Having watched the television series and read the book, I personally found the book more informative.

Although quite short, the book attempts to cover a large portion of the communist world and, despite its title, it does briefly cover religions other than Christianity. The content is based on research, coupled with the personal experience Sir John has gained while working and travelling in Eastern Europe over the past fifty years.

The chapters on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe draw mainly on information from sources already documented, and a newcomer to the subject will find them presented in a very readable way. I found most interesting the chapter entitled "Communist Rule Away from the Shadow of the USSR" which covers China, South East Asia, Central America and Africa. In these countries the position of believers is often less clear than in Eastern Europe, because in, for example, Nicaragua, reliable information is scarce, and the "revolution" is still in progress.

In his conclusion, Sir John explores a number of questions. What is the future of believers under communism? What can believers in the West learn from the experience of Soviet believers? Why is the Christian Church growing more rapidly in China under communism than under the previous regime? These are thought-provoking questions for which there may not be definite answers. They are, nevertheless, questions which ought to be asked.

ROLAND BRYAN

### *Atheïsme in de Sovjet-Unie (1917-1941): een terreinverkenning* (*Atheism in the Soviet Union (1917-1941): a Reconnaissance*)

by Drs A. Burg *et al.* Leiden-Utrecht: Interuniversitair Instituut voor  
Missiologie en Oecumenica, 1985. 284pp.

This book, modestly entitled a "reconnaissance", represents a solid effort to explore the ground. Some space is given to the church before 1917 —

its spirituality, its political stance, its liturgy and theology and the attitudes of its members. There follows a description of the division of church and state after 1917, and the programme of the party during the lifetime of Lenin. The author investigates the methods of spreading atheism during the 1920s, and the customary view of the church as a "counter-revolutionary force". The search for a rationale of atheism is dealt with, covering three aspects of atheism — the passive attitude of many citizens who rejected belief in God, the militancy of the "leftists", and the more sober efforts of those who based their atheism on "scientific" reasoning. There then came the setting up of the League of Atheists; it was not an easy start. The author discusses the methods used: the press, the museums, and educational campaigns of various kinds. Atheist cadres came into existence and something like an atheist "five-year plan". The author discusses the reasons for the lack of consistency in the policies which were followed: the impact of the West, the resistance of the Orthodox Church and various other internal factors. By 1941 came the decay and collapse of the League of Atheists. The author also attempts to put atheist work in the wider context of political and economic policies. There is no index. Each chapter, however, is equipped with footnotes; and there is a full bibliography, mentioning nearly 150 separate sources.

ARVAN GORDON

## Books Received

*Listing of a book here neither implies nor precludes review in a subsequent issue of RCL.*

**Belli, Humberto**, *Breaking Faith: The Sandinista Revolution and its Impact on Freedom and Christian Faith in Nicaragua*. Westchester, Illinois: Crossway, 1985. 272 pp.

**Beloff, Nora**, *Tito's Flawed Legacy: Yugoslavia and the West, 1939-84*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1985. 287 pp.

**Basse, Ottokar** (editor), *Kirche im sozialistischen Gesellschaftssystem*. Zollikon, G2W-Verlag, 1986. 192 pp.

**Carlson, Dennis**, *Through the Torn Curtain: Perspectives on the Hungarian Church Past and Present*. Kansas City: Dennis Carlson, 1985. 177 pp.

**Conquest, Robert**, *Inside Stalin's Secret Police: NKVD Politics 1936-1939*. Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1985. 222 pp.

**Craig, Mary**, *The Crystal Spirit: Lech Walesa and his Poland*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986. 320 pp.

**Croghan, Patrick A.**, *The Peasant from Makeyevka*. Worcester, Mass.: Augustinians of the Assumption, 1982. 326 pp.

**Dyson, Kenneth** (editor), *European Détente: Case Studies of the Politics of East-West Relations*. London: Frances Pinter, 1986. 279 pp.

**Ellis, Jane**, *The Russian Orthodox Church: A Contemporary History*. London: Croom Helm, 1986. 531 pp.

**Kahle, Wilhelm**, *Die lutherischen Kirchen und Gemeinden in der Sowjetunion: seit 1938/40*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1985. 280 pp.

**Kqstov, Vladimir**, *Le Parapluie bulgare*. Paris: Editions Stock, 1986. 236 pp.

**Miller, R. F.**, and **T. H. Rigby** (editors), *Religion and Politics in Communist States*. Canberra: Australia National University, 1986. 142 pp.

**Mötsnik, Harri**, *What is Needed for Peace? Sermons*. Stockholm: Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1986. 63 pp.

**Overmeyer, Daniel L.**, *Religions of China*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986. 126 pp.

**Popovici, Alexa**, *Istoria Baptistilor din România: Vol. I, 1856-1919*. Chicago: Bisericii Baptiste Române, 1980. 312 pp.

*The Position of Soviet Jewry: Human Rights and the Helsinki Accords 1985*. International Council of the World Conference on Soviet Jewry, 1985. 64 pp.

- Ratushinskaya, Irina**, *No, I'm Not Afraid*. Translated by David McDuff. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1986. 142 pp.
- Sen Gupta, Bhabani**, *Afghanistan: Politics, Economics and Society*. London: Frances Pinter, 1986. 206 pp.
- Singleton, Fred**, *A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. 309 pp.
- Svetov, Feliks**, *Opyt biografii*. Paris: YMCA Press, 1985. 438 pp.

# **TEN GROWING SOVIET CHURCHES**

The Church in the Soviet Union has been under intense pressure for most of this century. Many have suffered brutal persecution for their faith. Yet that faith has flourished.

From their long familiarity with the Soviet Union, and from detailed research, Lorna and Michael Bourdeaux have gathered the accounts of ten representative churches. Many have experienced phenomenal growth despite a hostile atheistic environment, and in one case a strong local Islamic culture. One church, painstakingly built by members of the congregation, was immediately confiscated and turned into a concert hall; frequently churches have suffered the imprisonment of their leading members: yet they have grown, taught, and borne effective witness.

Huge vitality, courage, strength of purpose and above all great spiritual integrity characterise the churches included here. Their stories offer inspiration and encourage prayer.

MARC Europe and Keston College

192 pp

£2.50

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