

For the Centre, then, the last few weeks have seen a major step forward. The Council and staff will be reviewing fully the ways in which we must respond to these new opportunities. Australia and New Zealand may be geographically isolated, but they are intensely concerned to be in the main stream of developments in international affairs. The Centre can play a modest role in this by its output and by remembering these countries when thinking about its development plans. We shall not fail our hundreds of new friends – and perhaps even more importantly, we shall ensure that believers in the communist world know of this response and benefit from the great encouragement which it will give them.

MICHAEL BOURDEAUX

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## Letters to the Editor

Mikhail Agursky writes from Moscow:

I greatly appreciated the brilliant article by Sir John Lawrence (*RCL* Nos. 4/5, 1973). It is a very careful although brief analysis of the situation. He is certainly right about the gradual decline of the Marxist ideology in the USSR. But he underrates the influence of the process of its corruption – it is creating enormous cynicism among people. Besides, the author is most likely unaware of some non-institutionalized cults in this society, both among intellectuals and non-intellectuals. Such intellectual cults include the pagan idolization of great writers, artists, the idolization of science and so on. These cults are none other than the sublimation of traditional religious faith. One also finds among non-intellectuals a cult which takes the form of simple fetishism with industrial goods – cars, television sets etc. – for its objects.

Such cults are certainly not institutionalized, but nevertheless they do exist. All this is leading to a high level of religious syncretism.

Unfortunately Sir John Lawrence has made a mistake about the background of anti-Zionist propaganda when he thinks that it is directed only against the Jewish emigration. Indeed, this propaganda means more than it says. It reflects the deep roots of right-wing nationalism, which is the secret ideology of the extremely influential ruling group (see my articles in the *New York Review of Books*, 30 November, 1972 and *Jerusalem Post*, September, 1973).

2 April, 1974.

**Sir John Lawrence writes:**

I am glad that Mr. Agursky thinks that my article was useful and I note his reservations with much interest, but I am not sure that we are really in disagreement. I am certainly aware of profound cynicism and corruption but it does seem to me that there are also elements of moral regeneration in Soviet society. I agree, of course, that the "anti-Zionist" propaganda reflects "the deep roots of right-wing nationalism" and I am sorry that my necessarily brief reference to this complex subject was open to misunderstanding.

As for making consumer goods into fetishes, that is a form of idolatry that is as common in the West as it is in Eastern Europe.

**Canon John Arnold writes:**

I would like to make some points about *RCL* No. 6, 1973.

Mr. Read in his article on the Christian-Marxist dialogue refers to the comments of V. M. Pasika on Teilhard de Chardin in *Problems of Philosophy* (p. 12). You may be interested to know that Miss Pasika contributed an excellent short article on Teilhard to the current edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia. This article is less negative about religion than the one which Mr. Read mentions.

I like the "News in Brief" section and I am particularly glad for the coverage of ecumenical topics. There is a small but significant error in the quotation at the top of p. 31. For "might" read "should". The full quotation reads :

Nevertheless the present listing has given rise to serious dissatisfaction with what some regard as its imbalance, and we note that there are other situations which *should* have been mentioned – for example, in other parts of Africa and Europe, and in Asia and the Pacific – which cause grave and widespread concern, and should be borne in mind by those who use this document.

The text as originally read out contained the word "might" and this was amended to "should" on a resolution (see *Minutes and Reports* of the 26th meeting of the WCC Central Committee, Geneva, 1973, p. 23). This slight grammatical change is therefore not without significance. I believe that the sentiment was first adumbrated in German with the word "sollte" which, of course, bears either connotation. The Assembly was quite clear that it wanted to say something more like "ought" than "could" and chose "should".