

CAREE Communicator

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

Spring 1999
#1

New Series,

A Renewed *CAREE Communicator*

You are holding in your hands the first issue of the renewed *CAREE Communicator*. Those of you who have been members of CAREE for some time will remember that the *Communicator* used to come out a few times a year, but it has been quite a while since you saw one. The reason for the interruption is not some change of interest within CAREE. Rather, when the previous editor retired from the position, another editor was sought out, and Jerry Benjamin was selected. He took on the responsibility for the *Communicator* not long before accepting a pastoral charge in the state of Washington.

However, shortly after he got involved with the newsletter, he was struck with an illness that kept him from putting together further issues of the *Communicator*. Jerry and the Executive Committee hoped that his health situation would improve, and that he would be able to serve as editor for the newsletter. As time passed, though, it became doubtful that Jerry would recover enough from the affliction to be able to resume his role as editor of the *Communicator*.

Consequently, with Jerry's agreement, the Executive Committee decided to seek a new editor--at about the same time as they began looking for a new executive secretary, to succeed Ken Ziebell. Ken had served CAREE as executive secretary with distinction for sixteen years, but he retired from his full-time employment last year, and from his position with CAREE at around the same time. In due course, I was appointed as executive secretary last summer. I was also asked to produce issues of the *CAREE Communicator*, at least on a trial basis. It took a while to get files, information, mailing lists, etc., transferred and sorted through. Finally, however, I have been able to put together this first issue of what, as I pointed out above, we hope will be the first of a renewed *CAREE Communicator*.

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is James R. Payton, Jr. I am Professor of History at Redeemer College, which is located in Ancaster, Ontario, Canada. Among the courses I teach at our liberal arts college are four courses on different facets of the history of Eastern Europe. Prior to coming to the college, I served a total of eight years in the pastorate. I hope to serve CAREE well as executive secretary and as editor of the *CAREE Communicator*.

What is the Purpose of the *CAREE Communicator*?

Since it has been quite a while since you have seen this newsletter, it would probably be helpful to remind you what its purpose is. The *CAREE Communicator* serves as a vehicle for

passing on information about the activities of CAREE's members (especially as they relate to Eastern Europe), about events or developments in Eastern Europe, and for the presentation of reflections about such events or developments. In addition, we want to use the newsletter to offer information about electronic connections those of us who "surf the web" can use to get information about Eastern Europe. Beyond that, we would like to open up the pages of the *Communicator* for brief pieces in which members comment on what they see happening in Eastern Europe: some good interchange among us would doubtless stimulate us all to ponder more deeply what is happening (or not happening, as the case may be) in Eastern Europe. So, please send me as editor of the newsletter any information about your travels to or involvements in Eastern Europe, information you think worthy of being passed on, or "reflection" pieces (no longer than 1 page, single-spaced, please) about developments in Eastern Europe.

CAREE is privileged to have a good relationship with CEWERN (the Churches' East-West European Relations Network). With its headquarters in England, CEWERN serves the churches of both Eastern and Western Europe. CEWERN publishes a newsletter, *East-West*, which contains articles which often relate to the concerns of CAREE. CEWERN has graciously granted us permission to reprint in the *CAREE Communicator* articles which we think you as readers would find interesting or stimulating. (Of course, we are only too happy to reciprocate, if the editor of *East-West* finds something in the *CAREE Communicator* which would serve his readership.) Later in this issue, two such articles from *East-West* appear. If you have suggestions about other types of content which you would find interesting, please let me know, and I will bring the ideas to the Executive Committee for discussion.

Whence and Whither CAREE?

As you may know, this year is the 40th anniversary of CAREE. In addition to appropriate celebration of 40 years' service, this noteworthy anniversary invites us to consider afresh what CAREE has been in the past and what it should be in the future. Given the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe since CAREE first embarked on its way, and especially those of the last decade, the Executive Committee has decided to hold a conference to consider the "whence" and the "whither" of CAREE. The details for the conference are still being worked out, and information should be available within the next few months. (Among other things, by the next issue of the *CAREE Communicator*--sometime this summer, I hope--should be able to give you information about the conference, location, dates, etc.) The intention is to have a presentation or two about what CAREE has been and done in the past, with panel discussion; then we plan to have another presentation or two about what CAREE should focus on for the future. (In all likelihood, the annual meeting of CAREE will be held at the end of the conference, as has been past practice.)

In preparation for that conference, I invite you readers of the *CAREE Communicator* to send in your thoughts about the themes to be raised in the conference: What do you think have been the strengths and/or weaknesses of CAREE's efforts over the past 40 years (or as many of them as you have been a CAREE member)? What do you see as viable avenues of continued service for CAREE in the future? Is there, indeed, a continued need for CAREE? Does CAREE have a viable future? Should we focus our efforts especially on one or another successful endeavors? Should we take on new tasks?

A different approach would be welcome, too. If you recall a particular event, area of

service, or undertaking that you thought was especially worthwhile, please write up a short recollection about that event (with why you thought it special) and send it to me. Contributions like that can help CAREE's deliberations by reminding us all of what has worked well in the past.

I would be happy to produce your comments on any of these (or related) topics in the next issue of the *CAREE Communicator*. Please limit your comments to no more than 1 single-spaced page. You may send them to me at either the regular address or the e-mail address listed above. I look forward to hearing from you--and we all look forward to your insights.

Whence and Whither CAREE: Comments by Executive Committee Members

I invited members of the Executive Committee to "get the ball rolling" on this by sending in their comments on the topics listed above. So far, two responses have arrived. One is from Professor Charles West, Professor Emeritus, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Vice-President, CAREE; the other is from Rev. Charles Mercer, Treasurer, CAREE:

Dr. West writes:

Whence?

First of all there is no doubt that what brought us together, first as the United States Committee for the Christian Peace Conference and then, with our Canadian colleagues, as CAREE, was the division of the world after World War II into an eastern and a western bloc. This was the overriding reality with which churches, Christian scholars and activists had to cope. We were made up of four types, sometimes mixed in various proportions in the same persons:

- a. People for whom peacemaking and reconciliation between east and west were the first agenda. These included Peace Church folk, pacifists from other churches, and anti-rearmament Europeans.
- b. Left idealists, who believed that, whatever its faults, the socialist revolution led by the Soviet Union was the hope of the future and deserved Christian support.
- c. Lovers of, and some emigrants from,
3. Discovering more deeply the form of

the countries of eastern Europe who wanted to help the churches there to live, witness and minister to the people and cultures of those countries under Communist rule.

- d. Christian-Communist encounter people, concerned with the theory and practice of Christian life and witness in a Marxist, socialist society.

Basically our agenda was to find a way, between the extremes of demonization and idealization, to understand and support Christians in their struggles, their suffering, and their witness over there, and to interpret this to North American churches as challenge to our witness to our society here.

This included:

1. Exploring the encounter of theology with Marxist-Leninist ideology.
 2. Discerning the practice of Christian living, ministry and mission in a society dominated by Marxist ideology and Communist-Soviet power, and its implications for Christians and churches in the western world.
- ecumenical relations, Protestant,

Catholic, and Orthodox, out of which a common Christian mission to Communist society might grow, and to bring the churches in the west into this common mission.

4. As a consequence of all this, to explore more deeply the cultural and religious traditions of east European countries, subordinated by Communism but there.

Whither?

Of course now the whole picture has changed. There are no longer two major ideological, political and social blocs. Instead there are many nations and cultures vying for space and power, often fighting, dominating or resenting one another. Religious differences are involved in this, and ecumenism is often opposed as one more effort to limit cultural autonomy or impose another foreign universal. Meanwhile economic turmoil prevails under the slogan of market economy and no political vision of justice and the common good is offered to take the place of discredited state socialism. We are asking about our relation to a part of the world which is only understood in terms of what it once was and no longer wants to be. So what might our agenda be? Let me suggest:

1. The east-west problem is still an issue for Christian witness and the life of the church. We have become over the years the study arm of American churches in this area. This is shown clearly in the contribution we are able to make to the Europe Committee of the NCCCUSA, and in the relations we maintain with the Conference of European Churches, but it operates more generally. We should pull together all who are
2. Celebrating the unity of Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic churches,

concerned for this ministry of understanding and be, through *Religion in Eastern Europe*, through the *CAREE Communicator*, through our meetings and our network, an instrument of ecumenical, international community in the European-North American arena.

2. Many of us are active in the work of reconciliation and understanding going on in eastern Europe, including all that was once the Soviet Union. CAREE should be a means of communication among us, so that we all have a part in this ministry.
3. I see three dominant problem areas in which we ought to be working, and bringing into focus the work of others: (a) reconciliation and peace among cultures and nations, and a Christian witness to the relation between Christ and cultural plurality; (b) ecumenical understanding between national churches and the ecumenical movement, between Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism in its various forms; (c) the search for a Christian social ethic to guide the reconstruction of former socialist economies.

Rev. Mercer comments:

As for the future of CAREE, I see at least 3 goals:

1. Maintaining longstanding ties with churches in Eastern and Central Europe in the face of the "invasion" of missionaries, some of whom are well funded and insensitive to the traditional churches.
- and fostering mutual understanding.
3. Supporting a free society which is

neither Capitalist, Communist, nor
Caesaro-papist.

**From CEWERN's *East-West*, #23
(Spring 1999):**

In an unusually frank report,
Patriarch Aleksy II of the Russian Orthodox
Church (ROC) has criticised ROC priests
who imitate New Russians by driving flashy
cars and showing off their mobile
telephones in front of poverty-stricken
parishioners.

In his message to the Moscow
diocese's annual meeting on 23 December
1998 he said some of the clergy were trying
to imitate the lifestyle of New Russians, and
that such behaviour was provoking
indignation among congregations. "A mass
transformation is taking place among
simple, impoverished people," he said.
"They see they are not needed by anybody,
neither the state nor society is taking care of
them, and now the Church too shows that
the rich are closer to her than the poor are."

Patriarch Aleksy noted that some
parishes had developed business contacts
with representatives of private companies,
banks and the black market. "It is hardly
necessary to point out that this does not
correspond with Christian ethics," he said,
and added that some clerics had tried to use
their relations with big business and "quasi-
political circles" to exert pressure, without
success, on him. He ordered the clergy to
do more to help Russians in need--"every
year I call on deans and heads of parish
councils to initiate charitable activities at the
parish level. But unfortunately, not
everyone hears my words."

He also accused priests of abusing
their roles as confessors by demanding total
personal obedience from their parishioners,
turning people into robots and church
communities into sects. He demanded
greater openness and transparency in church

affairs in the face of an anti-church press.

The outspoken Patriarch went on to
launch an attack on the "post-Christian
civilisation" which dominated the modern
world in general and Russian society in
particular. Society today, he said, faced
"not merely single episodes of evil . . . but a
deliberate construction of a global system of
evil. The population is organised on the
satanic principles of falsehood, forgery,
deception, and the veneration of crude
external forces."

Good Books

There are few books that recognize
religion as a significant factor in that
history. Some of the books on particular
countries deal better with the role of
religion, but treatments of Eastern Europe as
a whole offer limited treatment, if any, to
religion as a formative influence.

It was a pleasant surprise recently to
run across two books on Eastern Europe
which give special consideration to religion.
Both are by Dennis R. Hupchick, a
professor at Wilkes University in
Pennsylvania. The books are *Culture and
History in Eastern Europe* [ISBN: 0-312-
12115-6] (St. Martin's Press, 1994) and
Conflict and Chaos in Eastern Europe
[ISBN: 0-312-12116-4] (St. Martin's Press,
1995). Professor Hupchick focuses on
religion as a cultural force, rather than
looking at particular practices or teachings.
(When he ventures into details about
teachings or practices, he makes a few
minor mistakes.) The books make for
interesting reading, in any event--and since
his presentation treats religion in Eastern
Europe as an important factor in the history
of the region, the books offer much for
CAREE members to appreciate.

--James R. Payton, Jr.

**From CEWERN's *East-West*, #23
(August 1998):
(copy of "From Bucharest to Blackbird
Leys")**