

CAREE Communicator

Editor:
James R. Payton, Jr.
Executive Secretary, CAREE
Redeemer University College
777 Garner Road East
Ancaster, Ontario L9K 1J4
Fax: (905) 648-2134
e-mail: caree@redeemer.on.ca

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CANCEL PREVIOUS NOTICE!

CAREE CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL MEETING—*postponed*

In a letter you received a couple of weeks ago, we told you that the next issue of *CAREE Communicator*—the one you are now holding in your hand—would give further details and information about the CAREE conference and annual meeting on November 14 & 15, 2001. We had planned it to coordinate with the meeting in Washington, D.C., of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS), to which a number of you belong, and which we thought some of you might attend.

The location for the conference had been finalized and arranged, the plans had virtually all been made, and the last details were being finalized—when things began to unravel. We had planned to have two representatives of CEWERN (“Churches’ East-West European Relations Network”—CAREE’s counterpart in the United Kingdom) participate by bringing papers; we also wanted to devote a significant part of a session to discussions with them about how our two organizations might collaborate in service to Eastern Europe. However, both those people had to withdraw: one had needed to change his plans come, and the other sustained a broken arm, which prohibited lengthy travel. Then the Skopje conference—on which we had planned to have a report as a major element of a session—had to be postponed. (More on that conference below in this newsletter.) Another presenter had to withdraw, and despite numerous contacts with other possible presenters, it was proving impossible to find at that late date someone to provide a worthwhile paper in substitution.

This all came on top of the uneasiness many people in North America have experienced about flying in the weeks since the attacks on the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon. With that uneasiness, we thought that some people who otherwise might come might this time decide to forego a CAREE meeting held in Washington, D.C. Beyond that, the Executive Committee recognized that, with the setbacks in our plans for the conference and our attempts to substitute alternatives, we had lost too much time. Even if we were to manage somehow to fill in the slots appropriately, it would take a few more days—but time was slipping by too fast. In all likelihood, the delay in getting the *Communicator* out while we “fixed” things would mean that it would arrive with the information about the conference and annual meeting too late for most people to make plans to come.

So, the Executive Committee decided to postpone the conference and annual meeting. We are planning to hold it in March or early April. The date will depend on two matters: (1) when the Skopje conference is held (which will be settled in the next two or three weeks, while Paul Mojzes and Leonard Swidler are in Macedonia), and (2) when the "Europe Forum" (the successor to the "Europe Committee" of the Church World Service and Witness Unit of the National Council of Churches) can schedule their meeting (since we would like to invite them to the conference).

Please understand that this is a *postponement*, not a *cancellation*. We are going forward with the plans for the conference and annual meeting. We will hold on to the plans originally made and are working to fill in the open slots—perhaps even to enlarge the plans somewhat, to offer even more substance in the conference. We are currently in contact with the Europe Forum, our presenters, and possible replacements, to arrange a solid conference. We hope to have the plans finalized in time to present them to you in a late December/early January issue of the *Communicator*. So, look forward to receiving the information about the upcoming conference and annual meeting—and we hope to see you there!

INTERRELIGIOUS TRIALOGUE IN MACEDONIA

One of the exciting recent ventures that will be reported on at the Annual Meeting will be the Jewish-Christian-Muslim Dialogue to be held in Skopje, Macedonia, during March, 2002. The President of Macedonia, Basil Trajkovski, contacted Paul Mojzes a few months ago about possibly having such a conference, as a help toward settling the situation in Macedonia. Since then, Paul has worked with Leonard Swidler of Temple University and planned the dialogue. They approached the United States Institute of Peace for funding for the conference; USIP granted \$30,000 toward the costs of the conference. Paul and Leonard are currently seeking other sources of funding to meet the remaining probable costs.

Paul and Leonard will be attending the conference. Paul has indicated that he would welcome others to attend, as well. So, if you have an interest in doing so, contact Paul at pmojzes@rosemont.edu to find out further details.

NEWS FROM EASTERN EUROPE

Charles West was in Hungary and Croatia earlier this year. While in Hungary, he met with Dr. Karoly Toth (of the Ecumenical Study Centre), Bertalan Tamas (of the Presiding Bishop's Office of the Reformed Church in Hungary), and Professor Janos Pasztor. Through this contact, Charles heard about the following events, some of which have since taken place and others of which are still to occur. We hope to pass on communications about these events, as received:

(1) The Lutheran World Federation, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the Conference of European Churches held a conference June 22-29 in Budapest on "The Consequences of Globalization and the Ecumenical Response."

(2) The Reformed Church in Hungary was scheduled to hold a consultation with its “partner churches” in Budapest September 15-19. (“Partner churches” are not ethnic Hungarian churches in other countries, but churches around the world which are related to the Hungarian Reformed Church.)

(3) A special commission of the World Council of Churches on Orthodox-Protestant relations will meet in Debrecen in November.

(4) The Hungarian Ecumenical Study Centre is planning a 3rd ecumenical conference of Eastern European church people; they hope to have a few Western Europeans and North Americans attend, as well. The conference is entitled, “Churches as Parts of Civil Society.”

As well, former Executive Committee member Patricia Lefevere passed on information she received that two leading organizations representing mainstream churches across Europe had organized an historic joint gathering on the future of Christian-Muslim relations in Europe. The meeting was to be held in Sarajevo September 16-21. We have not received word whether the event was held; given, though, the events of September 11 and the tensions raised by them, such conferences and interreligious dialogues are needed. (See the end of this newsletter for further comment about this initiative.)

“ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY AND CONTEMPORARY EUROPE”

A conference on this theme was held June 25-28, 2001, at the University of Leeds. Most of the 100+ participants came from Europe; only 5 were from North America, and of those, 2 were members of CAREE—Samuel Calian and Jim Payton.

The conference was stimulating; in addition to the numerous smaller sessions, plenaries were led by Bishop Basil of Sergievo, Cardinal Cassidy (President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, 1990-2001), and Hieromonk Dr. Hilarion Alfeyev (Department of External Relations, Moscow Patriarchate). Representatives came from more than 25 countries and included clergy and religious (of various traditions and jurisdictions), professors, and members of the European parliament.

The conference offered us from North America an unusual opportunity to “listen in”—and, we trust, offer helpful comment—on European Christians and those of no faith struggling with the issues of European commonality and distinctiveness within it.

FROM CEWERN’S *EAST-WEST BRIEFINGS*:

In early 2001, CEWERN held a meeting at which Osman Topcagic, Ambassador of Bosnia-Herzegovina in London, spoke about the current situation in his country. The following is excerpted from the report as presented in *East-West Briefings*, No. 2, June 2001:

“The Constitutional Court ruled in 2000 that all three nationalities—Croat, Serb and Bosniak—are constituent nationalities in the whole of the country. Previously, Serbs had that

status in Republika Srpska, Croats and Bosniaks in the Federation. From now on there will be an increasingly diverse ethnic representation in both parts of the Republic. . . . Integration of the different ethnic communities will clearly be a long and difficult process. However, progress is being made.” – This move toward the reestablishment of a genuinely multicultural Bosnia-Herzegovina bodes well for the future of that remarkable state. – Mr. Topcagic further noted, “The number of NATO troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina is slowly going down, from 60,000 in 1995 to 22,000 today.”

Mr. Topcagic also urged, “The wish for revenge has largely disappeared. Hatred has been replaced by a general wish for justice to be done, and people are looking to the Hague War Crimes Tribunal, where an increasing number of cases of grave abuses are being considered.” – This sounds rather too much like political spin-doctoring. Certainly, we should *hope* that this is or will become the case. But if the memories of atrocities in World War II (and even long before) did not die in the nearly half-century succeeding, dare we accept the assurance that the desire for revenge has evaporated in 1/10 of that time? If what the ambassador urges is fact rather than wish, how is it that those accused of war crimes in the 1990s remain at large in Bosnia?

It is sobering to find him acknowledging, “Sixty percent of young people want to leave Bosnia-Herzegovina, the same figure as in Yugoslavia.”

As well, the following book recommendation by Paul Oestreicher appeared in *East-West Briefings*, No. 3, September 2001. We pass it on for the interest of potential readers:

“I want to commend to you Andrew Rigby’s new book, *Justice and Reconciliation after the Violence* and share with you some of its contents. Rigby challenges the notion that ‘peace’ and ‘justice’ go together. He points out that achieving one must often be done at the expense of the other. He gives due consideration to personal and psychological factors as well as to political ones. He considers how people who have been involved in violence can achieve a state where they can live together in harmony. This is a complex process, with no short cut to solving sin—and, indeed, Christians should not be surprised that this is so. It is not possible to create systems of forgiveness, since forgiveness is a very personal thing, but it is possible to create a climate in which forgiveness can be achieved. The book takes various countries as case studies.” (The only one explicitly mentioned from Eastern Europe is Russia.)

YOUR COMMENTS

Please be sure to fill out the sheet enclosed with the letter you received a couple of weeks ago and mail it back to us. Your suggestions on those sheets as to possible ways CAREE might serve in the future are especially welcome. – In that regard, we received such a comment from Patricia Lefevere, who suggested that, given the current world situation, perhaps CAREE could help facilitate dialogue between Christians and Muslims. – After all, in Eastern Europe Christians and Muslims have been living together for more than 500 years. Much of that time was lost in tensions and distance, to be sure; but during some of it, they lived in peace. In the current world situation, enabling dialogue between Christians and Muslims would be a helpful

contribution from CAREE, a valuable counterpart to the Marxist-Christian dialogues we formerly enabled.