

adoption of new legislation on religion in 1929 when Stalin was centralizing all power in his hands, all religious denominations had to face the same hardships. Within the labour camps in the '30s many Christians, both Orthodox and Protestant, discovered how close they really were spiritually.

The dilemma which faces many believers today in the USSR – whether to keep silent in the face of discrimination or to protest – is examined by Dr. Hebly in detail. He wisely warns against over-hasty criticism of those church leaders who *have* to conform in order to preserve church structures. It is not for us in the West, he argues, to condemn them; criticism must come from within their own ranks.

Dr. Hebly has pieced together a long and complex story, and he has done it well. Although it is based on secondary sources it is a useful study. Unfortunately, however, the book is badly translated from the Dutch. To sensitive English ears some sentences are painful in the extreme: “The negative attitude of the Union Council . . . strengthened the latter in their suspicions that the Union Council was indeed tied to the apron strings of the State and *solidified* [my italics] the opposition all the more” (p. 140); “the constant attempts to shrink the spiritual living space of the church” (p. 152); “the open letter of December 1967 . . . was sent to the churches abroad with the intent of *snuffing out* [my italics] rumours about a split within the Union” (p. 146). With some efficient editing the text could be improved considerably.

XENIA HOWARD-JOHNSTON

## USSR - Democratic Alternatives

(A collection of Essays & Documents)

edited by Vadim Belotserkovsky, Achberger Verlaganstalt, 1976,

335 pp. No price.

This is a series of essays by people who, for the most part have recently left the Soviet Union and who describe themselves as belonging to a “liberal-left” or “democratic socialist” orientation. This is not, the editor Vadim Belotserkovsky claims, a temporary, tactical union of “liberals” and “leftists”, but a new, unique and cohesive movement. It claims to represent the views not only of the contributors to the present volume, but also of such people still working inside the Soviet Union as Academician Sakharov, Yuri Orlov, General Pyotr Grigorenko and Valentin Turchin.

It is an interesting and in many ways encouraging book. Interesting largely because of the names of some of the contributors – Leonid Plyushch, for example, Anatoli Levitin-Krasnov, Mihajlo Mihajlov – names which are better known, perhaps, than the ideas that go

with them. It will be interesting, for instance, for those who have read in their newspapers of the constant harassment by the Yugoslav authorities of Mihajlo Mihajlov to know exactly what are the heresies which he has been propounding. In fact he is a firmly committed non-Leninist, non-Marxist socialist. His essay "Democracy and Socialism", published in this collection, is a reply to a letter which the author received from an engineer who had recently left the Soviet Union and who equated socialism with "military-police expansionism" and totalitarianism. No, replies Mihajlov, communist dictatorship has in fact nothing to do with genuine socialism. And the democratic countries of the West are yearly becoming more "socialized" (*sotsializiruyutsya*), without the least danger of becoming dictatorships.

The book is encouraging because of its tolerant tone. Several of the essays do hit out strongly at "communist dictatorship" (*komdiktatura*) and "partocracy". They directly criticize Lenin and Marx. But the authors themselves believe in the superiority of socialism in a *multi-party* context. Several of the essays are critical of Alexander Solzhenitsyn and his "slavophil" ideology. But they also pay tribute to the man's immense courage and his considerable literary talent, and even defend him from the more extreme accusations of his critics (e.g. that he is an "anti-semite").

Religion is a recurring theme throughout the book. And here the general tolerance of the book is much in evidence. The personal views of the contributors on religion vary widely. Some (like Anatoli Levitin-Krasnov and German Andreyev) are themselves believers and speak from a Socialist-Christian point of view. Others (Plyushch, Mihajlov) do not draw such a close connection between their socialism and religious belief, but are clearly sympathetic to Christianity. And some (including the editor Vadim Belotserkovsky) take an openly "humanist" stance. All, however, stress their repugnance at any repression of religious or non-religious belief, as the case may be.

The collection includes a translation into Russian of the "Humanist Manifesto II" issued in 1973. Its Russian signatories include not only Belotserkovsky, but Academician Sakharov and Alexander Yesenin-Volpin. Academician Sakharov, however, adds in a personal footnote to the Manifesto that he does not agree with its sharp differentiation between religion and humanism, between religion and scientific knowledge. These things are not mutually exclusive. Much more important for the present time, he suggests, is the sharp distinction between humanism (Academician Sakharov obviously uses the word in its widest sense) and "false theories and disastrous practice based on conceptions of class struggle, dictatorship, ideological monism, intolerance and contempt for the rights of the individual". That is a sentiment which, I think, would be shared by all the contributors to this collection.