The Catholic Church, Dissent and Nationality in Soviet Lithuania
by V. Stanley Vardys,
East European Quarterly, Boulder, distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 1978 xiii + 336 pp., $22.50.

The study of religion under communism has been enriched by a fine volume on the Lithuanian Catholic Church in the Soviet Union. Professor Vardys has accumulated an impressive wealth of data and facts and chronicled them in a lucid and systematic presentation of recent (post-1940) Lithuanian religious-national history. There are also three chapters introducing the reader to the problem and pre-history of Soviet treatment of religion in Lithuania.

The last four decades have seen the struggle for survival of the Catholic Church in Lithuania as it strives to remain the national institution in this Baltic country. After reviewing the first period of Soviet control in 1940-41, which exhibited a cautious attitude on the part of communist local and central authorities, Vardys passes over the interval of German occupation (1941-44), to move on to developments after World War II. While the first short Soviet occupation resulted in an uneasy "peaceful coexistence" between State and Church, the post-World War II reality was harsher and unequivocal. During the 1940s the Soviets mounted a frontal attack on the Lithuanian Church, justly considering it to be the main hindrance to the sovietization of the country. There were arrests of the hierarchy, deportations, restrictions on religious activity and attempts to sever official ties with Rome.

The Lithuanian Church survived this first assault and compelled Stalin's successors to develop a new policy. Ideological hostility to religion persisted but the authorities now tried to accommodate themselves to its continued existence and even possibly to seek rapprochement with the Vatican. The objective was to create a docile and weakened Church.

In two chapters, Vardys deals with the legal status of religion, with the absence or unreliability of any guarantees of religious freedom, and with the politico-ideological counter-religion, atheism. He also reviews the tactics and strategy of the Soviet authorities, demonstrating their flexible, coolly pragmatic and Machiavellian approach.

One third of the book is devoted to the religious dissent or opposition movement within Lithuania, one of the strongest in the USSR. The *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church,* an underground publication, has become its catalyst and mouthpiece. The movement began in the late 1960s using petitions as legal means in defence of religion. Soon it turned to the documentation and dissemination of religious grievances and reports on reprisals. Along with the *Chronicle,* six other

SOVIET JEWISH AFFAIRS

Volume 11, Number 1
February 1981
Published three times yearly

A Journal on Jewish Problems in the USSR and Eastern Europe

Contents

Reviews

Books Received

Published by the Institute of Jewish Affairs, 11 Hertford Street, London W1Y 7DX
Annual subscription: £5.50 ($12.00); single issues: £2.50 ($5.50)

samizdat publications started to circulate. Lithuanian religious dissent attempted to co-ordinate its activities with the general democratic and human rights movement in the USSR. The Lithuanian Helsinki monitoring group recruited its members mostly from Catholic activists.

In the 1970s, the Church felt its strength: popular among the masses, it was the only institution with some autonomy and, was, moreover, crowned with martyrdom. While the hierarchy was under pressure to collaborate with the regime, the rank-and-file clergy, the laity and in particular the intelligentsia constituted the core of the new religious movement. The Lithuanian peasantry and even the working class, only recently urbanized, expressed solidarity with dissenters. The students also demonstrated their support, if for no other reason than that the Church reflected their nationalist anti-Sovietism.

Vardys chronicles in detail the activities of the leaders of dissent and reprisals against them, and assesses the impact of the movement on public opinion, on the authorities and on the Vatican's *Ostpolitik*. His account ends at the end of 1977 but not so the story: a sequel to this volume could easily be written on the events of the subsequent four years.

Two principal themes recur in Vardys's book: the close relationship between religion and nationality in Lithuania; and the paradox inherent in Soviet policy towards religion—a policy which contradicts the alleged separation of Church and State in the Soviet Union. In fact, the Church is not separated from the State, but subjected to secular power not only as far as administrative control is concerned but also in terms of the long-range ideological objective of creating an atheist society.

VASYL MARKUS

Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: a Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World
by Alexandre A. Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Publication No. 11, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1979, xxii + 267 pp., $7.95.

Marxism and Islam are strange bed-fellows; and yet an ideological marriage of the two was engineered by Muslim nationalist leaders in the Soviet Union during the 1920s before Stalin suppressed all forms of "national deviation" in the 1930s. Professor Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, eminent scholars of Islam in the Soviet Union, trace the origins of Muslim national communism and suggest some channels by which these ideas spread from the Soviet Union to almost every corner of the Third World and influenced every national liberation movement. These