

BOOK NOTES

by Walter Sawatsky

Soon after the Velvet Revolution two publications appeared, dedicated to reinvoking the memory of Josef L. Hromadka, major twentieth century theologian of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (Unitas Fratrum). Hromadka sought to address the major changes in Europe that the fact of the Holocaust, the upheavals of the War and the major expansion of Communism in Europe represented. After 1990 that world seemed in danger of being forgotten too easily. The Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD) of the WCC published *Christian Existence in Dialogue: Doing Theology in All Seasons* in 1990 in honor of Hromadka. The volume included Hromadka's "Gospel for Atheists"(1958) and his "On the Threshold of Dialogue"(1964). The other six essays included biographical sketches by Josef Smolik and Milan Opocensky.

Another book, appearing in Prague in 1990 under the sponsorship of the Christian Peace Conference was: *Josef L. Hromadka, The Field is the World. Selected Writings from the Years 1918-1968*. Edited by Milan Opocensky, this 476 page volume presented Hromadka's writings/speeches grouped under the categories of major theological statements, essays on dialogue, an eschatological theology or theology of hope for the Church caught between East and West, many essays on the Church under socialism, as well as key speeches at the Christian Peace Conferences and some sermons.

At the end of the 1990s, the Christian Peace Conference International published *50th Anniversary of the WCC. Challenges of Remembering. To the Honour of J.L. Hromadka*.(Prague 1998). The presentations, mainly by CPC activists who shared Hromadka's positive attitude to socialism, attempted to assess the future role of CPC in light of the collapse of Marxist socialisms. The volume begins with Hromadka's famous speech at the founding assembly of the WCC in Amsterdam in 1948, "The Church and Today's International Situation". Another Hromadka appreciation appeared in 1999, as #43 in Studies from the

World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Entitled *From the Reformation to Tomorrow*. Josef L. Hromadka (1889-1969), its longest opening essay was Hromadka's 1955 contribution to a Czech publication, now appearing in English. That essay "From the Reformation to Tomorrow" was an attempt to locate the Czech Reformation within the many Reformations that have provided so much impetus for movements of liberation. The editor, Milan Opocensky, was then general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and he pointed out in his introduction that for more than a decade Hromadka had been on WARC's executive council. Shorter essays by well known ecumenists such as Philip Potter, Richard Shaull, Julio de Santa Ana, Jan Milic Lochman and Opocensky himself drew attention to the impact Hromadka had left, especially as one urging the Church to seek reconciliation in its brokenness, to act out of a deep sense of repentance for its failings in the face of the major challenges to living in the 20th century.

Though these publications are not readily accessible in most university libraries, readers of *REE* will know that copies can be obtained through the WARC and WCC offices in Geneva and the Czech Brethren in Prague.

Another book received recently from the editor, Fr. Vladimir Fedorov, is *Religion and Nationalism in Russia*. (St. Petersburg: Interchurch Partnership "Apostolic City - Nevskij Prospect" Press, 2000.) Appearing in both Russian and English, the 359 pages are divided into two parts. Fedorov's Orthodox Research Institute of Missiology, Ecumenism and New Religious Movements had organized a conference together with partners from Zurich (Erich Bryner) and Aarhus Universities (F.O. Overgaard) to address the problem of religion and nationalism from the perspective of the sociology of religion. For that conference, participants utilized statements and speeches of church and political leaders of the past decade, here printed in English translation. Those included speeches by Sergei Baburin of the Russian Peoples' Union, Gennady Zyuganov of the Communist Party, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and by Alexander Barkashov of the Russian National Unity or patriotic movement.

Here is recent material in English translation to enable the Western reader to enter into the debate.

Finally a contributor to *REE*, Ringolds Balodis, under the sponsorship of the Latvian Association for Freedom of Religion, produced a short (94 pages) volume on *State and Church in the Baltic States: 2001*. (Riga, 2001.) In it, Balodis discusses the juridical dimensions of the church-state relationship, providing summaries, charts and texts on the legal status of the churches, legislation on religion with reference to the media, labor law, public education and family law. In so doing, he examines the situation in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania in separate chapters but with parallel topics.