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A DOUBLE ISSUE

We have lots of information for you in this double issue of *CAREE Communicator*. First off, we have information about the CAREE conference and annual meeting, to be held in Washington, D.C., just before the annual conference of the AAR (American Academy of Religion) there in November. If you are going to be at the AAR, or even if you are just in the area, we urge you to come. Then we have a few reports about some significant recent meetings and developments which are important for the religious scene in Eastern Europe. After that, we pass on some information received from and about our CAREE members.

We welcome any information from our members about their activities in or for Eastern Europe, as well as articles or reports about religion in Eastern Europe which could be considered for publication in this newsletter.

CAREE'S CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL MEETING

On Friday, November 17, 2006, CAREE will hold a conference and its annual meeting. This was set up to coordinate with the annual conference of AAR (the American Academy of Religion), which begins the following day. This year the AAR conference will be held in Washington, D.C. CAREE's activities will take place in the Washington Convention Center, Room 155. The room is reserved for our use from 9:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Conference Theme:
**“Inter-church and Inter-religious Tensions
in Post-Communist Eastern Europe:
Can Americans Serve as Reconcilers?”**

As of September 22, 2006, the confirmed participants are Paul Crego, Krystyna Gorniak-Kocikowska, Peter Kuzmic, Duncan Hanson, Steve Dintaman, Paul Mojzes, Ines Murzaku, James Payton, Walter Sawatsky, Gerald Shenk, Charles West, and Paul Wilson.

As it is received, further information will be posted on our website (www.caree.info). For information and preregistration contact Jim Payton at caree@redeemer.on.ca or by phone at 1-905-648-2131, ext. 4287. Registration: \$30 (for CAREE members and students, \$20.00).

The annual meeting will be held after the conference is completed. CAREE members are urged to attend. Reports will be presented by the various members of CAREE's Executive Committee, and decisions will be made regarding plans for the future for CAREE.

The following is condensed from a 13 July 2006 Forum 18 News Service. (The full article is available at: http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=811.)

BOSNIA: TO LEGALLY BUILD A PLACE OF WORSHIP, by Drasko Djenovic

Eleven years after the end of Bosnia and Herzegovina's civil war, religious communities of all faiths face obstruction in getting permission to build new places of worship, or rebuild those damaged or destroyed. In the Bosniak-controlled parts of the Federation (the larger of the two entities which make up the country), many mosques have been built, apparently without official controls, but Catholic and Protestant churches face years of official obstruction. In Croat-controlled areas of the Federation, especially in and around Mostar, Muslim and Protestant places of worship cannot be legally built. In the Serb-controlled Republika Srpska (the smaller of the two entities), Serbian Orthodox churches can be built, but places of worship of other faiths face much obstruction.

The Catholic Church recently received permission to build a church in Novi Grad, in Sarajevo, "after many years struggling for building permission," Monsignor Ivo Tomasevic, Secretary of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina, reported on 24 May. He noted that some religious communities do not face difficulties, though: "Something I have found personally in Sarajevo is that mosques are built like 'mushrooms after the rain' - as we say in the Balkans." He said that some sources put the number of mosques in Sarajevo at 250 or more.

In the ethnic Croat-dominated town of Mostar in the south, sharp geographic religious divisions are clearly visible. City authorities have not allowed the Muslim community to rebuild the destroyed mosque, according to Muharem Omerdic, director of the educational service of the Islamic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He added that in Banja Luka, in Republika Srpska, renovating the town's sixteenth-century Farhadija Mosque, destroyed during the civil war, remains a big problem. Mufti Seid Smaikic of Mostar reported on 30 June that several times the Muslim community has simply built small mosques without going through the hassle of obtaining permission. "Building a mosque east of Mostar, towards towns such as Capljina and Stolac, conflicts with the 'ethnically clean' concept that some politicians have," he said. "When we apply for building permission, the administration just gives no response. So in west Mostar, we built a mosque without building permission." He put this in context: "In Mostar we have been waiting for permission for such a mosque since 2000."

It is not just Mostar's Muslims who face obstruction. Karmel Kresonja, president of the Evangelical Church in the non-Serb area of Bosnia and Herzegovina, says there is a "big

problem” in all of the Croatian-controlled area. “In Mostar we have been waiting for planning permission for more than six years. It is basically impossible to get it, even though in law we have the right to build a church.”

Bernard Mikulic of an Evangelical church in Capljina, in the Croat-controlled area, said that it seemed utterly unlikely that his congregation would ever receive permission to build a church, “even though under Bosnian law we have the right to have a church for worship.” But he pointed out that the situation was different in Sarajevo: “I know of Evangelical churches which have not had building permission problems.” But in Republika Srpska, the Orthodox Church is the only religious community that does not face obstructions in gaining building permission. Protestant churches have usually worked around this by buying a house and then converting it into a church.

Monsignor Tomasevic noted that, in Republika Srpska, the problem for Catholics is not rebuilding churches, but the return of Catholic people. From a pre-civil war Catholic population of about 200,000 Catholics, only 6,000 stayed in the area, and in the 11 years since the civil war about 6,000 to 7,000 have returned. “Most churches and parish houses that were destroyed have been rebuilt or renovated. The problem is that the people cannot return,” he complained. “It is easier to rebuild church buildings than the living church. The government causes administrative problems to make it harder for people to return.”

{Editorial notes: (1) the article gives several more specifics and includes consideration of the difficulties faced by Jehovah’s Witnesses and by Hare Krishna devotees; (2) the way things are working out in these regards some 11 years after the Dayton Accords indicates that not much has changed: ethno-religious exclusivism seems to be flourishing – JRP}

The following two reports are condensed from columns in the *National Catholic Reporter* (thanks to Patricia Lefevere for forwarding them):

Russian Orthodox Church Hierarch Addresses Faith Challenges Presented by a Globalized World

During the 9th assembly of the World Council of Churches, held February 14-23, 2006, in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Metropolitan Kyrill of Smolensk spoke about the edges where cultures and civilizations clash. He noted challenges in an increasingly globalized world.

Kyrill, chairman of the Department for External Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church, said that relations between religions have been “very peaceful” in his nation, but require close attention and care to maintain that mutual respect. Kyrill said that while most of Russia is Orthodox, 10% is Muslim, and other religious traditions comprise another 10%.

He noted that an interreligious summit would be held in Russia to look at intercultural and interreligious relationships in the context of globalization, prior to the G-8 summit planned for St. Petersburg in July [see report on this immediately below]. He commended the World Council of Churches for understanding “the importance of interreligious dialogue.”

Kyrill also addressed the divide between the religious and secular worlds, asserting the “most important question of the 21st century” is “whether it is possible or not to balance religious

values and secular values.” He referred to the recent Danish cartoon controversy as an example of the challenge.

The following is from John Allen’s July 7 “All Things Catholic” column:

Interreligious Summit in Russia

During the first week of July, a World Summit of Religious Leaders took place in Moscow under the sponsorship of Patriarch Alexei II, head of the Russian Orthodox Church. The summit, designed as a lead-in to the July 15 meeting of G-8 nations in St. Petersburg, drew over 200 religious leaders from 49 countries, including Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist and other communities.

The aim was to arrive at a common set of values in light of pressing global concerns. In their final statement, participants called for an end to terrorism, an ethical underpinning for modern notions of democracy and human rights, and respect for human life from natural beginning to natural end.

The Vatican was represented by a high-level delegation of Catholic ecumenical and inter-religious engagement: Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; Cardinal Paul Poupard, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture as well as the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue; Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, former President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace; Cardinal Godfried Daneels of Brussels; Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, emeritus archbishop of Washington; Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin; and Bishop Vincent Paglia of Terni, Italy. Most are longtime stalwarts of the Community of Sant’Egidio’s ecumenical and inter-faith efforts.

The delegation represents the largest number of cardinals ever to visit Russia at once, and was taken as a sign of an ecumenical “thaw” in relations between Russian Orthodoxy and the Catholic church.

The Dalai Lama was not on the guest list for political reasons. Putin’s government wants close ties with China, and the Chinese would have objected had Putin given the living symbol of Tibetan nationalism a platform.

As to the absence of Benedict XVI, Orthodox officials offered a positive gloss: “The visit of the pope of Rome is a historical event, and it would be methodologically wrong to put it on a par with other historical events, including the summit,” said Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad.

Another noticeable absence was Catholic Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz of the Mother of God archdiocese in Moscow (so named so as not to offend Orthodox sensibilities, who insist there can be only one archbishop of Moscow, Alexei II). Orthodox frostiness to Kondrusiewicz is well-known, in part because of his insistence upon “reciprocity” in the Catholic/Orthodox relationship. Bishop Joseph Werth, of the diocese of Transfiguration in Novosibirsk, took part as president of the Russian bishops’ conference. Local sources say the choice not to include Kondrusiewicz was made by the Vatican.

Vatican sources argued that, whatever its shortcomings, the summit represented an

opportunity both to improve Catholic/Orthodox ties, as well as to bring the various religions closer to a compact witness against religiously motivated violence.

Further on Catholic/Orthodox relations:

An important Vatican personnel move has taken place. In early May, a Slovenian Jesuit, Fr. Milan Žust, was appointed as the officer in the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity responsible for Catholic/Orthodox dialogue. Žust is a deep admirer of Eastern traditions, and observers say his appointment may boost relations with the Russian Orthodox. Russian sources told NCR that the Orthodox leadership in Moscow backed Žust's appointment.

Žust was born in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 1967. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on Pavel Florensky (1882-1937), a Russian Orthodox theologian, philosopher, mathematician and engineer, sometimes compared by his followers to Leonardo Da Vinci.

Prior to his Vatican appointment, Žust taught at the Gregorian University. He has also served as superior of the Jesuit community at the Centro Aletti in Rome. From September 1-22, 2005, Žust served as a visiting professor at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut.

The following is condensed from an article that appeared July 17 (thanks to Fr John Pawlikowski for forwarding it):

Poles Say Anti-Semitism Label Unfair, by Dinah Spritzer

They are despised by many. They face discrimination and stereotyping, and feel overwhelmed by the prejudice against them. They want to be seen as individuals, not as a group, and they want the media to stop slandering them.

No, not Jews, not Israelis. Think Poles, some of whom feel under siege for group allegations of anti-Semitism.

Joanna Owsiana is a Jewish studies major at Jagiellonian University in Krakow who in May participated in the March of Remembrance and Hope, which brings young people together of all faiths in Poland to promote tolerance. Her counterparts from the United States and Europe were open-minded, but she said a Polish-born Holocaust survivor living in Israel declared "she hated Poles and labeled them all as anti-Semites." "I told her I was not responsible for what Poland did 60 years ago. My grandfather's family hid Jews from the Nazis, but she didn't want to hear about that," Owsiana said.

Much has been made since the fall of communism of the persistence of Polish anti-Semitism, and many Poles feel that, try as they might, they cannot throw off this label. They argue that the real Poland is represented by young women like Owsiana, and not by marginal hate groups that one could find anywhere.

Working against them is evidence that anti-Semitism is a persistent problem in Poland. The Polish anti-racism organization "Never Again" estimated that Poland has hundreds of anti-

Semitic Web sites. According to a 2005 Anti-Defamation League survey of 12 European countries, Poland ranked between first and third place among nations with negative stereotypes about Jews.

Less known are current intensive efforts by the Polish government to combat anti-Semitism with police training, school programs and public statements in support of Polish Jewry. Little media attention is paid to the hundreds of grass-roots efforts by Polish Catholics to promote Jewish-Polish dialogue and the preservation of Jewish heritage. There are also reportedly more students studying Jewish history and the Holocaust at a university level than anywhere else in Europe.

Instead the press has typically focused on Education Minister Roman Giertych, the honorary chairman of the xenophobic All Polish Youth, known for its hatred of Jews and other so-called foreign elements.

Making sense of the two extremes in Poland is difficult for Jews and non-Jews alike, as was evident at the recent week-long Jewish cultural festival in Krakow, in which Poles paid homage to their former Jewish neighbors whose culture was nearly extinguished by the Nazis and the Communists.

Jan, a 30-something Israeli visitor, said, "I feel confused. It's like they shot us in the head and now they want to dance to our music." He was referring to Poles who collaborated with the Nazis in the 1946 pogrom in the Kielce and a government-sponsored anti-Semitic wave in 1968.

There were about 14,000 people, mostly Poles, at the festival's final jam session, where some of the world's best klezmer bands performed. Many Poles attended because it was a free music event. But out of a dozen attendees interviewed by one reporter, all said they were there because they wanted to learn more about Jews.

Agnieszka, a 27-year-old from the city of Czestochowa, was typical. "I wanted to visit the festival because I am interested in Jewish culture. It's my first time and I am really excited," she said. Asked if she had ever met a Jew she replied, "Not really, but I suspect that some roots of my family belong to Jewish culture. I would like it to be so."

But what about those Poles outside of the touristy Kazmierz district where the festival was held? In the working-class neighborhood of Podgorze, a group of teenagers who looked like poster boys for a skinhead magazine responded amicably to questions about the festival. "Jews are ordinary people," said one tattooed teen. "We have no problems with Jews," noted his shirtless friend. A third shaven-headed young man said that there certainly were anti-Semites in Poland, but added, "Everyone complains that Poland is the worst country. It's not fair." Amid another group of young men, grumpy and hot in the unrelenting Krakow heat, Kamil Kacmarczyk, 19, said, "Jewish people are smart and witty. I love the nation of the Jews. It's not popular to say this, but their extermination was also partly Polish fault."

Further down the main shopping street was Halena Ilinska, 70, who revealed the deep ambivalence of her financially downtrodden generation. "I love the idea of the Jewish festival, I like the songs," she said. But reflecting on Jews, she said, "Politically I don't like them. They have money and can do things with it. We are a poor country and we are made to feel inferior."

Her displeasure was nothing compared to the man who could be dubbed the Jew-hater of Krakow. Sitting on a bench in Podgorze's main square, the 79-year-old conspiracy theorist was smartly dressed. He refused to give his name while letting go a stream of invective: "Jews are so

rich, we are so poor. They take our money. 75% of the Communists were Jews. And now, a lot of the government is Jewish. They don't have Jewish names, but the president is really Jewish." Regarding the Holocaust he said, "Maybe Hitler killed too many of them, but the Jews should have been taught to live like decent people." Significantly, his tirade was made only a few minutes' walk from the ghetto and Plaszow forced labor camp memorialized in "Schindler's List."

Back at the festival, Monika, 19, was dancing to the music of the Mick Jagger of klezmer, David Krakauer. She planned to take the festival's tour of the former Nazi Jewish ghetto "so I could learn what happened to all the Jews who used to live here."

Six decades is a long time for Jews to have to wait for Monika, and not the park bench lunatic, to be the dominant force in Polish-Jewish relations.

But as positive images of Jewish contributions are now more central to Polish education and culture, from the Krakow festival to myriad government-sponsored programs unearthing Jewish history, there is hope that a new generation of Poles will be known for their tolerance instead of their anti-Semitism.

HONORS FOR CAREE'S WEBMASTER

Chris van Donkelaar designed our website (www.caree.info). While he makes his living as a webmaster, because of his interest in CAREE's work, he has been volunteering his services to maintain it for us.

But while Chris is gifted in computer service, his real love is iconography. Since 1996, he has traveled frequently to St. Theodore's House, a Greek Orthodox monastery, where he has received training in iconography. As well, he sought out and received specialized further instruction in working in egg tempura (a preferred medium in much of Orthodox iconography) from a respected artist in England. Along the way, Chris converted to Orthodoxy.

His giftedness as an iconographer led to an invitation to produce a triptych (three large icons) for the chapel of the Hamilton (Ontario) Mission to Seafarers. As well, various individuals and groups have sought him out for icons, which he has produced on commission.

For 2006-2007, he has been appointed Artist in Residence at the Homer Watson House & Gallery, in Kitchener, Ontario. During this time, he is producing icons and interacting with interested visitors and artists. From November 14-17, 2006, he will be further honored by the invitation to present an artist's lecture and mount a week-long iconographer's workshop at the University of Toronto Art Centre.

For further information, check out his website: www.vandonkelaar.ca
Congratulations, Chris!

We have received word from two CAREE members who have recently travelled to Eastern Europe: Paul Crego made a 4th trip to Georgia, and Michael Jones went to Romania. They have promised to write up reports, to appear in this newsletter or be posted on our website.

In 2002, CAREE was one of the sponsors for an interreligious conference in Skopje, Macedonia.

It was designed to bring the five religious organizations (Orthodox, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Jewish, and Methodist) recognized in the Macedonian constitution together, to promote religious dialogue. This was timely, in view of the violence that had broken out in the country between religio-ethnic groups. One of the results of that conference was the establishment of a Council for Interreligious Cooperation, composed of the leadership of the five religious communities. They promised to meet regularly, in the pursuit of peace and reconciliation, and to assist in the endeavor to establish civil society in the country. Paul Mojzes and Jim Payton were among a group who returned to Macedonia in 2004 to follow up on and encourage the work of the ICC. (See reports in *CAREE Communicator*, Summer & Fall 2002 [pp. 2-5, 7-9], and Fall 2004 & Winter 2005 [[pp. 4-6].) After slow beginnings, that council has been meeting regularly, and its efforts have begun to bear rich fruit. This is evident from the following report by Carol Partridge on the Second Inter-Confessional Meeting, held on June 7, 2006, in Tetovo, Macedonia. (She attended with Rev. Mihail Cekov, the leader of the Methodist Church in Macedonia.)

Times Are Changing

Some significant changes are taking place among members of the various religious communities in the Republic of Macedonia. Comments heard at the June 7, 2006 meeting in Tetovo, in northwestern Macedonia, would until now have been unexpected and, in some cases, nearly unbelievable. For example:

“In Islam there is a saying that Islam is the one religion and eventually all must become Muslims. In Christianity, it is the same. This is exclusiveness. Then there is the idea that all religions should blend into one, people becoming one great village. Realistically, we must accept a third principle, that there are different religions; each person is free to find his own. We have a greater chance of happiness if we do the third.”

“A beautiful garden is made up of different flowers; together we can make the most beautiful garden or bouquet”; “May we have the courage to be examples of tolerance and understanding to our followers. If we do this, God will bless our efforts.”

“If we have love, we will be one. This is our future, to love one another”; “I want us to come together as friends, to talk, to exchange phone numbers”; “We must show the EU that we are a culture that works together”; “If we want peace, we must have dialogue among us.”

“All of us our children of one God. Although we speak different languages and have different customs, we are children of one God”; “It is very important that future religious leaders be better informed about other religions. We should all have the opportunity to know each other better and to know the other religions”; “To what extent we ourselves are true believers and how much we live according to what we believe will determine how much we understand and love each other”; “Our actions must agree with our beliefs. We will be known by our acts, not by our words.”

“Drugs, alcohol, prostitution – only we religious leaders have the potential to fight against such evils. Do the Orthodox theologians and Islamic theologians have a different opinion about drugs? No!”

Along with top leaders of the faith communities – Orthodox, Catholic, Methodist,

Islamic, and Jewish – there were representatives from other ranks of religious workers, professors and teachers of theology and lay persons active in their faith communities. More than 125 persons attended; for some it was their first exposure to inter-religious dialogue. One young Muslim man described it as an emotional experience, hearing such desires for peace and cooperation.

The primary topics of discussion were the relationship between politics and religions, and religious education in the schools. Religious education has become a playing card in the hands of politicians as they prepare for coming elections. Much to the surprise of the government, a recent proposal for religious education in the public schools was rejected unanimously by the religious leaders. How was it possible that five diverse faith communities could answer with one voice? It was possible because of meetings such as this one in Tetovo.

Concerns were also voiced about efforts to involve youth in the process of cooperation among religious groups and the inclusion of more women in future discussions.

Discussion continued from 6:00 pm until 9:00 pm, with translation into Albanian and Macedonian. A dinner followed, at which participants were encouraged to sit with people they did not know, members of other faith communities.

In my experience, change is slow to come in Macedonia, but in this area of religious cooperation, we are witnessing an exception. Change is moving quickly and with enthusiasm.