

Reviews

*Breaking Faith: The Sandinista Revolution
and its Impact on Freedom and
Christian Faith in Nicaragua*

by Humberto Belli. Michigan: The Puebla Institute, 1985.

Paperback, 272 pp.

Since this book is particularly controversial, we are, exceptionally, publishing two reviews, written from different standpoints. Readers' comments on this subject — and, as always, on any other — are invited.

Humberto Belli is a journalist of Nicaraguan birth now working at the Puebla Institute in Mexico. His book *Breaking Faith* is a powerful indictment of the Nicaraguan regime; all the more effective because of its tranquil and unemotional style. Senor Belli's career also gives the book a solid credibility because he was not only for several years on the editorial desk of *La Prensa* (the powerful independent daily newspaper which was closed last year) but had previously been an enthusiastic Sandinista, and knew the nature of those revolutionaries from, as it were, within. The book's chief value is that it considers, subject by subject, the different sides of the Sandinista regime and shows how the government has, consistently and effectively, diminished the freedoms which Nicaraguans thought they had won in 1979 when Somoza fled.

The two most valuable chapters are those dealing with the church and the press. Belli left the Sandinistas in 1975 to become an active and practising Christian, and his evidence of the internal debate and subsequent quarrel in the Catholic Church, over attitudes to the revolution, is fascinating. I do not think anyone studying that chapter will be in any doubt as to where the loyalties of the Foreign Minister Fr Miguel d'Escoto, or the Minister of Culture Fr Ernesto Cardenal would lie if it came to a clash between state and church — as indeed

has virtually happened. Nor would anyone question the serious and inspiring efforts made by the Nicaraguan hierarchy under its Archbishop, Obando y Bravo, to maintain the dignity and independence of the church as well as to seek peace. Whatever else happens, it seems clear that thanks to the dedication, energy and intelligence of Archbishop Obando, Nicaragua is likely to retain at least one institution which will remain independent of the growing totalitarian power of the state. Thus, Nicaragua is more likely to be a kind of Latin American Poland than another Cuba. This is no thanks to the government, which, as Belli describes, has on many occasions (for example, in the case of the framing of Fr Bismarck Caballo) sought to bully the church into submission.

The passages on the press are of prime relevance, since from them we learn exactly how censorship functioned in Nicaragua after March 1982 when the state of emergency (recently re-confirmed) was first proclaimed. The editors of a paper such as *La Prensa* had to take proofs of the entire paper to the censors, wait for hours before being told to cut such-and-such and then return with the proposed new paragraphs — which would then undergo the same process. *La Prensa* was not permitted to report the meetings of the opposition candidate Arturo Cruz in the Potemkinised elections of 1984, nor, of course, the stoning, spitting and direct interference which followed.

This work, along with David Nolan's excellent *Ideology and the Sandinistas* and Shirley Christian's *Revolution in the Family*, together form a trio of books which should make it perfectly easy for a European democrat to understand this country in crisis. Unfortunately the availability of all three books in Britain is not very satisfactory.

HUGH THOMAS

* * * * *

Arguments over Nicaragua (a country which many, this reviewer included, would not accept as having a Marxist regime) have for too long been muddled by selective and biased presentation of evidence from positions of entrenched and polarised commitment. Humberto Belli, having been a member of the Sandinista Front and subsequently an editor of Nicaragua's only opposition newspaper, would appear to be well qualified to give a more than usually balanced picture of that country.

His introduction shows that he is aware of the conflicting views held by opposing political vested interests, and holds the promise that he

will do justice to the contradictions and complexities of Nicaragua's problems. "Both sides", he says

are interested in portraying the Nicaraguan situation, including the religious situation, in a certain light [so that] Christians in the United States, for example, [are encouraged] either to foster support for United States-supported military counter-measures or to diminish such support (p. xiii)

However, the promise of the introduction is not fulfilled. For example, this indirect mention of US support for the Contras is specifically repeated only once. We are told (without sources) that "the Sandinistas . . . have received over four billion dollars from abroad since coming to power", whereas the Contras, we are vaguely informed, "have been financed in part by the United States Government" (p. 225).

As the book unfolds it becomes apparent that Belli's perceptions are no less slanted than those of the "vested interests" whom he attacks in his introduction. His adequate but brief history of the rise of the Sandinistas, for example, is followed by a detailed and destructive assault on their regime. The same technique is used in his account of the church. He gives a brief analysis, dividing it into three categories — the conservative or traditionalist church, the liberal-social church (which contains many bishops, including Cardinal Obando Y Bravo), and the revolutionary church — and then devotes himself to proving that the social church is the true church of the people and that the revolutionary church consists of the wealthy intellectual élite.

All this would be fine if it were based on a balanced assessment of the evidence. But Belli starts from the assumption that any evidence put forward by the Sandinistas or the revolutionary church is nothing more than clever propaganda. This false logic, whereby the stronger the evidence in support of the Sandinistas the more it proves their cunning deception, provides the basis for a touching picture of the soft-hearted American public being manipulated by crafty Sandinistan public relations expertise.

No such scepticism is applied to the opponents of the regime. For example, the fact that two out of 14 soldiers in a crashed Nicaraguan air-force plane were Cuban is taken as proof that there is a similar proportion of Cubans in the armed forces as a whole (p. 77).

Perhaps the worst misuse of evidence in *Breaking Faith* lies in its selectivity. While the testimony of a Pentecostal Pastor concerning atrocities committed against him by Sandinistan soldiers is given in detail (p. 220), nowhere is there a reference to the many documented accusations of atrocities committed by the Contras. Similarly, the description of the Pope's visit to Nicaragua dwells at length on

displays of hostility towards him by government ministers, yet we look in vain for reference to the television picture seen all over the world of the Pope wagging an admonitory finger at the kneeling Ernesto Cardenal.

Belli has lived in the United States since 1982. His view of events in Nicaragua seems to be that of a disillusioned expatriate, influenced by a hostile American administration. The wealth of knowledge and expertise which he undoubtedly possesses, far from enlightening his readers, leaves them floundering and uncertain as to how much trust can be placed in evidence put forward by so biased a commentator.

BILL BROAD

Ten Growing Soviet Churches

by Lorna and Michael Bourdeaux.

Marc Europe, Keston College Book No. 17, 1987.

Paperback, 210 pp., £2.50.

Despite the emphasis on central planning in the Soviet Union, its size and the diverse backgrounds of its constituent republics mean that life throughout the country is far from uniform. Few general statements hold good everywhere, and this is particularly true of religion, where circumstances can change significantly not only from region to region but from year to year. It is greatly to the credit of the authors of *Ten Growing Soviet Churches* that they have not attempted an overall survey of the state of the church in the USSR, but have contented themselves with giving us ten portraits of local Christian communities whose only common feature is clear evidence of a living God in their midst.

¶ The ten communities could hardly be more varied, from Lviv near the Polish border to the eastern tip of Siberia near the Pacific, and from Tallinn in Estonia to Karaganda in Kazakhstan. Eight different denominations are featured (including a Uniate church), registered and unregistered churches find a place, and the experience of state hostility ranges from the Estonian Methodists who seem to have reached a measure of accommodation with the local Council for Religious Affairs, to the Siberian Pentecostals and the Ukrainian Uniates whose stories are a constant succession of harassment, intimidation, imprisonment, and separation from families and loved ones.

Information has been gained from a variety of sources, though rarely is more than one source quoted for any particular episode. This is a pity. The authors rightly attempt to be a voice for the voiceless, yet

when for example a person is described as suffering hostility yet being unsupported by church leaders, one would like to hear the church leaders' point of view also. On the evidence of the chapter about which this reviewer has first hand knowledge, the story of Estonian Methodism, the information appears to be generally sound though inaccurate in some details. Hugo Oengo died in December 1968, not March; Methodism is not found only in Estonia within the Soviet Union (there is a small Methodist society near Uzhgorod in the Ukraine whose pastor is Ivan Vuksta); and Heigo Ritsbek would smile a wry smile at the description of himself as "obviously acceptable to the Soviet authorities for advancement in leadership". Since his student days he has been in frequent trouble with the KGB and he is the one Methodist leader never to have been granted permission to travel abroad. The account of Herbert Murd's experience is so one-sided as to threaten the credibility of the whole chapter. The claim that the KGB is not well enough organised to pick up subversion in the Estonian language is laughable.

There are more serious reservations to be entered against this book. The title is misleading. The ten chapters are not all about growing churches, and they are not even all about churches. They are accounts of the experience of a variety of individuals and congregations, all of whom show signs of great faithfulness but few of growth in any measurable sense.

More serious is the assertion that "evangelisation in all its many forms . . . is impossible legally or practically". It is true that many forms of outreach are not permitted. However, studies in many different cultures throughout the world have shown that 70-80 per cent of the people who become Christians do so through the personal invitation of a friend, neighbour, or member of the family. This form of evangelism is open to Christians in the Soviet Union and is indeed being practised in many places with great effect — as the book itself shows.

From many of the chapters one gains the impression that the authors have a special regard for those who take an absolute and uncompromising stand and suffer greatly for it. While such people do indeed deserve our admiration and our prayers it must be seriously questioned whether their stance is more Christian than those church leaders who, by diplomacy and compromise on matters not fundamental to the gospel, create a space in which the church may live and grow. Jesus judged that there was a time to confront his enemies and a time to avoid confrontation, a time to speak openly and a time to share only with his intimate friends. The widely-held view that compromise should be regarded as the eighth deadly sin is not supported by the New Testament. Indeed the first requirement of any

serious student of the persecuted church is theological reflection on the nature of compromise.

Lorna and Michael Bourdeaux have given us food for thought, material for prayer, ground for concern and a reason for thankfulness. They have shown beyond doubt that all the power of the modern totalitarian state is not able to quench the flame of faith. They have also raised more questions than within the limited compass of their book they were able to answer. A sequel is eagerly awaited.

J. DAVID BRIDGE

Soviet Fiction Since Stalin: Science, Politics & Literature

by Rosalind Marsh. London: Croom Helm, 1986.

338 pp., £25.00.

A study of Soviet fiction published over the last twenty years can throw much light on Soviet society and the relations between private citizens and the state: yet until recently this rich store of source material has been ignored by most Sovietologists. Rosalind Marsh's detailed and scholarly survey does much to fill this gap. She has concentrated on those novels and plays which take science as their main theme, and which have been officially published in the USSR during and after Khrushchev's reign. She has quite rightly excluded books written by Russian authors in emigration, but has included some works which were published only in the West but which were written in the authors' homeland — notably Solzhenitsyn's *First Circle* and Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*. From the enormous mass of "official" novels and stories, some of which are extremely interesting but a great many of which are boring and third-rate, she has extracted some fascinating insights into the life of Soviet scientists and writers. This will be an invaluable reference book for students of the USSR, chronicling as it does all the swings in official policy since 1953 not only towards scientists, but towards intellectuals in general.

The cult of science, based on the traditions of the 19th-century Russian "Westernist" school,* has always been a basic dogma of the Soviet regime. Writers have always been expected to share Marx's reverence for science as the creator of a new world, and to give their support to the Soviet state's grandiose scientific-technical projects, from the development of nuclear energy to the BAM railway line in Siberia. Yet the idealised picture of scientists at work found in so

*Soviet science claims descent from the "Westernist" school of thought in Russia in the 1840s. Adherents to this school looked to revolutionary ideas and technical progress imported from the West to bring about a happy future for Russia.

many minor Soviet literary works is not just the result of the authors' desire for a meal-ticket: it also reflects the genuine enthusiasm for science and technology felt throughout the country — and as Rosalind Marsh shows, enthusiasm for science has provided some writers with the chance to express other than strictly orthodox views.

This is particularly true in the immensely popular genre of science-fiction. Some authors feel themselves sufficiently secure with both their reading public and their editors to risk deviating from the party line in their speculations about the future. The Strugatsky brothers, for instance, in their best-selling fantasy-novels, have often voiced grave doubts about where science is taking mankind: they show men as alienated beings, in a universe which is nothing like the Utopia which the much-acclaimed "scientific-technical revolution" was supposed to bring about. Rasputin in his *Farewell to Matyora* passionately criticises planners who pursue technological progress with no regard for the fate of the human beings involved. And Chingiz Aitmatov, in his novel *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years*, shows Soviet and American cosmonauts cooperating on a space mission, but being betrayed by their earth controllers, who forbid them to return. Aitmatov is clearly criticising the isolationist foreign policy of his own government, and its refusal to admit that Russia as well as America is responsible for the precarious situation of the world. Although his book drew some adverse comments (notably from Georgi Markov, since demoted from overlordship of the Writers' Union), Aitmatov was able to get away with an unorthodox formula for world peace, because he expressed it in what he himself described as a "cosmological tale" about events with no basis in fact.

A primary function of Soviet science, in the eyes of the authorities, is to combat religious superstitions, and Soviet writers like Tendryakov have written stories with this as their main aim. Whether deliberately or without the authors realising it, these stories often show considerable sympathy with the viewpoint of believers, and a notable lack of enthusiasm for atheist arguments. In his story *On Apostolic Business* (1969) for instance, Tendryakov's hero, a young scientist, is shown throwing himself into religion as a reaction from his disillusionment with science, which he realises is powerless to make men happy. Eventually he abandons his search for God, but is left with a strengthened belief in the Christian principle of loving one's neighbour. In a later story, *The Eclipse* (1977), Tendryakov paints a sympathetic picture of a young girl with high ideals, who leaves her conformist, scientist husband for a long-haired drop-out who preaches the same gospel of brotherly love. Tendryakov clearly disapproves of her action, but approves of her search for spiritual

values and her rejection of the materialism of Soviet society. Rosalind Marsh cites these stories, plus a number of works by Solzhenitsyn and Sinyavsky: but there are many more examples in official Soviet fiction of sympathetic treatment of believers.

Rosalind Marsh ends her book with some speculations as to why the frank works of fiction on which her survey is based were allowed to appear in print. The main reason, in her view, was that the pressure for change emanating from the writers themselves was too strong for the authorities to resist — especially as writers have become extremely skilled in outwitting the censors. Passages containing criticism of the regime can be balanced by ideologically orthodox passages; artificial happy endings can be added; anti-party opinions can be put into the mouths of villains; outright condemnation of government policies can be disguised as folklore or fantasy. And while authors have grown cleverer at evading the controls imposed on them, readers have become equally adept at catching on to hidden implications.

To outside observers, the Soviet literary scene presents the appearance of haphazard chaos: "Chance plays a large part in determining literary policy, and often there seems no good reason why one work is published and another not." But it is clear that since Stalin's demise, literature has increasingly provided a forum for the general public to voice a variety of opinions. The existence of this forum works both as a safety valve for social tensions, and as a means for the rulers to elicit information about the mood of the ruled. More importantly, writers have gained in confidence, since they know from experience that a certain degree of liberalisation from within is possible, without the destruction of the system as a whole. In the Gorbachov era, the continuation of this liberalisation process looks pretty certain. And so — with Rosalind Marsh — we can "look forward to the future with cautious optimism".

MARY SETON-WATSON

Muslims of the Soviet Empire
A Guide

by Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush. London: C. Hurst, 1986. 296 pp., £18.50.

Probably few people have done more to document the position of Islam in the Soviet Union than the authors of the book under review. Following their provocative analyses of "Muslim national communism" and Sufism in the USSR, Bennigsen and Wimbush have now produced a reference work on the different Islamic peoples of the "Soviet Empire".

The first, introductory, part of the book traces the history of Islam in Central Asia from the Arab invasion of the seventh century, through the Russian conquest of the nineteenth, to present-day Soviet rule. This is followed by a brief look at the leadership, structures, institutions and publications of the officially recognised Muslim establishment, and at what they call "parallel Islam", which is associated with the Sufi brotherhoods. Moving on to a wider plane, they examine the economic and military implications of the expanding Muslim population, and of the likely impact on Soviet Muslims of events in Iran, Afghanistan, and China. They end this section by stating:

We believe that a variety of forces — from domestic economic stagnation and the impact of demographic shifts to the Soviet Muslim's heightened political awareness and the potential for this awareness to be stimulated from abroad — will make Soviet ethnic management of the Islamic community within its borders more difficult in the years ahead. If for no other reason than this, we should be asking: Who are the Soviet Muslims?

The second part of the book seeks to answer this question, looking at each of the individual Islamic peoples in terms of demography, ethnography, language, assimilation, religion and, in some cases, national awareness. Of special interest here are comments on the increased religiosity of the Kazakhs under Soviet rule, and the rise to pre-eminence within the Central Asian community of the Uzbeks.

For those with little knowledge of the Soviet Muslims, this book will provide an invaluable guide, and there are few details presented here with which one would wish to quarrel. Occasionally the information may be a little dated, as when the authors report on there being seventy students at the Budharan *medressah* — in 1986 it was reported to have 85. This reviewer would also dispute the suggestion that the journal *Muslims of the Soviet East* surpasses its Christian counterparts "both in presentation and content". Less happy still is the strong language used in describing anti-religious work in the various Muslim areas: "intense" in Kazakhstan, "particularly intense" in Uzbekistan, "particularly fierce" in Tadzhikistan, "more intense in Kirgiziya than in any other Central Asian republic with the exception of Uzbekistan", and "somewhat more intense than in other territories of Central Asia" in the Karakalpak ASSR.

Also disappointing is the lack of a detailed discussion of the views of scholars such as Alastair McAuley, who downplay the role of Islam in the USSR. Some writers point to the relative economic prosperity of Soviet Muslims when compared to their co-religionists elsewhere, and

suggest that they are at least partly supportive of the Soviet regime. Moreover, they argue that the tight controls over religious life and the difficulty of acquiring religious knowledge militate against any Islamic "revival". Bennigsen and Wimbush do counter these arguments by criticising the excessively Moscow-oriented approach of many social scientists and by noting that Muslim politics have a distinctive quality of their own. To this might be added the evidence provided by the Central Asian press over the last year or more of an increasing obsession with the "Islamic factor". Nevertheless, these are very minor points when set against the overall value of a book which helps make sense of a complex situation.

JOHN ANDERSON

Mint a szarvas a folyóvizekre

(As Pants the Hart for Cooling Streams)

by B. András Bálint. Budapest: Magvető, 1985. 196 pp.

What is the role of faith in modern life, and how far have believers altered their religious attitude in recent years? These are the questions to which András Bálint seeks answers in a survey of the religious life of Budapest's south-eastern suburbs. The eighteenth district figures in guide-books as rarely as, say, Hackney. It is an unprepossessing conglomeration of old single-storey houses, factory estates, and modern high-rise flats, with no real centre. Very few of its population of about 100,000 were born there; they are mainly factory and office workers, with a sprinkling of teachers, lawyers and retired folk. Within the district boundaries there are eighteen churches and one synagogue, and most of these were built between the two world wars: they comprise eight Roman Catholic, five Calvinist and two Baptist churches, while Lutherans, Unitarians and Adventists each have one church there. According to the local council records — for the council monitors their activities — regular churchgoers number some 10,000 Catholics, 6,000 Calvinists and Lutherans and some 600-700 members of other denominations. This is slightly more than the national average.

The author's method is to talk with a wide range of individuals, from teenagers to factory-workers, teachers, and retired people, about their beliefs. He visits churches and attends meetings, including one held by a basis community; he discovers, but cannot penetrate, an unregistered sect at work and hears of the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses in the area. His approach is that of the interested (formerly Catholic) sociologist. The result is a mosaic every bit as fascinating to read as Ronald Blythe's *Akenfield*. There is the angry elderly Calvinist

who prays God to exterminate all atheists, the thoughtful schoolboy who needs to know more before he can make up his own mind about religious belief, the elderly teacher who has maintained her faith through even the darkest days and is now an educational adviser to the council, and the Adventist elder who is an active and popular member of the district council, to name but a few. There are those who do not wish to be seen attending their local church and therefore travel into the city to worship, and a young teacher in training takes care not to mention her faith in college, but wonders, "If religion is a private affair, why are religious folk harassed?" (p. 103).

The problems of the clergy are also discussed. Celibacy, the Catholic Church's teaching on abortion, the generation-gap between the conservative church hierarchy and the more radical young priests are vital issues, highlighted by a long interview with a former priest, now excommunicated, who found it impossible to reconcile his burning social concern with the conservatism of his superiors. There are brief portraits of the local clergy, from the popular Catholic parish priest to the neglectful Calvinist pastor who prefers his books to his flock and the Unitarian minister whose congregation, originally of refugees from Transylvania after the first world war, has dwindled to a mere handful. By contrast, a change of clergy at the main Catholic church saw an increase in Sunday attendances from 800 in 1978 to some 3,000 in 1980.

Members of the basis community discuss some of the important questions of the age, such as the relationship between faith and vocation, especially where the latter may cause conflict. This theme is brought into even greater prominence among the Adventists, whose work may militate against their attendance at Saturday worship. The fellowship of the basis community is important, as one member puts it, "to show someone he's not alone. One must not feel alone in church" (p. 114). And loneliness is a recurrent theme: the friendship shown in the Baptist and Adventist congregations is a strong attraction.

There are many familiar problems, such as that of youth work, whether secular or ecclesiastical. We meet church members who are leaders in the Communist Youth Association, described by one of them as "a lukewarm mass organisation" (p. 85) and similarly regarded by the district council. The ineffectiveness of atheist teaching receives frequent comment, though the demand for religious instruction is very low, prompted more by grandparents than parents.

András Bálint's survey is left open-ended, but it is clear that there is more questioning and discussion of the teachings of the churches than would have been possible even thirty years ago. Nor has there been a

death of religious belief, though there is ample evidence of increased indifference, particularly among the young — a phenomenon which is certainly not confined to Budapest. A postscript to the book, by Pál Horváth, seeks to interpret the findings of the survey from a Marxist viewpoint, arguing for a better understanding between Christians and Marxists of each other's beliefs, and urging combined action on matters of shared concern. It is worth recording that this plea is not entirely unheeded in present-day Hungary.

GEORGE CUSHING

*Kirche im Sozialistischen Gesellschaftssystem
Begegnungen — Erfahrungen — Einsichten.
(The Church in the Socialist Social System.
Encounters — Experiences — Reflections)*

edited by Ottokar Basse. Zollikon: G2W-Verlag, 1986.

Paperback, 192 pp.

This is a compilation of lectures by leading church representatives, publicists and experts on the churches in the socialist system. These lectures were given at a conference in Stuttgart (West Germany) from 22 to 24 March 1985, under the patronage of Bishop Dr Georg Moser. It had the design and character of a truly ecumenical conference, although representatives from the churches in Eastern Europe had declined the invitation, much to the regret of the organisers.

William van den Bercken's examination of atheism and ideology (pp. 115-34; see also article in *RCL* Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 269-81) and Cardinal Koenig's contribution on the subject of religious liberty (pp. 50-61) emerge as the two focal points of the book, and these articles greatly help the understanding of the issues involved in the remarkably diverse range of topics covered by the other contributions.

These lectures, on the subject of the churches in socialist countries, highlight the fact that ideological atheism is a common denominator of all the various communist regimes, but its expression differs from country to country. I expected to find up-to-date information on different countries and this the book certainly provides. But I found its assessment of the dialogue between believers and non-believers (including Marxists) particularly valuable. Experts with first-hand experience, especially on the Roman Catholic side, give their differing, often pessimistic views.

Furthermore, the book opens new perspectives on the future of the churches in Eastern Europe and the ecumenical movement. A number of authors, led by Cardinal Koenig, express cautious optimism that

communist policy on religion could be revised in the not too distant future, especially in view of the revival of religion amongst the younger generation. State atheism can indeed adapt to historical situations, as is clearly the case in the GDR. We also have to remember that the conference was held in the spring of 1985, when the Gorbachov era had only just begun, although so far religion seems to have been left out of the liberalisation process.

In a climate where communist revision of religious policy is a possibility, a unified approach in the ecumenical movement on the understanding of religious freedom is essential. It must be seen as the great merit of this conference that the responsibilities and shortcomings of the ecumenical movement were openly discussed. A unified stance, sadly, is often not achieved and the subject of religious freedom has often been superseded in favour of other concerns (see Paul Teunissen: *“Marxistische und christliche Perspektiven der internationalen Beziehungen”* (Marxist and Christian Perspectives of International Relations), pp. 76-92; and Johannes A. Hebly: *“Aspekte der westlichen ökumenischen Politik gegenüber Osteuropa”* (Aspects of Western Ecumenical Policy Towards Eastern Europe), pp. 22-44. Christians in the Eastern-bloc countries expect more of the ecumenical movement: “Is Eastern Europe no subject for ecumenism?” That telling question, coming from a young participant in an ecumenical youth conference of the Lutheran World Council in Budapest, put in a nutshell what Christians in Eastern Europe feel. The process of “idea-selection” (Hebly), prevalent in the WCC at the time of the conference, is extended to them. Their vital concerns, such as religious freedom, are not top of the agenda in the ecumenical movement and they can only discuss topics of the WCC’s choice at ecumenical gatherings in their countries.

With the widely-recognised growth of Christian awareness in the communist world the real concerns of grassroots believers can no longer be represented and interpreted in the ecumenical forum by their church leadership alone. The research work of Western institutes such as Glaube in der Zweiten Welt, Keston College and others closely involved in the preparation of the conference is crucial in providing us with knowledge of the real issues facing the churches in Eastern Europe. This book should therefore serve as a basis for wider discussion in the ecumenical world on the issues of religious liberty.

Christians in Eastern Europe seem to lead the way to a better understanding of what ecumenism is about. Every member church should be able to express its own most pressing problems, without, however, losing the worldwide perspective. The experiences of “real” churches must find a voice to qualify the declarations of their

spokesmen, who are often not able to speak frankly because of government directives. The WCC could add a new dimension to its struggle for justice by recognising the question of religious liberty as one of the prime concerns of the churches in Eastern Europe. To be "the salt of the earth" and not "the jam of the state" as Bishop Krusche from Magdeburg once put it, is the hallmark of a free church. Can the ecumenical movement also be the salt of the earth and help the process towards religious liberty for all its member churches? This seems to be the question and hope we are left with.

BÄRBEL GRANGE

Book Notes

Talking about God is Dangerous

by Tatiana Goricheva. London: SCM Press, 1986.

Paperback, 104 pp., £3.95.

The German version of this book has already been reviewed in *RCL* (Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 233-34). The English translation reads well and is to be highly commended. Clearly written and easy to read, it is a profound and moving account of conversion to Christianity. The author, a member of the Soviet non-conformist intelligentsia, describes with honesty and insight both her experience of joining the Russian Orthodox Church, and, later, her reactions — not always favourable — to Christianity in the West. An excellent book to give as a present to someone wanting an introduction to contemporary Russian Christianity.

JANE ELLIS

Die lutherischen Kirchen und Gemeinden in der Sowjetunion seit 1938/1940

(The Lutheran Churches and Parishes in the Soviet Union Since 1938/40) by Wilhelm Kahle. (Die lutherische Kirche: Geschichte und Gestalten, Band 8.) Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1985. Paperback, 280 pp.

This is an excellent presentation of the information currently available on the Lutheran churches in the USSR. The author is a profound historian and leading authority on the history of Protestantism in that

country. The book is the last in a trilogy on the Lutheran churches in Russia and the Soviet Union.

The introduction deals with church and state, and traces the development, under the auspices of the government, of a theology of peace. Kahle then turns to the Lutheran churches in the Baltic states before focusing on the Asiatic regions of the USSR, where 450 German Lutheran congregations have re-emerged, half of which are legally registered. The gathering of the material on which the ensuing study is based was pioneering work indeed, but of most interest are Kahle's reflections on the life of these forgotten churches and parishes, the role of the church in preserving the identity of a people, the development of the ministry and (under the supervision of the Russian Orthodox Church) of ecumenical relations. Here, Kahle makes a welcome contribution to the debate about Western ecumenical relations with churches in the Soviet Union, commenting discreetly on the naïveté of many Western visitors, and treating with equal caution the question of how churches in captivity can best be helped, while pointing to the danger that "Ecumenical relations almost become the criterion for truth" (p. 261).

HANS HEBLY

Books Received

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

Floridi, Alexis Ulysses, *Moscow and the Vatican*. Ann Arbor, Michigan; Ardis, 1986. 280 pp.

Groth, Bernd, *Sowjetischer Atheismus und Theologie im Gespräch*. Frankfurter Theologische Studien, 33 Band. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Josef Knecht, 1986. 366 pp.

Klein, Christoph, *Auf dem andern Wege: Aufsätze zum Schicksal der Siebenbürger Sachsen als Volk und Kirche*. Erlangen: Martin-Luther-Verlag, 1986. 224 pp.

The Molokan Heritage collection. Volume I: Reprints of Articles and Translations. Collected by Stephen P. and Ethel Dunn. Berkeley, California: Highgate Road Social Science Research Station, Inc.

Popieluszko, Father Jerzy, *The Way of My Cross*. Translated by Father Michael J. Wrenn. Chicago: Regnery Books, 1986. 268 pp.

Contributors

John Anderson is a member of the research staff at Keston College, specialising in the religious situation in the Soviet Union.

Paul Booth is a member of the research staff at Keston College, specialising in the religious situation in Romania, and editor of *RCL*.

David Bridge is a Secretary of the Methodist Home Mission Division with particular responsibility for evangelism and communications.

Bill Broad is a priest in the Church of England.

George Cushing is Emeritus Professor of Hungarian Language and Literature in the University of London.

Jane Ellis is a member of the research staff at Keston College, specialising in the situation of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Arvan Gordon is a member of the research staff at Keston College, specialising in the GDR and China.

Bärbel Grange holds degrees in Theology and French from Saarbrücken University. She is a language teacher and musician.

Hans Hebly is former director of the Ecumenical Institute at Utrecht University.

Dr Lukasz Hirszowicz is editor of *Soviet Jewish Affairs*, London.

Dimitri Pospelovsky is Professor of Russian and Modern European History in the University of Western Ontario, London, Canada. At present he is a visiting Fellow at Keston College and the School of Slavonic and East European Studies.

Dr D. S. Russell served as General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland from 1967 until his retirement in 1982. He is chairman of the British Churches' Forum on Human Rights.

Marite Sapiets is a member of the Soviet research staff at Keston College.

Mary Seton-Watson worked for thirty years in the BBC's Russian-language broadcasts. She is now retired, and her book *Scenes from Soviet Life*, based on Soviet literature of the past twenty years, was published in May 1986.

Andrew Sorokowski is a member of the research staff at Keston College, specialising in the religious situation in the Ukraine.

Dr Gerd Stricker was until December 1986 a member of the editorial staff for the yearbook *Kirche im Osten*, published by the Ostkirchen-Institut, Münster, West Germany. He is now a member of the research and editorial staff of *Glaube in der Zweiten Welt*, Zollikon, Switzerland.

Joseph J. Spae holds doctorates in Chinese and Japanese. He is the author of several books on oriental religions and Christianity. Dr Spae is a yearly visitor to China. He is editor of *China Update*, a quarterly on today's China.

Lord Thomas (better known as Hugh Thomas) is a historian known for his history of the Spanish Civil War, his history of Cuba, and, most recently, his study of the causes of the cold war, *Armed Truth*, published in 1986.

Michael Walsh is the Librarian of Heythrop College, University of London.