

# CAREE Communicator

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## **DELAYED AGAIN – BUT ONLY DELAYED**

The previous issue of this newsletter indicated I would be sending out this issue sometime in late December or early January. It has been necessary to delay putting the newsletter out, though, due to factors beyond our control. For one thing, we wanted to set up the planned conference and annual meeting so that report could be given on the Macedonian interreligious conference, but when Paul Mojzes and Leonard Swidler returned from the planning meeting in Skopje, they noted that the conference had to be scheduled in May, rather than in March. So, that made us question when to schedule our CAREE conference and annual meeting. Secondly, until a few days ago, we were unsure when the Europe Forum would meet. (Our intention has been, from the start, to schedule our conference so that it could be attended by those who come for that forum meeting.) With that meeting now scheduled, the CAREE executive has been able to determine when to have our conference and annual meeting.

## **MINI-CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL MEETING**

With the shortness of time, we decided to scale back our expectations for a conference and hold a mini-conference – a sort of “warm-up” approach to a fuller conference to be scheduled later, when we can arrange far enough in advance to line up more speakers and to let you know so that many of you can be present.

So, CAREE’s mini-conference and annual meeting will be held on March 4 & 5, 2002, in New York city. We have been invited to join the symposium sponsored by the World Conference on Religion and Peace, to be held at New York University, chaired by Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky, on Monday, March 4, from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. From there we will go to the InterChurch Center, at 475 Riverside Drive, making use of the Reformed Church in America’s conference room for the CAREE and Europe Forum meetings: those will occupy the afternoon of March 4, to dinner-time. We will resume on Tuesday, March 5, at 9:00 am and conclude by 3:00 pm that afternoon. We hope that many of you, even at this late date, will be able to come.

Specific details are still being ironed out: if you want to come, contact Jim Payton via one of the routes on the masthead of this newsletter to get specific information. (Please include your e-mail, fax, and telephone numbers to facilitate this.)

Generally, though, the schedule will work out as follows:

***Monday, March 4***

9:00 am - 1:00 pm – Symposium of the World Conference on Religion and Society

1:00 - 2:00 pm – lunch

2:00 - 4:00 pm – “Interreligious Dialogue in the Balkans” – Paul Mojzes

Paul will present an overview of interreligious dialogue in the region, with special attention to the upcoming dialogue scheduled for May 10-14 in Macedonia. (See below in this newsletter for further information about Macedonia, the dialogue itself, and your opportunity to participate in it.) This is an important venture in the region, and it is sure to elicit discussion among us.

4:00 - 6:00 pm – CAREE business meeting

Reports, election of officers, and plans for the future

6:00 pm – Dinner, at somewhere of our choosing nearby

***Tuesday, March 5***

9:00 - 9:30 am – Morning worship

9:30 - 11:30 am – “Reflections on the 2000 Jubilee Bishops’ Council of the Russian Orthodox Church”

Walter Sawatsky and Charles West will each present a paper on this recent and significant council, which adopted two noteworthy lengthy statements: (1) “The Orthodox Church and Society: The Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church,” and (2) “Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church toward the Other Christian Confessions.” (These statements can be viewed and downloaded from the following websites: [www.russian-orthodox-church.ru/sd003.htm](http://www.russian-orthodox-church.ru/sd003.htm) and [www.russian-orthodox-church.ru/s2000e13.htm](http://www.russian-orthodox-church.ru/s2000e13.htm), respectively).

Both are important documents, in which the ROC bishops directly address issues of significance, not only for the ROC and the Russian nation, but for the ecumenical movement and Russia’s interaction with other nations. We will probably return to these again at a larger conference, for each document offers much to consider.

11:30 am - 12:30 pm – lunch

12:30 - 3:00 pm – Business meeting of the Europe Forum

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**Basic Conference Information**

**CONFERENCE HOTEL:** We have worked out a favorable accommodation rate for conferees at the **Hotel Edison**. (The information is on the last page.) You should contact the hotel directly to arrange your accommodation: the toll-free number (for reservations only) is 800-637-7070. **Please note that you must mention “CAREE” to get the special rate.** (Conferees are welcome, of course, to make arrangements for accommodation elsewhere, if they so choose.) Hotel Edison is just off Broadway, a couple of blocks from Times Square. The quickest way to the InterChurch Center (where the conference will take place) is the subway, only a short walk from the hotel. (Hotel staff can advise you where to catch the subway).

**REGISTRATION:** Since the InterChurch Center is a controlled-access building, we need to give the names of all those who will be attending to the reception desk. Consequently, if you are planning to attend the conference, please advise Jim Payton, the Executive Secretary, no

later than March 1, so that I can put you on the list. Even if you have not yet firmly decided whether you will attend the conference or not, please advise Jim of your interest, so that he can include your name, allowing you access if you come. Get in touch with Jim via my e-mail address (listed on the first page) or regular mail (but note that letters from the U.S.A. to Canada can take as long as a week to arrive).

**CONFERENCE LOCATION:** The conference will be held at the InterChurch Center, 475 Riverside Drive (corner of Riverside Drive and 120<sup>th</sup> Street), New York. If you come by subway, use the IRT #1 or #9 train and get off at the 116<sup>th</sup> Street station. Walk north to 120<sup>th</sup> Street and one block west to Claremont Avenue (where the entrance to the InterChurch Center is). Enter at the door on Claremont Avenue, proceed to the reception desk, and identify yourself; the attendant will have the list of registrants. We will be using a room on the 18<sup>th</sup> floor.

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## **WELCOME BACK, PAUL!**

Many of you know, and all of us in CAREE greatly respect, Dr. Paul Mojzes, who has been a significant leader in CAREE. For the last few years, though, he served Rosemont College as its Academic Dean and Provost, where the constant pressures and busy-ness of administration forced him to cut back on outside involvements, including CAREE. This past summer, he completed his administrative term and returned to regular faculty status. Last November, he advised the CAREE executive that he would soon again be available to participate actively in CAREE activities – and we were, of course, delighted. Paul has been a strong force within CAREE for many years, and we welcome him back to the kind of full-throttle involvement all who know him associate with him. Currently, he is enjoying a well-earned sabbatical, during which he has been vigorously involved in things Eastern European. The following notes reflect some of his activities of the last few months in and for Eastern Europe.

For one, Paul has been a major planner (with Leonard Swidler of Temple University) for the interreligious conference to be held May 10-14, 2002, in Skopje, Macedonia. Paul received the original invitation to set up the conference from the President of Macedonia, Basil Trajkovski. (Details about the dialogue, and about possibilities for you to be involved in it, appear below.)

As well, CAREE provided some funding to enable Paul to participate in “The Belgrade Round Table,” held December 12-15, 2001. His report on that meeting follows:

### ***REPORT OF THE BELGRADE ROUND TABLE December 12-15, 2001 To CAREE leadership and friends***

There were no short organizational names or conference titles related to this event. The Round Table was organized by “The Maribor Initiative” of the Network for Democracy , NGO Human Rights, and Protection of Persons Belonging to Ethnic and Religious Minorities in South-Eastern Europe, which in turn is an activity of ISCOMET, (International Scientific Conference Minorities for Europe of Tomorrow), an NGO enjoying consultative status with the Council of Europe. Maribor is the second largest city of Slovenia, near the Austrian border; “The Maribor Initiative” is headed by

Professor Silvio Devetak and his colleagues from the University of Maribor. During the past several years they have organized 3-4 conferences and round-tables in Slovenia and Serbia and have now ventured to Belgrade. Their next two projects will be a round-table in Timisoara, Romania, and then in Macedonia.

The title of the Round Table deserves some sort of award for its length and comprehensiveness: "Contribution of Religious Communities in FR [Federal Republic of] Yugoslavia to Reconciliation, Respect of Diversity, Democracy, Human Rights, Protection of Minorities, Cooperation and Stability in South Eastern Europe." In other words, all the good stuff was lumped together, possibly in order to appeal to those funding the meeting (among whom were the European Union-Royaumont Process, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, Fund for the Open Society, and Catholic Relief Service).

The Round Table began with a fancy reception in the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup>, with all-day meetings on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> at the large Sava Conference Center in Novi Belgrade, and on the 16<sup>th</sup> an optional visit to worship sites. Approximately seventy people participated, but a good half of these made a shorter appearance at one or another event. Only few were from outside Yugoslavia. In addition to the three Slovenian organizers and Rev. Anton Stress, there were three from Romania, including a Romanian Orthodox bishop from Timisoara (in the archdiocese of CAREE's friend, Metropolitan Nicolae Corneanu); a priest of the Macedonian Orthodox Church from Skopje; Rev. Ruediger Noll, Executive Secretary of Church and Society of the Conference of European Churches; Msgr. Mato Zovkic, auxiliary bishop for ecumenical questions from Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; a representative of the Russian Orthodox Church (who resides in Belgrade); and Ambassador Michael Weninger (an Austrian), who is Counselor of the European Commission in Brussels.

Special greetings were delivered in the name of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarch, the Roman Catholic Cardinals of Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Sarajevo, and the Reis-ul-Ulema of the Bosnian Muslim Community. Among the attendees were Serbian Orthodox Bishops Lavrentije of Sabac-Valjevo and Atanasije of Hvosno, Roman Catholic Bishop of Belgrade, Stanislav Hocevar and his retired predecessor Franc Perko, the Mufti of the Islamic Community of Serbia, Hamdija Jusufspahic, and the Mufti of Sandzhak, Muarem Zukorlic, representatives of the Ministry for Religious Affairs, Lutheran and Reformed bishops, representatives of Jewish, Baptist, Evangelical-Pentecostal churches as well as of academic and theological institutions. All in all, an impressive group.

For me, as the sole guest from the U.S., it was an opportunity to renew contacts with many people with whom I had worked earlier as well as many new people, with at least some of whom I will be able to continue cooperation. Prof. Thomas Bremer, Roman Catholic Theologian from Muenster, who knows the South Slavic scene very well, became sick on the way to Belgrade and had to return home. He and I were to plan a conference on the role of religiously inspired reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to take place in Dubrovnik in the middle of September 2002. Now we'll have to rely on email.

The main topics of the sessions were:

- 1\_ Realization of religious freedoms and rights in the context of restoration and development of democracy and human rights in Serbia and Montenegro and

- settlement of democratic relations between the state and church or religious community.
- 2\_ The role of the church in the plural society and the plural state
  - 3\_ The contribution of churches and religious communities in FRYugoslavia to fostering cooperation between people and nations in South-Eastern Europe with special regard to the area of the former Yugoslavia
  - 4\_ The role of the churches or religious communities in the field of culture, education and media in the sense of affirmation of multiethnic and multireligious societies, and
  - 5\_ Interrelationship between churches or religious communities and the protection of small religious communities.

My own reading is that two topics animated most of the presentations and discussion. One was a certain anti-Communist tone, expressing satisfaction that the time of the oppression and control of religious communities, as well as the recent wars, are over. There seemed to be less consensus as to what is to follow. A number of the Serbian Orthodox participants (e.g., Bishop Lavrentije) placed all the blame for the wars on atheists, maintaining that religious people did not contribute to the war -- an allegation refuted several times by non-religious (or less religious) academics. Likewise the large religious communities (both Orthodox and Catholic) expressed concern over sectarianism (with little clarity as to what this term subsumes), and one of the influential Orthodox academics was quite emphatic that pluralism in Yugoslavia ought to have limits (and that mixed marriages ought to be discouraged). The Serbian Orthodox participants tended to stress return to the past pre-Communist traditions, including those of gender relations.

The second major topic was catechism in public schools. The Serbian government had adopted rather hastily a law which introduces catechism into the schools -- at this point as an elective subject, along with education for citizenship (likewise elective). Students can choose one or the other, both or neither. Representatives of the Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim religions all urged catechism as an obligatory subject, whereas a number of academics preferred the academic study of all religions. No real opposition to catechism in schools was expressed, although minority church representatives were silent on the subject.

During the last session a "Belgrade Declaration" was adopted with minimal discussion as to the substance (and some discussion as to the form -- reminded me of our faculty meetings, but with less obstructionism!). The declaration seemed to go considerably beyond areas of agreement or even what was actually mentioned on the floor. It was prepared by a subcommittee and might have been prepared by someone prior to the Round Table.

My overall impressions of the visit are that many positive changes are taking place. The most positive is that there seem to be real efforts to leave behind the hatred generated by the wars (part of the reason was that Kosovo was not being mentioned and there were no Albanian Muslims present). I detected no acrimony, although the Mufti of Sandzhak expressed some pointed and eloquent criticism about the date of the meeting (the meeting took place during the end of Ramadan and the first day of Bayram) and some general societal discrimination against Muslims.

There is much ambiguity about the U.S., the western world, and NATO. One can definitely feel resentment because of the NATO bombardment. On the other

hand, there are many who boldly (even haughtily) press for changes in the name of joining Europe (the West). There are tremendous political conflicts between the numerous political parties (including the ruling coalition of President Vojislav Kostunica and Serbian Premier Zoran Djindjic), which only points out that the slogan "Only Unity Saves the Serbs" has for most of Serb history been observed in the breach.

I could go on, but at the expense of testing your patience. Let me conclude with a brief summary of some statements by Dr. Chedomir Chupich, professor at the School of Political Science of Belgrade University. He urged that a radical break be made with the tradition in the Balkans to teach revenge to each new generation. It is destructive as well as an impossible moral burden to require of each generation to avenge or right the injustices of the past. Injustices should not be forgotten, but they should not become the task for today, because then one looks only toward the past rather than toward a better future. He also explicitly stated that he is ashamed as a Serb for what was done in their collective name by "Milosevic and Co." If views such as Dr. Chupich's were to become common, one could expect a dramatic improvement in the cultures of the Balkan people.

One of the recommendations was to publish a book about the history and practice of interreligious dialogue, which was proposed by Bishop Lavrentije. This was welcomed and I offered to help out by providing some of the articles published in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*.

To end on a humorous note, Bishop Lavrentije told us a story which illustrates the role of ignorance in religious matters. One day a woman came to him and said, "Bishop, when are we going to get rid of this ecumenism?" When he asked her whether she knew what ecumenism is, she said, "No, but I know it is bad." A cleaning lady at the seminary heard students preparing for an exam about "scholasticism" ("scholastica," in Slavic, is a female noun) and she told the bishop how all night long she dreamed about being choked by the woman "Scholastica."

Lest you dream of me choking you with the report, let me end by thanking CAREE for supporting my attendance at the Belgrade Round Table and wishing that in the New Year we all increase our activities in Eastern Europe.

Respectfully submitted,  
Paul Mojzes

P.S. The Serbian translation of my *Yugoslavian Inferno: Ethnoreligious Warfare in the Balkans*, which was not published because of the NATO intervention in 1999, will apparently be published early in 2002 by the Belgrade publisher "Plato."

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## **INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN MACEDONIA**

The interreligious dialogue in Skopje, Macedonia, to be held among Albanian Muslims, Macedonian Orthodox, and Jews is scheduled for May 10-14, 2002. As indicated in the last *Communicator*, the President of Macedonia, Basil Trajkovski, contacted Paul Mojzes a year ago about possibly having such a conference, as a help

toward settling the situation in Macedonia. Paul has worked with Leonard Swidler to plan the conference.

In addition to Paul Mojzes and Leonard Swidler, others from North America can attend the conference. If you have an interest in attending, contact Paul at [pmojzes@rosemont.edu](mailto:pmojzes@rosemont.edu), or by telephone at (610) 696-8970 (home) or (610) 527-0200 (work), or by letter sent to him at Rosemont College, Rosemont, Pennsylvania 19010. He will inform you of further information and conditions. Aside from your travel costs to Macedonia (and a few dollars for travel costs from the airport), Paul is making arrangements with a hotel: room and three meals a day will be around \$50 (US); there is no additional registration cost for the dialogue.

For those attending, if you would be interested in travelling with other participants in the dialogue to the historic center of Ohrid, let Paul know ahead of time, so that arrangements can be made. Cost for this trip after the dialogue would be additional, but reasonable.

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## **YOUR ACTIVITIES**

We would be happy to post information about your activities in and for Eastern Europe. Please pass on any such information to Jim Payton, via one of the addresses on the masthead.

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## **UPDATES ON EASTERN EUROPE**

Over the last several months, the eyes of the world and the media have been focused almost exclusively on events in Afghanistan. Developments continue apace in Eastern Europe, though. The following items have been culled out of reports from Keston News Service [hereafter KNS], a publication of the Keston Institute

In Kosovo, Serbs have complained that destruction of their historic religious sites continues – and that KFOR forces seem either unconcerned or else powerless to deter such destruction: “According to the Serbian Orthodox Church, Albanian extremists have destroyed or vandalised 108 churches in Kosovo since the arrival of NATO forces in mid-June 1999.... Church representatives ... believe that the attacks are part of a systematic campaign to eradicate Serb Orthodox presence in the province, rather than acts of blind revenge.... Mirjana Menkovic of the Mnemosyne Centre for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Kosovo pointed out to Keston in Belgrade on 24 October that destruction was continuing because the international authorities administering Kosovo had given ‘no signal to the Albanian community that it is unacceptable’” (KNS 27 November 2001).

As well, in Macedonia, “At least 30 religious sites, including churches and mosques, have been destroyed ... in the last three months .... [This period has] seen a series of attacks on Orthodox churches in the region west of Tetovo close to the border with Kosovo, an area mainly inhabited by ethnic Albanians. Mosques in Macedonian-populated areas have also been destroyed” (KNS 11 December 2001).

In reaction to the recent destruction of religious centers, “Boris Trajkovski, the president of Macedonia, pledged his country’s commitment to inter-religious harmony, despite the burning of places of worship. ‘The Republic of Macedonia on the grounds of its tradition will exist as a joint house of different religions and cultures, taking care and respecting the feelings and the religious affiliation of all its citizens’” (KNS 13 December 2001).

This all underlines the importance of the Inter-religious Dialogue planned for Skopje, Macedonia, on May 10-14, 2002.

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### **OF POSSIBLE INTEREST**

The Inter-University Centre Dubrovnik will be offering a course on “The Future of Religion: The Truth in Discourse and Life World,” from April 22-27, 2002. More information (on this course and on other opportunities at the center) can be found at <http://www.hr/iuc>. One of the instructors will be Professor Rudolf J. Siebert of Western Michigan University. Beginning on January 13, 2002, he has been teaching another course in Ukraine, with sessions in Kiev, Simferopol, and Yalta. The course is entitled, “Religion and Politics in Civil Society.”