

Editorial

When studying the religious situation in Eastern Europe and China, it is misleading to place all these countries in one category, labelled "the Communist World". For the component parts of this "world" differ widely and do not form a uniform whole. The basket containing these eggs – the Marxist-Leninist ideology – may be the same for them all (although the eggs often disagree on the exact nature of this basket), but the eggs themselves, if scrutinized, will be seen to differ – one may be speckled, another plain brown, another smelling of the farmyard with a wisp of straw still attached. "There is no quality so universal in the appearance of things as their diversity and variety. The Greeks and Romans, as well as ourselves, use eggs as an example of the perfect degree of similarity. Yet there have been men, particularly one at Delphi, who could detect marks of difference between them, so that he never mistook one for another; and although he had many hens, he could always tell which had laid a particular egg. . . . Resemblance does not make things as much alike as difference makes them dissimilar" (Montaigne *Essays*, Book 3, Chap. 13). Hopefully, this journal will follow the example of the man at Delphi, rather than that of the Greeks and Romans.

Professor Bociurkiw in his lecture (reported pp. 9-14) shows how the relationship between church and state in Eastern Europe varies from one country to another and how the Soviet model of church-state relations could not be applied to these countries without modification. The predicament of the Roman Catholics in Lithuania (see *Documents* pp. 47-53) is quite different from that of the churches in the German Democratic Republic, discussed by Hilary Black (pp. 4-7). The former have recently been under severe pressure from the authorities, whereas the government of the GDR prefers to avoid a clash with the churches, is often content to leave them alone and maintain the *status quo*. It wavers between wanting the political support of Christians on the one hand, and preferring the churches to remain divorced from social and political issues and confined to a religious ghetto on the other. But both Protestant and Catholic leaders in the GDR are fiercely independent of state control: although the printed word is carefully censored, the *spoken* word can be used by such men to express their views (see Bishop Schönherr's speech pp. 7-8). Uncritical support or total rejection of state and society on the part of churchmen in the GDR is untypical. An attitude of "critical

solidarity" is the norm : socialist society is accepted, but that which is bad and dehumanizing in it rejected. Although theoretically the state will not accept such an attitude, in practice it does. It is extraordinary for the student of Soviet affairs to learn, for example, that the churches in the GDR are allowed to provide certain social services : some hospitals are staffed by Protestant and Catholic religious orders, and churches can give help in such areas as mental health and the care of the aged and sub-normal. However, there is a dark side, emphasized by Hilary Black – as Bishop Schönherr stated, it is "a wearying and difficult task" to confess Christ in a socialist society – but one should not ignore the points of light which also exist.

No space in *RCL* has yet been devoted to the Buddhists in the USSR. Two documents have been translated for this issue to help fill this gap, until an article on the subject can be printed.

Initially, the Communist Party, in need of Asian support, admitted that, ideologically, Buddhism contained valuable elements, but with Stalin's change of policy towards religious groups in 1929, Buddhists were treated as ideological and class opponents and decimated during the purges. In the war some Buddhists (134,000 Kalmucks to be exact) were deported. The Buddhists of Buryatia – the subject of the above documents – had 37 monasteries and 14,000 lamas in 1917; by 1923 new temples and monasteries had been built and the number of lamas had grown to 15,000. Buryats were particularly active in the fields of medicine and education : in 1926 a medical school was established; in 1928 they ran 73 monastic schools. But in 1929 the medical school was closed as were many monasteries, until, during the Great Purge, the remnants of Buryat monasticism were finally liquidated. Recently there have been signs of a change in the more benevolent post-war policy towards Buddhists (a Buddhist Central Council was organized after the war, two monasteries were re-established in Buryatia and the remaining 106,000 Kalmucks re-settled). The trial of Bidiya Dandaron, a Buddhist scholar, and the harassment of his relations and fellow scholars (see *Document 2*) have given rise to much speculation. In the late '50s, Professor Malalasekara, then Ceylon's ambassador in Moscow, gave a series of lectures on Buddhism to the Moscow academic élite and was delighted at the amount of interest shown in Buddhism by members of the intelligentsia. The Soviet authorities do not apparently share Professor Malalasekara's delight.

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