

Reviews

Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia

by Michael Rywkin. London: C. Hurst & Company, 1982. 184 pp.

Michael Rywkin's tonic first sentence is enough to encourage a careful reading of this book: "Soviet Central Asia has come out of the backyards of history and now clamours for our attention." What one then finds, not only within the first paragraph but throughout the book, is the author's sensible awareness that events and trends in Soviet Central Asia are of significantly more than anthropological interest. Indeed, as Rywkin makes clear, Soviet Central Asia is a strategic crossroads, and the forces that are at work there, from the demographic shifts within the region itself to the dynamic interaction of Soviet Central Asians with their ethnic and religious kin across Soviet borders in China, Afghanistan, and Iran, have implications not only for the short- and long-term stability of the USSR as the last major multi-national empire but also for the stability and evolution of the entire Central Asian — and by extension Middle East — region. Because of its broad scope, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge* is one of the best books of its kind in existence.

The book is divided into ten logical chapters and a conclusion. Because the book is a short one — 184 pages — and attempts to treat the history of Islam in the Russian Empire from the 1550s to the present day, one might quibble about the brief treatment of particular subjects. For example, a more complete history of Islam in Russia before the Bolshevik takeover is provided by Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemerrier-Quellejray in their classic work *Islam in the Soviet Union*. Nonetheless Rywkin's treatment is satisfying without being verbose or pedantic. Where his descriptions are brief, as they tend to be in the first three chapters ("Tsarist Times", "The Revolution", and "The Basmachi Revolt"), they are well documented for those who require more.

Two well-integrated sections dominate the book. The first, chapters four ("The Economic Scene") and five ("Population and Manpower"), is arguably the best synopsis of pressing developmental and labour issues in Soviet Central Asia in one study. The treatment is made more effective by the inclusion of excellent charts, graphs, and maps, which — how un-

common in a book of this kind! — actually clarify rather than confuse. If Rywkin is to be faulted here it is for his inadequate treatment of the impact of demographic change on perhaps the most important universal Soviet institution, the armed forces. He cites this problem only in passing in “Population and Manpower” and returns to it, again briefly, in chapter nine. A good deal more is known about this problem than Rywkin has chosen to present, which is, given his thoughtfulness in selecting material for the other sections, a surprising omission.

The second impressive section consists of chapters six (“The National-Religious Symbiosis”) and seven (“Culture”), which Rywkin begins with another of his many well-considered generalisations: “Islam, which bears on the identity, behaviour, attitudes, and way of life of the peoples of Soviet Central Asia, permeates all the social, political, and economic aspects of their lives.” It is hard, he warns, “to discuss Central Asian Islam as a subject in its own right”. One may count mosques and catalogue religious rituals but this simply does not explain much about the place of Islam in the Central Asians’ individual and corporate identity nor can it explain why the Soviet leadership since Lenin has tried unceasingly to eliminate Islamic consciousness among its Muslim peoples. Rywkin argues that there is a “national-religious symbiosis within the Muslim *umma* (community), a merging or overlapping of ethnic and religious sentiments and loyalties that reappears in all aspects of Central Asian existence.” This symbiosis, he argues, stands square in the path of Soviet official attempts to inculcate Central Asians with the regime’s preferred atheistic and “internationalist” identity, the New Soviet Man. Rywkin makes clear that this issue is of more than theological interest; ultimately it bears on the ability of the Soviets to penetrate Central Asian society successfully with their alien ideology, with all the implications this has for maintaining social control.

Throughout the book, Rywkin presents the arguments of other specialists of Central Asian affairs, which makes the book an extremely useful compendium for use by those unfamiliar with the subject. It has a valuable “Selected Bibliography” and a satisfactory index. *Moscow’s Muslim Challenge* would in fact make a splendid introductory text to the subject for both students and laymen. Rywkin’s style is lucid, avoiding for the most part the hideous language of today’s social scientists.

If it receives a second printing, *Moscow’s Muslim Challenge* presumably will incorporate new information about recent events, such as the impact of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on Soviet Central Asians. It is a book which could be updated periodically to great effect. As the purveyor of basic information and sound analysis *Moscow’s Muslim Challenge* is a superior effort which will find a ready audience among scholars, students, policymakers, and laymen.

The Sword and the Ploughshare

by John Sandford

London: Merlin Press/European Nuclear Disarmament, 1983.

112 pp., £1.95

While attending the "Ten Days for Peace" of the Protestant Churches in the GDR in November 1983, I became more aware than ever of the double sense of foreboding and threat which the Churches and ordinary people concerned for peace felt in the GDR in the period prior to the breaking-off of the Geneva talks. The deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe has precipitated an escalation in the arms race which makes them feel more threatened. Pershing II can reach Soviet soil within a quarter of an hour, effectively precluding any last-minute crisis management. As a response nuclear weapons will now be deployed in East Germany for the first time and the government is organising petitions, requiring citizens to declare their support for the deployment of these missiles in the GDR. The external Cold War brings with it a worsening domestic climate. Western policies ostensibly aimed at forcing the Soviet Union to make concessions in the Geneva negotiations and to promote internal freedom in Eastern Europe have achieved precisely the opposite.

The point of this preamble is two-fold. It shows the basis from which I approach the problem faced by the East German peace movement and it also provides the international context which is lacking in Sandford's book, which rather underplays the important Synod statements — for example, not even mentioning the 1979 Synod statement of the Protestant Churches which rejected the deployment of Cruise-Pershing and the Soviet SS20s.

The book contains valuable descriptions of many issues and events in the independent peace movement. They include the history of conscientious objection (for which there is limited provision under the Constitution) and proposals to extend this provision, the militarisation of society, the Peace Weeks of the Protestant Churches, and the Dresden "Peace Forum" (1982). It also gives valuable background on the history of the GDR and documentation on peace issues in English. It is thus a valuable and necessary publication.

In spite of his assurances to the contrary, it does seem that the search of the peace movement in the West for a counterpart in the East has influenced the author (cf. p. 79).

The discussion of the terms "*eigenständig*" and "*selbständig*" (pp. 77-79) (which, as Sandford states, are hard to translate in any other way than "independent" or "autonomous") reveals the point on which the whole issue centres. What is this "independence"? My view is as follows. It is based on a description recently given by an East German church leader. The Church's contribution is independent in the following

three ways:

- 1) Independence in terms of motivation. In short, it is based on the Bible not on the newspapers;
- 2) Independence in terms of its area of responsibility. The Church is not the State. Each has its own responsibilities, methods and legitimacy;
- 3) Independence also means being independent of western initiatives; thinking, deciding and acting for themselves.

Sandford, in my view, underplays the importance of the church leadership and the space offered by the institutional Church. He seems to regard the Church and its leaders merely as “meditators” (p. 77). His basic analytical approach sets the government and the official peace initiatives at one end of the spectrum, with a challenge coming from the peace groups at the other end, and the church leadership in the middle as mediators and, to some extent, protectors (p. 78). In fact, the reality is more complex. Sandford recognises this in his conclusions, but the framework of his book, centering on “issues” and “events” does not allow him to work this insight through properly. The Churches in the GDR are the only mass organisations which are independent of the State. What is at stake is whether they should operate only within an extended private space for corporate worship or whether they should and will be allowed to voice their views on issues of social ethics such as the peace question. If the churches were not there, there would be no social space within which the independent peace groups could gather with even the restricted room for manoeuvre open to them. (Writers also have a degree of relative independence as Sandford notes.) There is thus no separate “Swords into Ploughshares” movement. Any attempt to create such a thing outside the protection of the Church would almost guarantee its disappearance since the organisation of such a movement would be illegal and would quickly meet with state opposition. Sandford does recognise this, but his treatment of the Havemann-Eppelmann approaches (pp. 58 ff. and 89-96) leads one to question how deeply he understands the dilemma of the peace movement in the GDR regarding what is possible and what is helpful. The reason why the “Berlin Appeal” was not supported by the church leadership in Berlin-Brandenburg was not because of failure of nerve on the church leaders’ part but was surely because of the content of the appeal, in particular the call for a solution to the “German problem” which involves the withdrawal of all “occupation troops” from both Germanies. Even if this solution were strongly supported by the GDR Churches — and it is not their stated policy — the characterisation of Soviet troops as “occupation troops” means that the proposal was a complete non-starter in terms of practical policy.

Sandford does not reflect on the pros and cons of the use of western media for the independent peace movement in the GDR. This is a double-edged weapon. Many who resort to the use of western media

themselves end up in the West as they find their activities precluded in the GDR.

The problem facing the Church and the grass-roots Christian groups is this. How in the present Cold War climate can they campaign effectively on peace issues? Sandford's book is a valuable contribution to the peace debate in this country. I have highlighted some critical comments since they raise important issues in analysis of the situation. Sandford's descriptive work is excellent. This is a book well worth reading and discussing.

ROGER WILLIAMSON

Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia

by Nina Tumarkin. Cambridge, Mass. and London:
Harvard University Press, 1983. 316 pp., \$20.

A standard criticism of Soviet communism and Lenin is that they form a secular religion in an atheist State. In *Lenin Lives!*, Nina Tumarkin takes a fresh look at the personality cult of Lenin in the Soviet Union. She concludes that "the Lenin cult was less an actual substitute for religion than a party effort to fuse religious and political ritual to mobilise the population".

The use of religious themes in *agitprop* probably has several components. There was an apocalyptic mood in Russia at the turn of the century, and for some, the revolution was part of that vision. Lunacharsky, who was Commissar of Enlightenment at the time of Lenin's death and a primary architect of his cult, had expressed the idea of Bolshevik god-building, with socialism as a religion that believes in man, not God, and has a human god representing all peoples. For some there were genuine parallels between religion and the revolution, despite the obvious irony of a revolution against religion being seen in religious terms.

Others used religious themes because they provided ready-made symbols for making chaotic times more understandable. For some propagandists it was their idea of what would appeal to the peasantry. Popular belief in the Tsar as the little father who understood the *narod* (people) and would give them what they wanted, was one accepted form of leadership. Books on the lives of the saints were popular reading; they included saintly princes, or leaders who died for their people, like Christ. That Lenin was described in these terms was, not surprisingly, a mixture of deeply rooted Russian traditions and immediate political necessity.

The cult began with the attempt on Lenin's life in August 1918. War communism had started and the assassination attempt was seen in terms

of being for or against the Red Army. Solidarity with Lenin equalled solidarity with the Party. There were highly individual pieces in local papers, but signs of standardisation were already apparent in the major papers and biographies, which distorted the facts of his life for political ends. Lenin disapproved of glorification of individuals and apparently stopped his cult after he recovered. Tumarkin shows that despite this, he had ironically set the stage for himself by his style of rule: one leader, one Party, one communism.

In April 1922 Lenin fell ill and as he withdrew from public life, cult institutions such as the study of Leninism and the Lenin Institute, representing his writings, filled the vacuum. Lenin corners were established, modelled on the icon corners that were a part of most peasant homes. Lenin died on 21 January 1924 and his cult was moved into full swing. The government, fearful of losing credibility, attempted to maintain continuity in chaotic times and legitimise its actions by association with Lenin and government in his name. It increased its popular support by channeling genuine grief into planned funeral and mourning ceremonies, where oaths were taken on his name and pledges of solidarity with Lenin and the Party were made. He was described in Christ-like terms: Il'ich the man was mortal and had died for the *narod*; Lenin would live forever, immortalised in his writings and later, in his preserved body. Gor'ky wrote, "In a religious era, Lenin would have been considered a saint."

Competitions were held at all levels on how best to pay tribute to Lenin and continue his work. They served to politicise workers and artists. Tumarkin does not mention films, which Lenin considered to be primary propaganda material. He appears at length in documentary footage by Dziga Vertov, whose film *Kinopravda No. 21* is exciting propaganda about his life, death and the future of his work.

By 1926 it was no longer a living cult, although it continued to spread. Stalin moved to the top, emphasising his long, close relationship with Lenin. By the early 1930s, Lenin had become part of Stalin's cult. In 1956 Khrushchev denounced Stalin using Lenin. He passed around documents in Lenin's own hand showing that Stalin was actually on bad terms with him. He went on to compare Stalin's behaviour with how Lenin would have behaved. In doing away with one cult, he introduced a new Lenin cult of slick optimism (the tone of Stalin's cult), to be celebrated on the anniversary of his birth instead of his death. The 100th anniversary celebrations on 22 April 1970 resulted in a deluge of propaganda that had the opposite effect and since then, there has been a visible lack of enthusiasm.

In its early days, the Lenin cult was a symbol of a party struggling for its survival, which to some extent saw itself as dependent on the proletariat and worked for the participation and solidarity of the people. It has evolved into a tired ritual, to the point where it would be hard to persuade Soviet citizens that *Lenin Lives!* is interesting reading. They could regain

a national hero if Lenin were put in perspective. However immortal, Lenin has had to adjust to the times. It would be hard to compare enforced *subbotniks* (free workdays given to the State) and parades with the thousands who crowd into churches at Christmas and Easter.

HILDE HOOGENBOOM

Human Rights: A Dialogue Between the First and Third Worlds

by Robert A. Evans and Alice Frazer Evans.

Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, and Guildford: Lutterworth Press,
264 pp. Paperback, £6.50

This is a most perplexing book and it is to be questioned whether the subtitle is really admissible. Any discussion of human rights in the Christian context should be either wider, to include the whole world, with Eastern Europe (the "second" world) playing its role alongside the third, or it should be narrower to focus more specifically on a problem area. To focus on two blocks of the world as though the Soviet one does not exist fluffs out the myth-making of our times. It is very much the view being fostered in WCC circles and elsewhere.

The problem of the rights of immigrant workers in Switzerland and of Australian Aborigines to retain their sacred sites on land needed for mining do not deserve to be ignored, but neither are they quite on the same level as the massive degradation of human rights to be found in the Soviet Union.

This problem is removed, for the authors, by the theoretical discussion of the first chapter on the "global content" of human rights. It will scarcely be removed for readers of this journal when they come across such passages as the following:

- ‡ The socialist democratic republic focuses on the rights of social participation in the benefits of society. Economic and social needs become the standard of real liberty. The guarantees stressed are the right to work and to material security, including the right to health, to education, and to housing [. . .] According to the Marxist interpretation, real freedom is always a social reality [. . .] Leonid Brezhnev cites a section of the Communist Manifesto as the factual principle of the state: "An association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all".

Nonsense like this deserves exposing.

The authors, it is true, do go on to state that conflicts may arise when "dissident voices" point out inconsistencies, but the point is passed over

in a sentence and the rest of the book ignores it.

It is a pity that the thesis of the book is thus invalidated, for several of the essays contain material of interest, not least the chapter on China, which the authors represent as not belonging to the First/Third World axis of the discussion. A lively debate between two Christians, one from Hong Kong, one from the People's Republic, illuminates the case for and against the official (Three-Self) Church and receiving Bibles from the outside. Bishop Ting and the official church have the last word and the "teaching notes" at the end accept the claim that Communism in China has fulfilled certain commands of the New Testament ("When I was hungry, you gave me food").

The argument is hardly convincing.

MICHAEL BOURDEAUX

Strijd om Vrede. Essays over kerken in de marxistische samenleving
(The Struggle for Peace: Essays on the Churches in the Marxist World)
by J. A. Hebly. The Hague: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum B.V., 1983.
Paperback, 152 pp.

Loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ, the unifying feature of the member Churches of the World Council of Churches, should have some effect on the hatreds and rivalries of the nations, and especially on the bitterness that divides the Marxist from the "capitalist" world. At least, such a thought may well be in the minds of many responsible statesmen in the West. Such an approach is foreign to the thinking of Soviet-bloc leaders, for whom the value of the WCC is very different. Dr Hebly has had wide experience of WCC affairs. His well-informed and realistic analysis of the communist approach, which is all too often reflected in the pronouncements of Soviet churchmen, is well worth study.

The title is to some extent misleading. The book does not set out to be a systematic survey of the Churches' work for peace, but is a collection of separate essays summing up various aspects of religious life in communist lands. One section deals with the life of the Reformed Churches in Hungary. An essay entitled "*De Confessio Cubana*" gives a thorough summary, with many quotations, of the confession of faith issued in 1977 by the recently constituted Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba. Dr Hebly argues that, despite the small numbers of the Church in question, the confession plays a significant ecumenical role.

The essay directly concerned with the "struggle for peace" ("The Churches' work for peace in Eastern Europe") reveals a good understanding of this difficult topic. The work of official movements like the Berlin Conference and the Prague Christian Peace Conference is effec-

tively dealt with, and the summary of the GDR Protestant Churches' guiding principles in their work for peace is most valuable.

Dr Hebly does not overload his book with detail. General principles are always analysed with skill and clarity. This is a book to be recommended for Dutch speakers with an interest in Eastern Europe.

ARVAN GORDON

Und Siehe, Wir Leben! Der Weg der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche in vier Jahrhunderten (And behold, we live! The path of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church over four centuries), by Johannes Schleuning, Eugen Bachmann and Peter Schellenberg, with a preface by Ernst Eberhard. Erlangen: 1982, second edition, 242 pp.

Erinnerungen an Kasachstan. Erfahrungsbericht einer Russlanddeutschen (Reminiscences of Kazakhstan. Experiences of a Russian German), by Berta Bachmann. Wuppertal: 1982, second edition, 160 pp.

To the title of the first book we should add "in Russia", since the book consists of an account of the life of German Christians living in Russia in the past four centuries, and especially since 1917. There are four contributions by three authors. The first, "Die Stummen reden" (The dumb speak), which takes up almost half the book, is by Johannes Schleuning, a Volga German born in 1879, one of the most influential German Lutherans in Russia who, at the end of the Russian Civil War, emigrated to the West where he spent the rest of his life rousing support for his fellow Christians. He gives a highly readable account of German Christians in Russia from the sixteenth century to the dark years of 1937-38. This is followed by a contribution by Eugen Bachmann, a German from the Black Sea area, born in 1904, the only surviving pastor of the German Lutheran Church in Russia before 1937, who was able to exercise his ministry again in a parish after the war. His contribution, ". . . Ihr Ende schauet an" (. . . consider their end), is subtitled "A remembrance of the sufferings and deaths of the last German pastors in the Soviet Union". There follows a moving list of those pastors, men it seems of outstanding spiritual stature, who perished mostly between 1937 and 1945, with brief descriptions. Peter Schellenberg's contribution, "Die Kirche der Überlebenden" (The Church of the Survivors), continues the account of German Christians from 1937, the finishing year of the first contribution, to the present day. The final contribution, "In Ihn geborgen" (Hidden in him), consists of the autobiography of Eugen Bachmann, whose Lutheran Church in Tselinograd was, in 1957, the first

to receive official registration for almost twenty years.

Quite apart from the impression one gains of the spiritual endurance and vigour of German Lutherans in Russia since the sixteenth century, it is highly interesting to examine part of the history of Christianity in Russia during this period from the standpoint, not of the Orthodox or Baptist Churches, but from that of a minority which is a national as well as a religious one. It is understandable, although one may not agree with this, that German Lutherans tend to do everything possible to get along with the State. At the start of his visit to Poland last June, Pope John Paul II said that Christian worship and other activities should not be regarded as something which is permitted as a result of a gracious concession on the part of the State, but is a right which Christians have in any case and which the State has an obligation to defend and preserve. This is not the attitude of German Lutherans in Russia today, who, as is remarked in the foreword by Ernst Eberhard, are grateful to the State for being able to meet together without molestation. This quiescent attitude, however, has hardly saved them from difficulties in the past and is unlikely to do so in the future, but the position of a Lutheran Christian in the Soviet Union is plainly different from that of a Roman Catholic in Poland. Eberhard goes on to say that "there are only a few small groups belonging to the tradition of the old Lutheran Church who oppose state registration". It would have been very interesting had the book told us more about these groups. On what grounds do these groups oppose registration and do they have links with the *Initiativniki* (reform) Baptists? And what happens today when Lutheran Churches apply for registration and are not granted it?

Reminiscences of Kazakhstan is the autobiography of Berta Bachmann, born in 1923, who was deported from European Russia to Central Asia after the outbreak of the war. She, and the other German women — German men hardly appear in the book at all after they were all removed from her village in 1937-38 — who were deported with her, had to face almost continual hunger and cold throughout many years of their lives. The author speaks as the voice of German women in Russia during the war. "I wrote what I myself and what my companions in suffering have experienced" (p. 125). She was sustained above all by her Christian faith and in 1956 married Eugen Bachmann, mentioned above; when his health began to give way in 1972 they both emigrated to West Germany.

Although the format of these two books is very different from each other, they are both written in readable German, which anyone with some knowledge of the language should find easy to master. Certainly anyone with "O" Level German will have no difficulty with Berta Bachmann's *Reminiscences*, which they will find as moving and as exciting as any novel.

ANDREW LENOX-CONYNGHAM

Books Received

Listing of a book here neither implies nor precludes review in a subsequent issue of RCL.

Benton, George, ed., *Wild Lilies: Poisonous Weeds: Dissident Voices from People's China*. London: Pluto Press, 1982. 218 pp.

Bogdan, Henry, *De Varsovie à Sofia: Histoire des Pays de l'Est*. Paris: Editions de l'Université et de l'Enseignement Moderne, 1982. 463 pp.

Brown, Archie and Jack Gray, eds., *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States*. London: Macmillan, 1979. Second edition. 286 pp.

Ericson, Edward E., *Solzhenitsyn: The Moral Vision*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1980. 239 pp.

Fricke, Karl Wilhelm, *Die DDR-Staatssicherheit: Entwicklung, Strukturen, Aktionsfelder*. Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1982. 263 pp.

Gastpary, Ks. Dr W., *Historia Kościoła w Polsce*. Warszawa: Chrześcijańska Akademia Teologiczna, 1979. 239 pp.

Gherman, Pierre, *The Romanian Byzantine-Rite Catholic Church: Thirty years of persecution in Romania (1948-1978)*. Aid to the Church in Need, 1977. 65 pp.

Gonzalez, Peter Asael, *Prophets of Revolution*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1982. 192 pp.

Lash, Nicholas, *A Matter of Hope: A Theologian's Reflections on the Thought of Karl Marx*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981. 312 pp.

Levitin-Krasnov, A., *U vorot*. Paris: Poiski, 1982. 125 pp.

Lyon, David, *Karl Marx: A Christian Appreciation of His Life and Thought*. Tring: Lion Publishing, 1979. 192 pp.

Nowakowski, Marek, *The Canary and Other Tales of Martial Law*. London: Harvill Press, 1983. 144 pp.

Orthodox Liturgy, *The Divine Liturgies of St John Chrysostom and St Basil the Great*. Oxford: OUP, 1982. 226 pp.

Poradowski, Ks. Michal, *Kościół od wewnątrz zagrożony*. London: Veritas Foundation Press, 1983. 257 pp.

Summerscale, Peter, *The East European Predicament: Changing Patterns in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania*. Aldershot: Gower, 1982. 147 pp.

Tampke, Jurgen, *The People's Republics of Eastern Europe*. London: Croom Helm, 1983. 178 pp.

Westoby, Adam, *Communism Since World War II*. Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1981. 514 pp.

Wyszyński, Cardinal Stefan, *Notes de prison*. Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1983. 304 pp.