Reviews

Reinvigorating the International Christian-Marxist Dialogue (Dialectics and Humanism: The Polish Philosophical Quarterly Vol. XVI No. 3-4, 1989), guest editor Paul Mojzes. Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers. 192pp. *The Catholic-Marxist Ideological Dialogue in Poland, 1945-1980* by Norbert A. Zmijewski. Aldershot, Brookfield USA, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sydney: Dartmouth, 1991. V + 179pp., £32.50.

Few people have invested so much in Christian-Marxist dialogue as Professor Paul Mojzes whose 1981 book *Varieties of Christian-Marxist Dialogue* was reviewed in this journal. He has specialised in 'Christian-Marxist dialogue' for so many years that one might be forgiven for thinking he invented it. Indeed, he did invent it as a distinct academic discipline, with courses, bibliographies, and above all conferences. At the crowning moment of his career he was invited to edit this volume of *The Polish Philosophical Quarterly*. It consists of the main papers from the conference on 'The Christian-Marxist Dialogue on Confidence Building in a Time of Crisis' (1987), and the Grenada 'Christian-Marxist Dialogue on the Meaning of being Human' (1988).

Already the volume is a great historical curiosity. It seems to belong to another world. One would like to see what *The Polish Philosophical Quarterly* looks like in 1992 or 1993. One may be quite sure it will *not* be devoted to CMD (as I shall call Christian-Marxist dialogue from now on). For it was a condition of CMD that 'Marxism' should be considered a serious intellectual position with ethical ramifications. If that premise collapses, and its crash has been resounding around the world, then CMD becomes what Leszek Kolakowski always said it was — 'like fried snowballs in hell.' One cannot have CMD if the Marxists have left the field.

But if CMD is (for the time being) no more, one can still ask what it was. Was it always an illusion, a will o'the wisp? One characteristic of

Mojzes is that he always gives it a definite article: he is talking about *the* CMD, even though he not only recognises its diversity but makes this his principal theme. Yet he seems to yearn for some platonic essence of CMD that would satisfy his most rigorous criteria. He explains, for example, in a footnote:

> It is my conviction that not every conversation between two ideological partners develops into a dialogue. Sometimes there are parallel monologues, sometimes friendly chats, sometimes tense negotiations, but dialogue has the quality of mutual learning and impacting. (p. 10, fn. 5)

Quite. But why call that a 'conviction'? Isn't it a truism?

If I had the opportunity to 'impact' with Mojzes, or even to have a friendly chat with him, I would like to ask him what he means about six times a page. He has a tendency to resort to vagueness and abstraction. For example, he reports that the Paulusgesellschaft, which in the 1960s organised the famous meetings at Marienbad and elsewhere, showed signs of life in the 1970s by organising two dialogues at Florence and Düsseldorf 'before it stopped its activities amidst uncertainties and indecisiveness' (p. 8). *Who* was uncertain and indecisive? What about?

Imprecision characterises the Mojzes style. He loves portmanteau phrases that allow for every eventuality and are consequently irrefutable. His opening sentence reads: 'From its inception in Poland in 1955-56 the CMD fluctuated in popularity, intensity, and scope.' That is what one would rather expect. But there are problems. Was CMD ever 'popular', and if so where? The answer cannot be Latin America for there it developed a 'model of cooperation without organised dialogue, but with a great deal of theological reflection' (p. 9). It is possible that under the influence of proto-Gorbachev and his *perestroika* Mojzes believed that CMD was about to be 'reinvigorated', but that is not the way things have turned out.

It is tempting to conclude that CMD was something that happened at conferences attended by Prof. Mojzes. He reports on unknown meetings at Rosemont, Penn., and Detroit, Mich., organised by the International Christian-Marxist Peace Symposia. He gives the game away when he says that 'by the 1980s, it was obvious that there was a fairly large and diverse group of Marxists and Christians, mostly intellectuals, who *were interested in each other*' (p. 9). The 1987 and 1988 conferences whose papers are given here both had 'an exceptionally cordial and friendly atmosphere' which was 'partially due to the allocation of enough time for socialising' (p. 13). I suppose this could mean they drank a lot.

Mojzes goes solemnly on: 'More remarkable, the sessions were characterised by absolute intellectual honesty, lack of posturing, and tolerance of radically different ideas, many of which were unconventional.' (p. 13) Why was this so remarkable? Does he not have the same experience in his own university? Of course his remark reveals the real reason why the whole CMD experience proved so enthralling: it ought not to have happened, it was unexpected, against the trend, against officialdom. In the 1960s it was exciting. It was part of the preparation (though we only knew this afterwards) for 1968, the year of mini-revolution.

So CMD is worth studying historically. Who joined in? And why? There are some texts here which will outlast the present crisis of Marxism, for example Arthur McGovern S.J.'s penetrating study in which he presents first the Marxist critique of Christianity fairly and honestly, and then the Christian critique of Marxism. It glows with a clarity not found elsewhere. Princeton Professor Charles West includes a discussion on Marxist 'atheism' which he concludes is 'essentially an argument among *Christians*' (p. 21). He thinks that Marxism resembles Christianity more than it resembles conventional social science, which is another way of saying that it is/was some sort of faith. Roger Garaudy used to hold this view in the 1960s. Now he is a Muslim.

Stanislaw Kowalczyk, as a Polish philosopher teaching at the Catholic University of Lublin, might be expected to tear us away from 'conference CMD'. His 'Christian and Marxist Theory of Human Liberation' is a most interesting paper, considering that it was written (presumably) in the time of martial law when many began to wonder about the 'Marxist' content of General Wojciech Jaruzelski's regime. Given a shove, it turned out to be pasteboard. So Kowalczyk's reflections on the need for 'cooperation' to overcome the 'mechanisation of work' and 'the psycho-social alienation which is connected with the process of urbanisation and hedonistic attitudes of some people' (p. 126), now seem totally irrelevant to the real world. This will not displease Kowalczyk who takes the Vatican line of refusing to endorse class-struggle.

Zmijewski, though, from his Australian exile, can go on in the CMD business because he is concerned with history and halts his discussion with the rise of Solidarity in 1980. There are two odd things about his title. Was CMD in Poland ever 'ideological'? And if it ever existed, how can it have begun in 1945 when the Red Army imposed this alien creed on Catholic Poland? Here we need Mojzes' reminder that not every exchange is a dialogue.

But Zmijewski's title is misleading. He has written a straightforward account of how Christians and Marxists related to each other

in Poland in the post-war period. Three movements represent three possible paths. *Pax* collaborated and won a slice of the action. *Wiez* according to the author tried to humanise socialism (but the main interest is that it produced Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a man so cruelly cast aside). He describes the attitude of *Znak* as 'political realism' which makes it sound rather shady; but he admits that Jerzy Turowicz, who has edited its paper from the start, is an honourable man who never compromised with Marxism. Whether that is conveyed by speaking of Turowicz's 'ideological indifferentism' may be doubted. 'The Catholicism of Znak,' he says, 'though fundamentalist was also minimal, in the sense of not providing an ideological bound form of guidance which could petrify its flow.' (p. 34). Both 'fundamentalist' and 'minimalist' (is that what he means?) would require more definition. Zmijewski's concluding chapter is on 'The Overcoming of Marxism by Wojtyla and Kolakowski', which makes one wonder why CMD is involved at all.

It is too easy to be wise after the event. But I felt all along from the 1960s that CMD badly needed some good linguistic analysis to tell us what was being talked about. Mojzes, like most of the participants, is not a native English-speaker. He introduces himself as a 'Yugoslav'. No-one would do that today. That makes his prophetic comment rather sad: 'The Yugoslav situation does not favor a unified approach to the CMD due to the pluralism of religious traditions and ethnic strife which has escalated since Tito's death.'

PETER HEBBLETHWAITE

A romániai magyar református egyház élete 1944-1989 (The Life of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Romania, 1944-1989) by István Tőkés. Budapest: Magyarságkutató Intézet, 1990. Paperback, 463 pp. 396 Ft.

The author, father of László Tőkés who sparked off the Romanian revolution in 1989, held high office in the church whose life he describes in this substantial book. He was vice-bishop of the Transylvanian diocese, occupied the Chair of New Testament Studies at the Protestant Theological Institute in Cluj, edited *Református*

Szemle, the chief ecclesiastical journal, and published numerous theological studies. An outspoken critic of the church's leadership, he was forced to retire in 1983 and forbidden to preach in 1989. His book was completed just before the revolution that ended the period he chronicles, though he was not to know this.

It is important to heed the author's warning that this is not a history of the post-war period; he was forbidden access to church archives and therefore relied on his own extensive records, some of which are reproduced in the 170 pages of documents that follow the text. The present volume should therefore be regarded as a personal account, an essential aid for the future historian and a continuation of the long and splendid Transylvanian tradition of memoir-writing. It is written with an urgent concern for the moral and spiritual welfare of an increasingly isolated church which has suffered both state persecution and servile leadership. The communist authorities merely built on the already existing suspicion of a strong national minority church, and achieved virtually complete control of it. As the author remarks, the history of the Reformed Church at the time is part of the history of the *Securitate.*

After a general introduction, the book is divided into seven main chapters. The first examines the organisation of the church and demonstrates how the traditional autonomy of local congregations was supplanted by a centralised administration with all power in the hands of the two bishops, one in Cluj, the other in Oradea. The situation was not helped by tensions between the two sees. Having forced the 'election' of two compliant bishops, the state proceeded to interfere at every level of church life, simply overriding protests and marking down all protesters, including István Tőkés himself, for punishment. A similar woeful tale could be recorded in other countries, but rarely has it been told in such detail.

Next the author discusses the relationship of the church to state and society. The Reformed Church sees itself as the protector of Hungarian culture, hence the loss of its many schools and colleges to the state was a serious blow. Yet the state involved the church in promoting certain policies like the collectivisation of agriculture and its so-called ecumenical and peace activities; these latter were to show the outside world that freedom of religion did indeed exist in Romania. Citing the example of a brave interpreter who told a foreign visitor that all he had heard was a pack of lies, the author wonders whether the truth ever reached the world at large; he must know now that it did.

The chapter on mission is important. It shows how opportunities for it were slowly and firmly reduced after considerable activity

immediately after the Second World War when such organisations as Christian Endeavour and Christian Unions flourished. After 1950 everything outside church buildings ceased. Confirmation classes were still held, but in the view of the author preparation was poor; he adds significantly that in towns confirmation frequently marked the end of church attendance.

One chapter is devoted to ministerial training. Originally given in the theological faculty of the Hungarian University of Cluj, it was transferred to a Protestant Theological Institute there, specially established to include students from the Lutheran, Reformed and Unitarian churches. The first rector, a state-appointed Unitarian, boasted of his ignorance of Christian beliefs, which hardly augured well for its success. Nevertheless, ministers were trained there and occasional foreign students accepted; it is doubtful, however, whether there was any ecumenical spirit there, since all the churches maintained separate programmes, and any 'interconfessional' sessions were strictly supervised by the state. Post-collegiate training and ministerial seminars were gradually phased out.

As editor of *Református Szemle*, the author sheds some interesting light on the problems of publishing. The censors refused to allow publication of any material that might indicate life in the church, so the journal necessarily gave most space to scholarly articles. Document 74 illustrates the problems with vocabulary: 'sin' must refer only to the sin of believers, 'the judgement of God' must not appear, nor must 'secularism' — it is a wonder that anything was ever published. Yet some substantial articles and books appeared throughout the period.

The chapter on ecumenical life makes depressing reading. Even contacts with the sister church in Hungary were minimal, and links with the world-wide Reformed Churches were sternly discouraged. Occasional set-pieces of ecumenism were staged by the state and attendance at the Prague Peace Conference was compulsory. Most depressing of all, however, is the almost total lack of cooperation between the Reformed and Roman Catholic churches in Transylvania, something that might have been expected from two organisations claiming to represent the Hungarian minority. The Reformed Church unfortunately had no leaders of the calibre of Bishop Áron Márton (See *RCL* Vol. 17 No. 3 (Autumn 1989), pp. 286-87).

The final chapter on finance contains no definite figures, but it is clear that there was much generous giving among dwindling congregations; unfortunately this was not matched by proper administration of funds.

Contributors

George Cushing is Emeritus Professor of Hungarian language and literature in the University of London.

Mark Elliott is professor of history and director of the Institute for East-West Christian Studies, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL., USA. He is the author of *Pawns of Yalta: Soviet Refugees and America's Role in Their Repatriation*; editor of *Christianity and Marxism Worldwide: An Annotated Bibliography* and *East European Missions Directory*; and co-editor with Rom Maczka of *Christian/Marxist Studies in United States Higher Education: A Handbook of Syllabi*.

Fr Hans-Friedrich Fischer belongs to the Community of St Philip Neri in Leipzig. A Slavist by training, he became a priest in 1978. Since that time he has belonged to 'Justitia et Pax', formerly a working group and now a commission of the Berlin Bishops' Conference, as representative of the Dresden-Meissen Bishopric. As a member of this commission he was a delegate to the ecumenical assembly for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation in the GDR and also to the European assembly 'Peace and Justice' in Basel in May 1989.

Peter Hebblethwaite is the Vatican Affairs writer for the *National Catholic Reporter*. He is the author of *John XXIII: Pope of the Council* and *In the Vatican*.

Fr Serge Keleher is secretary to the Ukrainian Catholic Bishop of Toronto.

Dr Vladimir Moss is a translator and a writer specialising in the history of the True Orthodox Church. In 1989-90 he worked as a translator for 'Raduga' publishers in Moscow, where he became a member of the True Orthodox Church of Russia. At present he is writing a history of the True Orthodox Church of Greece.

Petr Pitha was born in Prague in 1938. He studied history and linguistics at Charles University where he took his doctorate in general linguistics. He offered courses in the history and culture of Bohemia at Brno University before taking a chair in the Faculty of Education in Prague. He is now responsible for the development of civic education in post-1989 Czechoslovakia. This responsibility includes the production of an appropriate curriculum for education in citizenship for all secondary schools in Czechoslovakia.

Sabrina Petra Ramet is an Associate Professor of International Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington. She is author of five books (including *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Meaning of the Great Transformation*, published by Duke University Press in 1991).

Bishop Albrecht Schönherr was born in 1911. From 1928-33 he studied theology under Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Tübingen and Berlin, when he joined the Confessing Church. After the Second World War he was director of the Predigerseminar in Brandenburg. In 1962 he became General Superintendent and in 1973 Bishop of the eastern part of the Berlin-Brandenburg Church. From 1969 until his retirement in 1981 he was president of the Federation of Protestant Churches in the GDR.

Dr Philip Walters is Editor-in-Chief of the publications of Keston College.

Vera Wollenberger is a lay member of the Protestant Church in the former GDR. She was a member of the *Volkskammer* and also active in the *Kirche von Unten* movement.