

religious family or had lived somewhere in the West, well, then we could have looked at your religiousness in another way. But you were brought up in a family of non-believers. You are an educated person. . . . And suddenly – wham! – you're religious . . . ! It's very odd indeed.

While Amnesty was preparing the report it was also conducting informal discussions about its work and aims with official Soviet lawyers. In this connection it sent a draft of the report to Moscow and asked for comments and corrections. These would be considered for inclusion in the final text. Eventually Lev Smirnov, the president of the Soviet Lawyers' Association, replied. His letter, reproduced in facsimile in the report, foreshadowed the inevitable end of Amnesty's efforts to establish a fruitful dialogue :

In connection with your letter dated 15 April and so-called "Report of Conditions of Detention of Prisoners of Conscience", we would like to acknowledge you that we are not eager to discuss about what you call a book and that is vulgar falsification and defamation on Soviet reality and socialist legitimacy.

Pace Mr. Smirnov, the report is in fact the most valuable available source for readers who want to understand the mechanisms by which religious and political prisoners are punished for their beliefs in the USSR.

PETER REDDAWAY

Marxism and the Church of Rome

by Hervé Leclerc, Conflict Studies (Institute for the Study of Conflict)

No. 45, 1974, 13 pp., £1.00.

The idea of the Church of Rome being "subverted from within" by highly-placed ecclesiastical figures (including several eminent cardinals and possibly even the Pope himself) will sound far-fetched to many of us. Nevertheless, when we are promised – as Brian Crozier promises in his editorial note – "arguments powerfully supported by research and documentation", then we are bound to take note.

I have to say quite frankly, however, that I neither found the arguments powerful nor the research very convincing. Hervé Leclerc (which is a pseudonym for a French correspondent accredited to the Vatican) sets out to demonstrate that the Catholic Church has to a dangerous degree been penetrated by "the principles of historical materialism and Marxist-Leninist subversion". To identify the roots of this process he goes back to the French Revolution, and then traces its development

through the ideas of Lamennais, Maritain and other "progressive" Catholic thinkers to the Worker-Priest Movement, and then, more recently, to what he calls the "exploitation" of John XXIII's liberalism and the "manipulation" of Vatican II by a group of "modern-minded" bishops. M. Leclerc sees evidence for the existence of this "Marxist-Leninist subversion" today in, for example, a statement by the Vatican "foreign minister", Mgr. Casaroli:

in the social sphere the Christian doctrine has many common aspects with the social divisions of Marxism and other progressive movements; which ought to allow the formation between them of solid and organic links in many domains.

Apart from the speculative nature of most of M. Leclerc's evidence, there is one major weakness in his essay. In tracing the roots of the trends within the Church which disturb him he goes right back to the French Revolution – that is, half a century before the Communist Manifesto and over a century before the emergence of Marxism-Leninism as the state ideology of the Soviet Union. Evidently, for M. Leclerc the real enemy is not simply "Marxist-Leninist subversion", but any form of "progressive" churchmanship which threatens what he calls the "time-honoured tradition of the Church". He substantiates the claim that 20th century Catholic churchmen have become increasingly influenced by the ideals of liberalism, socialism or even, as in the case of Camilo Torres, with violent revolution (the last of these does contradict the Christian message, in my opinion) but fails to establish the link between these "progressive" ideals and the machinations of the Kremlin. Even the "revolutionary" Christianity of Camilo Torres, undoubtedly inspired by human concern, is a long way from the state ideology of the Soviet Union, based as it is on considerations of power politics. M. Leclerc argues, of course, that the real danger of these forms of "progressive" churchmanship lies in their naïveté: they play into the hands of Moscow by advocating "dialogue" with Marxism and thus appear to give Soviet communism a respectability which it does not deserve. This danger does, of course, exist. But a much greater danger, in my view, would be for the Church to go back to the position of rigid hostility to all "progressive" movements which in the past has made it appear as the advocate of stagnation and privilege, thus presenting communism with its most potent anti-religious propaganda weapon.

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