

Reviews

Tito's Flawed Legacy: Yugoslavia and the West 1939-1980

by Nora Beloff. London: Victor Gollancz, 1985.

288 pp., £12.95.

Disillusionment about Yugoslavia is widespread among its friends abroad and even more among its own people — both the now-ageing generation of ardent young men and women who threw themselves into the battle against the war-time occupiers of Yugoslavia and their collaborators, and today's young people. The wartime resistance was also a civil war, in which the disparate parts of this post-World War I creation fell apart and turned on each other. The result was a blood-soaked struggle whose scars have never healed properly. Demythologising is fashionable, and Nora Beloff, whose field of foreign reporting until the end of the '70s had been the Soviet Union, and who knew very little about Yugoslavia before then, has plunged in at the deep end.

She says a lot of things which need to be said; the myth of Tito has been fiercely nurtured by the Yugoslav authorities and the penalties for criticising him are severe. But the raw material for the myth was always there. Unlike Mihailović, who was a general in the Royal Yugoslav Army and an obvious leader of resistance, Tito was the almost-unknown leader of an illegal communist party. He could count on the support of Moscow while he remained an obedient communist; but he had the reckless courage, skill and determination to take up the challenge when the Yugoslav Communist Party was expelled from the Cominform in 1948 — and to carry through his defiance successfully, and with great brutality. While he was alive, his physical presence helped to nurture Yugoslav unity; he was never identified with any of the different nationalities or republics and he had official residences in most of them. His charisma worked on the British officers, Brigadier Maclean and Captain Bill Deakin, who were infiltrated into Yugoslavia to bring aid to the Partisan forces, and his leadership was

only once challenged by his war-time comrades, when some of them rejected his defiance of Stalin, and paid heavily for it.

Nora Beloff rejects the myth and is convinced that Maclean and Deakin were dupes. Unfortunately her work is deeply flawed by numerous inaccuracies and the venom with which she makes her attacks. She describes herself as a journalist not a historian, but a good journalist takes care to get the facts straight. She throws doubt on the judgement of Professor Michael Howard, the distinguished military historian, on purely speculative grounds, and refers to the late Elizabeth Barker, a scholarly writer who was a member of the Special Operations Executive during the war, as “totally committed to the Partisan side”. A journalist who challenges scholars of this calibre needs to be very sure of her facts.

Beloff gives no source for the story (p. 90) that British liaison officers sent to General Mihailović came to blows with the British liaison officers sent to the Partisans, and were in consequence permanently barred from the map-rooms in Cairo and later in Bari. Rodoljub Čolaković was never in the post-war concentration camp of Goli Otok (p. 146). He was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and organising secretary of the Central Committee of the party in Bosnia-Hercegovina, and could not have “rightly predicted that he would never emerge alive” since the English translation of his book is dated January 1961 and the preface is signed by him. Perhaps she confused him with someone else. She writes that Tito abolished the Christmas holiday “in an overwhelmingly Christian country”. The Muslims, the third main religious group and just under a third of the population, would not thank her for that; and the Christians are divided between Catholic and Orthodox who celebrate Christmas on different days. There was at least a plausible case for abolishing the holiday altogether and making the first of January a national holiday.

Beloff writes that Archbishop Stepinac never protested against *ustaša* atrocities from the pulpit (p. 136). The present reviewer’s book *Church and State in Yugoslavia*, which Beloff lists in her bibliography, gives several extracts from sermons when he did just that (pp. 34-36). Stepinac was sentenced to 16 years’ imprisonment, not 17, and was kept in prison for 3½ years, not seven (p. 136). Koštunica and Čavoski’s book *Party Pluralism and Monism* could not have “slipped through the censorship” (pp. 136-37) since there is no pre-publication censorship; there was *restricted* printing of only 1,000 copies (which is, incidentally, a figure which would be normal for a book of this kind in Britain and the United States) — the usual practice with publishers in Yugoslavia who expect a book to run into trouble.

Nora Beloff claims (p. 155) that in 1954 Tito reacted first with astonishment and then with rage to Djilas's heretical articles in *Borba*, one of the party papers. She cites Stephen Clissold's *Djilas: Progress of a Revolutionary* as reference but Clissold wrote (p. 235) that Tito's first reaction was "Well, the line you're taking is alright and you write well," followed by a warning, "We aren't ready yet for democracy." It was Kardelj who reacted immediately; Tito's fury came later.

All this is a pity because much that Nora Beloff writes is true and needs saying, although she is not the first or the only one to say it. The lapse of nearly two years between the publication for her book and the appearance of this review gives the opportunity of assessing her judgement with hindsight. Liberalisation in Yugoslavia today is piecemeal but it is also surprising. Conditions in Bosnia and Hercegovina, and the province of Kosovo, where the majority of the population is Albanian, are still harsh, and one can find plenty of examples of arbitrary oppression; Croatia can be very uncomfortable for dissidents. But Serbia and Slovenia have gained civil liberties in a way which could hardly have been foreseen. Yugoslavia is an odd, unpredictable and occasionally outrageous hotch-potch of situations, varying from one part of the country to another and dependent sometimes upon which official one happens to be dealing with. There are other and more reliable accounts of this period, notably Clissold's and Pavlowitch's.

STELLA ALEXANDER

Miedzy parafia a lagrem

(Between the Parish and the Prison Camp)

by Fr Jozef Kuczyński. Paris: Editions Spotkania, 1985. 92 pp.

Fr Jozef Kuczyński was one of three Roman Catholic priests from the parish of Luck in pre-war Poland who worked as missionaries in the Soviet Ukraine and Kazakhstan during and after the Second World War. As a result, he spent a total of 17 years in Soviet prison camps, while his two colleagues from Luck — Fr Wladyslaw Bukowiński and Fr Bronislaw Drzepecki — served slightly lighter sentences of 13 and 15 years.

During a brief visit to Poland in 1977, Kuczyński made a tape-recording of his memoirs. The editors of this book later combined that material with some of his written notes to make up a sketchy but accessible account of his experiences as a priest, missionary and prisoner from September 1939. At present, the work is available only in Polish.

Kuczyński's story begins on the eve of the Nazi invasion of Poland,

when he was working as the priest in charge of two apparently insignificant Ukrainian parishes just inside what was then the Polish border. The parishes, Szumbar and Dederkaly, were caught between the German and Soviet fronts throughout the war, and their inhabitants had to cope with occupation by both sides, as well as with sporadic but ruthless attacks from groups of Ukrainian nationalist guerrillas, nominally under the leadership of Stepan Bandera. In 1943 alone, over two hundred of Kuczyński's parishioners died in terrorist raids on the Polish population. Homes were robbed, families were massacred, and the Catholic church in Szumbar was burnt down.

Those who escaped took refuge in nearby towns, or sought shelter in the monastery in Dederkaly. The occupying German forces retreated in early February 1944, and the population was left entirely at the mercy of the guerrillas. The Dederkaly monastery became a fortress. Walls were barricaded, and the three hundred parishioners sheltering there fought off Bandera's forces with weapons scavenged from the departing German army. As priest in charge of the monastery, Kuczyński was high on the guerrillas' hit-list. Only shrewd practicality and courage enabled him, and those taking refuge with him, to survive what was effectively a full-scale siege, lasting nearly three weeks. On 21 February, the Red Army arrived, and the local inhabitants were given a guarantee of protection by the new Soviet administration — although Poles who were rash enough to return to their homes in the hope of retrieving their possessions died nevertheless.

Between August and December 1944, Kuczyński travelled as a missionary in the Ukraine. He worked in Krasilov, Kiev, Kharkov and Dnepropetrovsk apparently unhindered, although in the constant company of the head of the Kiev Church Committee, who kept a close watch on all that he did. In January 1945 he was arrested in Dneprodzerzhinsk for failing to register his arrival with the militia.

Kuczyński received a sentence of ten years' hard labour for "anti-soviet activity". In June 1946 he was transferred to a prison camp in the Urals, and spent the next ten years digging trenches and mining coal. His assessment of the experience is striking for its lack of bitterness:

There, I became convinced that God allows the relentless fury of the authorities in order to bring religious comfort to those who suffer most . . . in the far north. Even the most zealous clergy could not have reached the areas where the authorities sent them, yet in that icy hell true priests found joy comforting those in greatest misery.

Kuczyński was released in May 1956, in the temporary thaw which

followed Stalin's death. Almost immediately, he set off for the predominantly Muslim republic of Kazakhstan, to be a parish priest and missionary in Taincha. Bukowiński and Drzepecki were also in the region, doing similar work.

Within less than three years the authorities again clamped down. Priests were accused of speculation and parasitism by the media, and Kuczyński was singled out by name. He and Bukowiński were arrested within days of each other in December 1958; Drzepecki joined them a month later.

Kuczyński was held for seven years in hard labour camps in the Irkutsk area of Siberia. Drzepecki served five years and Bukowiński three. They spent the latter part of their imprisonment in a special camp for religious prisoners south-east of Moscow, where over five hundred priests and believers of different denominations and sects were held. In his memoirs,* which are a useful complement to Kuczyński's, Bukowiński explains that believers tended to influence other prisoners and conversions were not infrequent. This camp forestalled the danger of the spread of religious faith.

After his release Kuczyński was assigned to the parish of Bar in the Podole region of the Ukraine. He remained there until his death in 1982 — an uncompromising priest who made no apology for his inflexibility on issues of church tradition and dogma. His closing remarks indicate that in Bar he was saddened by the increasing small-mindedness of a population gaining in material prosperity, and by the loss of the community spirit he had known and valued in hard times. He reflects in conclusion that a more comfortable and stable way of life does little to uphold spiritual values, personal relationships, or the cohesion of society as a whole.

IRENA KORBA

Remember the Prisoners:

Current Accounts of Believers in Russia

edited by Peter Masters. Chicago: Moody Press, 1986. Paperback,
204 pp.

Remember the Prisoners is a valuable and attractive little book which, with certain reservations, I can recommend. Edited by the Minister of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, it contains no less than twenty chapters dealing with different aspects of the life of Christians in the Soviet Union today. It covers, among others, such subjects as: what happens when a Christian is arrested; what it costs to witness in a

*Fr Władysław Bukowiński *Wspomnienia z Kazakstanu* (Memoirs of Kazakhstan) (Paris: Spotkania, 1979).

prison environment; perils faced by those who set out to help the relatives of prisoners; sufferings involved in being transported long distances to prison camp or Siberian exile; what it means for believers to be incarcerated in psychiatric hospital; and so on. However, the real power of the book lies in the fact that it frequently tells its story through the actual words of those involved. We hear from Nikolai Baturin, Galina Vil'chinskaya, Vera, wife of the imprisoned Baptist pastor Mikhail Khorev, [released in December 1986 — *Ed.*] Ivan Antonov, and many others whose names are familiar to those in the West who are concerned for the church in communist countries. Reading this book, we feel that we have come to know these people personally, and we stand in wonder at the faith which, in spite of all they have to endure, can lead such people to say "the lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places" (Psalm 16:6). (p. 71.)

There are, however, several features which irritate. The book deals only with the Reform Baptists, and although there is a three-page disclaimer at the very end, the impression given is that these Christians are the only ones to remain true to the Gospel. The book reflects something of the suspicion and bitterness felt by the Reform Baptists towards the registered Baptists who, by their "accommodation" with the authorities, are deemed to have "sold out". There is no recognition of that perennial dilemma faced by Christians in the Soviet Union — the choice between the way of discretion and the way of valour.

Reservations notwithstanding, this book is a very useful one to make room for on a church bookstall, and a "must" for those who wish to alert other people to the realities of contemporary Christian experience in the Soviet Union.

TED BAINES

Books Received

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

Bialer, Seweryn, *The Soviet Paradox. External Expansion, Internal Decline*. London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1986. 392 pp.

Bradstock, Andrew, *Saints and Sandinistas. The Catholic Church in Nicaragua and its Response to the Revolution*. London: Epworth Press, 1987. 86 pp.

- Colton, Timothy J.**, *The Dilemma of Reform in the Soviet Union*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1986. 274 pp.
- Havryliv, Rev. Mykhaylo**, *Every Person Is First of All A History. Autobiography of a Ukrainian Catholic Priest in Contemporary Ukraine*. Rome: Ukraine Press Service, 1987. 158 pp.
- Lawrence, Carl**, *Against All Odds. The Church in China*. Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1986. 168 pp.
- Mastny, Vojtech** (Editor), *Soviet/East European Survey 1984-1985. Selected Research and Analysis from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986. 400 pp.
- Monticone, Ronald C.**, *The Catholic Church in Communist Poland 1945-1985*. Boulder: East European Monographs. New York: Columbia University Press (distributors), 1986. 228 pp.
- Pekar, Athanasius B.**, "You Shall Be Witnesses Unto Me." *Contribution to the Martyrology of the Byzantine Catholic Church in Subcarpathian Ruthenia*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: Byzantine Seminary Press, 1985. 112 pp.
- Pietarinen, Rauno**, *A Bibliography of Major Orthodox Periodicals in English*. Joensuu: Joensuun yliopisto, 1987. 154 pp.
- Sanford, George**, *Military Rule in Poland. The Rebuilding of Communist Power, 1981-1983*. London & Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986. 288 pp.
- Sloskans, Mgr Boleslas**, *Témoignage de Dieu chez les sans-Dieu. Journal de prison de Mgr Boleslas Sloskans: Du bain des îles Solovki à la déportation en Sibérie*. Mareil-Marly: Aide à l'Eglise en Détresse, 1986. 204 pp.
- Stamoolis, James J.**, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today*. (American Society of Missiology Series, No. 10.) Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1986. 194 pp.
- Violations of the Helsinki Accords*. Reports prepared for the Helsinki Review Conference, Vienna, November 1986. On Bulgaria (34 pp.), Czechoslovakia (42 pp.), Poland (88 pp.), Romania (48 pp.), Yugoslavia (52 pp.). New York/Washington: The US Helsinki Watch Committee, 1986.
- Vööbus, Arthur**, *The Martyrs of Estonia: The Suffering, Ordeal and Annihilation of the Churches Under the Russian Occupation*. Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1984. 142 pp.
- Wallis, Arthur**, *China Miracle. A Voice to the Church in the West*. Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications Ltd., 1985. 216 pp.
- Wolf, Josef Maria de**, *Katholisch sein ist ein Verbrechen. Fakten und Dokumente über die offizielle Liquidierung der ukrainisch-katholischen Kirche in der Sowjetunion und ihr Fortbestehen als Katakombenkirche*. Köln: Aktionsgemeinschaft Kyrillos und Methodios, 1987. 526 pp.

Contributors

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