Editorial

In the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, where Marxism-Leninism is being promoted with particular energy, it has ceased to attract creative minds. The causes of this phenomenon are of course complex, but one major landmark in the process was the trauma of 1968 in Czechoslovakia which disillusioned many Czechoslovak and Soviet intellectuals about the possibility of making the face of Marxism more "human" in any fundamental way. In his article in this issue of *RCL* (pp. 180-7), Alexander Tomsky writes that in Czechoslovakia "moral values based merely on anthropocentric humanism are proving to be hopelessly inadequate to the task of overcoming the totalitarian system". This contention may well surprise many western readers: for us, "humanism" implies the positive social virtues which totalitarianism lacks. The point is, however, that many intellectuals in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe believe that Marxism-Leninism in its present form is a direct descendant of this secular humanism. Now that the latter has assumed the extreme form of atheist dictatorship, they believe that it requires an antidote of a different nature altogether. Many of them are now looking to Christianity to supply such an antidote. In Mr Tomsky's opinion, the culture which the editors of the unofficial Czech journal *Spektrum* are fostering is profoundly Christian. According to Tatyana Goricheva, in her article "The Existential and Religious Significance of Unofficial Culture" (published as a document in this issue of *RCL*, pp. 230-2), the same is true of recent unofficial cultural activity in the Soviet Union.

The idea that atheist totalitarianism can be overcome only by an active Christian faith is not a new one in Russia. Young Orthodox believers in the Soviet Union are deeply versed in the writings of pre-Revolutionary Russian Orthodox thinkers, many of whom—including Dostoyevsky and Vladimir Solovyov—predicted that the militant atheist humanism of the Marxist revolutionaries of their day would result in totalitarianism. If the existence of God is denied, they argued, then moral values lose their absolute nature, and become something which the individual creates for himself. At the same time, the individual loses his uniqueness, and his

importance becomes subordinate to that of the society in which he lives. There is then no reason why one individual should not eventually come to exercise dictatorial control over society while at the same time claiming to be working for mankind's ultimate perfection. The theologian Sergei Bulgakov tackled this problem in his article "Heroism and Zeal" in the influential symposium *Vekhi* (*Landmarks*) of 1909, arguing that the consequences of the egoistic "heroism" of the atheist revolutionary can be averted only by Christian "zeal". All these writers thought that moral values can be safeguarded only if man recognizes that the individual is not merely a means to an end, but a being of unique and transcendent importance. They also believed that the true spiritual stature of man can best be revealed in sincere artistic, literary and poetic creativity; and the same belief is now shared by those who would found a new culture in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia.

Tatyana Goricheva speaks of a "new type of man". He resembles Bulgakov's Christian "zealot" and would qualify as a member of that "sacrificial élite" which Solzhenitsyn prescribes for Russia (see his articles in *From Under the Rubble*, London, 1975). Such men will be ready fearlessly to proclaim the truth whatever the cost. They are also appearing in Czechoslovakia. Those who write in *Spektrum* do so not out of a desire for earthly fame: they know that they will suffer. For these writers, Mr Tomsky notes, literary creativity "is almost becoming a form of asceticism". Tatyana Goricheva says the same thing about unofficial culture in Russia.

For those who are bearing witness to transcendent values, the most important thing is that men should act in accordance with their beliefs. One of the most evident ills of the societies they live in is hypocrisy: people pay lip-service to a secular humanitarian ideology while acting according to completely different principles—self-preservation, for example, or careerism. Words without works are dead. Mr Tomsky quotes Fr Josef Zverina, a Catholic theologian, who warns of the danger that the Christian faith itself can become merely an ideology if its principles are not put into practice. The same idea is expressed by Tatyana Goricheva in her recent article "The Christian Renaissance and Ideology": she writes that "ideology is the power of an idea, of external appearance, of seeming. It is inimical . . . to man as Christ wanted to see him." Faith must not become a series of dead cerebral formulations, but must manifest itself in life as active and creative love.

In order to do effective creative work, a man must gain a "realistic" view of the world. The writers we are considering show that "realistic" means "Christian": the individual learns to see himself as part of a fellowship with other men and with nature, and as part of a world created for a purpose higher than his own temporal existence.

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