

The second conference also discussed various aspects of the present situation of religion in Eastern Europe, and underlined the need for greater communication and cooperation between groups working in this field. Some concrete proposals were made to further such cooperation. The conference included a public meeting in Chur, which was well attended. It is hoped that a single conference next year—possibly in Holland—will draw together all the groups represented here, and others not present on these occasions.

Abolition of Torture

Amnesty International, a non-aligned organization working for the release of prisoners of conscience all over the world, has launched a campaign for the abolition of torture. Signatures are being collected for a petition to be presented to the United Nations. The climax of the present stage of the campaign will be an international congress in Paris on 10 December. One of the photographs featured on the cover of the campaign brochure "Epidemic: Torture" is that of Ivan Moiseyev, the young Baptist who was tortured and killed while serving in the Soviet Army in the Crimea last summer. One of the signatures already received for the petition is that of Anatoli Levitin, Russian Orthodox publicist and defender of human rights.



Letters to the Editor

L. La Dany from Hong Kong writes:

I have just received No. 3 of *Religion in Communist Lands*, containing a very good article on China by Victor Hayward. I would like, however, to add one point.

One has to distinguish between what visitors to China see and what they are told by church dignitaries whom they are allowed to meet. In the article Bishop Ting is quoted as having said that "he knew of churches where religious services were well attended". Also, words of Dr. John Fleming are quoted: "The Catholics still had a seminary with about twenty students and six full-time teachers".

Similar statements are frequently made to foreign visitors, and they are rarely consistent. A Spanish journalist, Ricard Estarrion, was told in Peking that "about eight" Catholic seminarians are still studying in schools of secondary education. Several visitors to Peking were told that Catholic services are held in other churches. The truth of such statements could never be verified. People on the China Mainland believe that everybody knows that they cannot say what they think and—I have seen it on several occasions—they are astonished when their words are reported as the objective truth.

One could add rumours I heard from two persons—one from Canton and the other from Shanghai—who said that in both places young communists are being trained to function as Buddhist monks; they perform only when foreigners are present. I have described the Canton case in the November issue of *Civiltà Catolica*. I heard the same story about Shanghai later.

A correspondent writes:

Religion in Communist Lands Nos. 4-5, p. 64, again mentions the execution of a Father Shtefen Kurti. I must voice my very severe misgivings as to the accuracy of that report. My reasons are that the London *Daily Telegraph* reported early in 1969 that a Father Skurti had been executed by the Albanians. At that time his crime was reported as being escaping into Yugoslavia with certain members of his congregation. It appears that the Yugoslavs in the Kosovo region, into which he escaped, handed him back to the Albanian border guards. It was alleged that the execution took place in November 1968.

You will see that the similarity in the names is too great not to arouse suspicion. The fact that on 29 April this year Radio Tirana confirmed the execution of S. Kurti does not seem to lend bias to either story, but could just as well have applied to the execution in November 1968, as to the alleged later execution.

Frankly I'm bound to say I regard the report of a Father Shtefen Kurti having been executed recently for baptising a child as unlikely in the extreme.