

The *Gulag Archipelago* is the work of a Christian writer and it is firmly based on Christian values, but it does not tell one as much as might be expected about the religious life of the prisoners. The second volume has more than the third on this subject but what there is in the third volume is of great interest. In the canteen at Kengir there was a daily schedule of services of different churches throughout the Forty Days. To confess to Christian faith was the one thing in the Archipelago that could make a KGB examiner relent in his attempt to force a false confession. The KGB know that some believers simply cannot be made to lie, whatever the pressure on them. But there were also perils from false brethren, such as the odious informer Archdeacon Rudchuk who had formerly been in the entourage of the Patriarch of Moscow. Jewish faith is not much in evidence, perhaps because its revival had not begun until after Solzhenitsyn was released. But there is an interesting story of a Jewish Party member who swore that he would in future observe the ordinances of the law, if he survived a moment of great peril in the war.

This third volume is the most varied of the three and therefore the most readable, but to get the full perspective one must read the other two volumes first.

JOHN LAWRENCE

A Marxist Looks at Jesus

by Milan Machovec, Darton Longman & Todd, 1976, 220 pp. £2.95.

As Peter Hebblethwaite notes in his introduction, it is a remarkable fact in itself that a confessing Marxist should write respectfully and intelligently about Jesus. Hebblethwaite believes that Machovec's book "can stimulate and challenge Christians and open the eyes of Marxists". One hopes indeed that it will do this. It will not convince Brezhnev or Ian Paisley or Monsignor Lefebvre. But it deserves to be read by as many people as possible who claim to be either Marxist or Christian.

The title, however, may prove misleading. Milan Machovec is by no means a run-of-the-mill Marxist. In spite of his Catholic background he became sufficiently convinced of the relevance of Marxism to become in 1953 Professor of Philosophy at Charles University in Prague, a post which he held until 1970. Apparently, however, he never lost his interest in Christianity. In the mid-60s, well before the "Prague Spring", he organized a series of seminars at which he invited Christians, both Czech and foreign, to take part in discussions with eminent Marxist thinkers. Dr. Machovec's book is essentially a result of these discussions. It was first published as a series of articles in Czechoslovakia itself during

the Dubcek era, was later revised and translated into German, and has only now been translated into English.

Machovec's book is thus the product of a unique period of optimism and open-mindedness, a fact clearly reflected in the opening chapter, where the author states confidently that "there has been a real transformation in the relations between Christianity and Marxism". We have a right, alas, to be sadly sceptical about such honest but sanguine assertions. The period of dialogue in Czechoslovakia was, after all, unfortunately brief.

One wonders, moreover, whether Peter Hebblethwaite is right to call Machovec's book "a minor but indispensable Marxist classic". A minor classic, perhaps; and certainly a very readable and informative book. But there is little which is specifically "Marxist" in his interpretation of the gospel message, which might have been more accurately entitled "A rationalist looks at Jesus", or "An existentialist looks at Jesus" or even "A Bultmannian looks at Jesus". But then Machovec, like so many modern Marxists, reduces Marxism to a methodology, a system of "sober scientific analysis" which rejects fixed dogma.

This easy-going type of Marxism will certainly be much more palatable to the average Christian than the editorials of *Pravda*. And Machovec's "demythologised" Jesus, the man who urges people to totally change their lives, will undoubtedly make sense to many who consider themselves Marxists. So, even though the book is unlikely even to scratch the surface of orthodoxy on both sides, for many it could open new avenues of thought. What a pity it is not for sale in Eastern Europe.

MALCOLM HAZLETT

White Book on Restrictions of Religion in the USSR

by Michael Bourdeaux, Committee for the Defence of Human Rights
in the USSR, Brussels, 1976, 66 pp., 65p.

Religious Liberty in the Soviet Union: WCC and USSR—A Post-Nairobi Documentation

edited by Michael Bourdeaux, Hans Heblly and Eugen Voss,
Keston College (CSRC), 1976, 96 pp., £1.50.

These two volumes are important reports for all those concerned with an accurate assessment of the limitations on religious liberty in the USSR. The first, slighter book sets out the present state of the law and then, with the support of documents, considers the present limitations