

velopments since the ban, "shielded behind a barricade of lies, evasions, and false moves, the defense establishment resumed its research and development of war poisons and biologicals." He concludes that the ban "was in the end just a grandstand play, an empty boast, a hollow fraud."

Seagrave acknowledges a need to respond to the Soviet chemical threat. He advocates a small, efficient, and well-equipped strike force on the model of existing counterterrorist units. This would serve to deter Soviet use of chemical weapons without creating larger and more dangerous arsenals of such weapons. It is obvious too that civilians, particularly in NATO countries, are as vulnerable to chemical attack as their armed forces; and Seagrave accepts the view of the far-sighted Swiss and Swedes that in chemical warfare the best offense is a good defense. He argues that the many billions of dollars needed for the contemplated binary stockpile would be better spent for available high-quality protective gear.

This huge new arsenal of binary

weapons—comparatively harmless chemical components kept separate until the weapon is fired—forms the backbone of the Pentagon's response to Soviet chemical warfare. Seagrave rejects creation of a massive stockpile of binaries on the grounds that this approach is likely to replicate past follies. We cannot be certain that our NATO allies would accept these weapons. Furthermore, new concerns about spills, leaks, and explosions will arise, since binary components can be described as "safe" only when compared to the deadliest of toxins. Above all, once there is "a breakdown in the public willpower and resistance to binaries, a philosophical and visceral human safety factor will be gone forever," leaving open the door to "unlimited military development of yet unforeseen poisons...."

In a world already menaced by too many "unforeseen poisons," the moral force of public resistance, applied on an international scale, is likely to be the greatest defense against the irreversible degradation of the planet. [WV]

not only has proved to be, in some areas, an effective countermeasure to religion but also represents a significant change in Soviet tactics and their understanding of themselves. Soviet socialist ritual is being endorsed in a society whose revolutionary spirit had heretofore adamantly opposed ritual and championed rationality.

Fletcher's main task in *Soviet Believers* is to evaluate the Soviet sociological research on religion and then derive from it some general conclusions about the state of religion in the U.S.S.R. today. Western suspicion of Soviet data is not surprising, given the manipulations that were endemic in the Stalinist era. But it can linger too long and hurt more than help Western attempts at gaining greater insights into the inner dynamics of Soviet society. Thus the questions that Fletcher addresses are critical: How reliable are Soviet data, and can Western scholars use them with any degree of confidence? Fletcher concludes that when some relatively apparent weaknesses in Soviet research are taken into account, Soviet data can be used with assurance; they are even essential for achieving a realistic and differentiated appraisal of religion's status in the USSR.

Some of the problems Fletcher identifies are not exclusive to Soviet research, but they do take on a peculiarly Soviet coloration precisely because of the complex Soviet socio-religious context. For example, Soviet researchers, like their Western counterparts, face the task of circumventing their own ideological predilections as they frame their questions and deal with their subjects. As might be expected, Soviet sociologists' sympathies are with the system rather than with religion. But beyond that, Soviet sociologists often have an inadequate understanding of religion and its workings because concrete scholarly research on specific religions was begun only in the '50s and is still incomplete. If any religion is at all familiar to these researchers it is Russian Orthodoxy; and regardless of the religion being studied, the tendency is to couch questions within an Orthodox framework. Fletcher notes that this can be a greater obstacle to the study of minority religions than even the researcher's Marxist-Leninist orientation.

SOVIET BELIEVERS: THE RELIGIOUS SECTOR OF THE POPULATION

by William C. Fletcher

(The Regents Press of Kansas; ix+259 pp.; \$27.50)

THE RITES OF RULERS: RITUAL IN INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY—THE SOVIET CASE

by Christel Lane

(Cambridge University Press; ix+308 pp.; \$47.50/\$14.95)

Judith M. Mills

For obvious reasons there has been great concern in the Western world over the present struggle between religion and atheism in the Soviet Union. These fresh studies document some unexpected turns in that struggle. Because they describe movement and countermovement, the two are interlocking and complementary; together they provide a picture that begins to approach reality. Each uses resource materials that only rarely have been tapped by Western observers, and then never so comprehensively.

Soviet Believers treats the status of conventional religions in Soviet society, using Soviet sociological research on religions and religious practices.

Most of this kind of concrete, data-gathering research by the Soviets has been done only since the late 1950s with the rebirth of sociology as an academic discipline. It serves two purposes. One is information-bearing for both the Soviets themselves and for foreign analysts who cannot gather their own data. The other is purely functional and tactical: To combat religion, which has remained a vital force in Soviet society, the Soviets have to have a more concrete understanding of its specifics.

The Rites of Rulers argues that the Soviet worldview is itself a "political religion," and Lane traces the development of rituals that express and inculcate its tenets. This phenomenon

Yet other problems include the unreliability of the research subjects (some deny belief, fearing reprisals from atheistic rulers; others claim to be believers while the secular nature of their behavior belies it, causing researchers to doubt their veracity); the unavailability of comprehensive national data (in the Soviet case the suspicion is that more could be made available, since congregations must register with the government to be considered legal); and the lack of coordination among research projects. Additional deficiencies stem from the still-developing state of Soviet sociology. Techniques of mathematical analysis often are not wholly adequate, and conclusions sometimes show that the researcher is not fully aware of the complexity and subtlety of the data. But Soviet sociologists do keep abreast of developments in the West and try to enrich their own methodologies accordingly.

The reader of this book will get an arresting sense of the enormity and intricacy of the task of collecting data in this highly complex and differentiated environment. The national and ethnic variations, the number of religions and sects involved, and the varying stages of social development of differing populations make the drawing of general conclusions nearly impossible. Yet Fletcher has drawn conclusions, not only about the percentage of believers in Soviet society, but also about their age, sex, educational level, job status, degree of cultural assimilation and alienation, and extent of participation in religious ritual. And he has been able to do it on the basis of Soviet data. Some will demur at his estimate that as many as 45 per cent of the Soviet population can be considered religious, if only because the definition of "believer" is not firmly fixed—a problem Fletcher discusses at great length. Nor does he take into account the recent introduction of Soviet socialist ritual and its potential impact on religious observance. Nevertheless, Fletcher's work is the most comprehensive and most statistically informed study available on religion in the Soviet Union. It is must reading for anyone who wants to understand this complex and elusive subject.

The Rites of Rulers describes the countermovement, setting it into a

theoretical framework. We learn that Soviet sociological surveys of the 1950s and '60s had shown that Marxism-Leninism was not yet a philosophy of life for a majority of the Soviet population and that religion was still a serious competitor. This prompted the political leadership to support, and then to endorse for national dissemination, secular rituals that had originated in the 1950s in Estonia and Latvia as countermeasures to religious ritual. The dynamic here is not unlike the one that eventuated in the adoption of Socialist Realism as the official literary school. In both cases Party and government stood aside until the temptation became irresistible to use on a broad scale for socializing purposes what had been developed earlier by committed writers and local enthusiasts. The result is a system of rituals that the political elites and ritual specialists hope will revitalize the ideals of Soviet ideology for the population at large.

Lane's study is especially valuable for the detailed descriptions of these rituals, sometimes in several local variations, and also for bringing into sharp relief one aspect of Soviet life that has been largely unknown or ig-

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nored in the West. Some Western analysts with inadequate knowledge of the internal situation have dismissed Soviet ritual as ineffective and as not having taken root. The absolute necessity of working with Soviet sources becomes acutely apparent if the West is to have a realistic understanding of the dynamics of Soviet life.

If the interaction of conventional religious ritual with the new socialist ritual in Estonia and Latvia is an indication of future patterns, it bodes ill for religious ritual. In these Baltic republics there has been a sharp decline in participation in religious rituals. However, the road is not completely clear for the purveyors of the new socialist ritual. There is resistance, for example, in Catholic Lithuania and in the Muslim regions, where conventional religions are still strong. Just as in their research on religion, so too in ritual development the Russians' national bias hampers their work. The dates, timing, and patterns for the new rituals are frequently derived from the Western, especially the Orthodox, traditions and their pagan antecedents. This either brings them into conflict with Muslim traditions or simply empties them of significance. Here there has been minimal acceptance of the new rituals.

Lane's book is a true counterpart to Fletcher's. Where one evaluates the strength of religion among the various populations, the other evaluates the strength of socialist ritual among them. At the moment, the combat seems to be even. Lane notes that Christian and Muslim ritual, often overlaid on earlier pagan practices, has become ingrained in the cultures over centuries. The new socialist rituals are scarcely twenty years old. Time, the increasing secularization of modern societies, and the power behind Soviet cultural management would seem to favor the growth in significance of socialist ritual.

Lane's study concludes with some notes that compare ritual in different types of societies. There are intimations of a new book percolating in this last chapter, and one hopes there *will* be one, since the present volume as well as Lane's earlier study on Christian religions in the Soviet Union are both landmark contributions. [WV]

FROM MY LIFE
by **Erich Honecker**
(Pergamon Press; n.p.; \$24.00)

A. James McAdams

The autobiographies of Communist leaders, and especially those still in power, always have been difficult to evaluate. They are filled with dogmatic pronouncements, self-serving explanations of events, and simplistic conceptions of history and politics. Embarrassing experiences from the past—for example, the Stalin purges—often are treated as nonevents, while contemporary life under communism is depicted in the rosiest of lights. Erich Honecker's autobiography is on the whole no exception to the rule. This self-portrait of the East German head of state is unabashedly flattering: From his early years he is the dedicated Communist, consumed only by a desire for peace and social justice; he struggles against the fascists, is imprisoned, yet survives the war to play a central role in the formation of the East German state; today he yearns only to foster a better, more humane life for his people under socialism. Through it all Honecker can do little wrong.

Nevertheless there is something to be gained from reading such personal statements. Honecker's autobiography provides a great deal of information about life and politics under communism; one just has to know where to look for it. Honecker's account is a good source of impressions about the appeal of communism in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, about the opportunities for "sacrificial heroism" that the movement provided to scores of idealistic German youth, especially in the struggle against National Socialism. Honecker's story is particularly helpful in capturing the seemingly mystical power Soviet Russia exercised over the international movement and over the minds of its followers, a power so great that communism and the USSR became virtually indistinguishable. "For me too," Honecker writes in recounting his first trip to Moscow, "the country of Lenin was my fatherland, its party my party, its youth organization my youth organization."

He also provides an interesting slant on the growth of communism in his own country after the Second

World War, the challenges of reconstruction, and the problems of nation-building in a divided Germany. Significantly, Honecker is not afraid to address some of the better-known difficulties that East Germany faced in its early years. With regard to the workers' revolt of June, 1953, for example, he even admits that much of the popular discontent that led to the uprising was caused by his own government's errors and weaknesses. Only later was this discontent exploited by "counter-revolutionary agitators." Honecker's treatment of the building of the Berlin Wall is also noteworthy because of his relative frankness about both the social and economic problems that made it necessary to stop the flight of East Germans to the West. His account of the deliberations preceding the barrier's construction is especially valuable. Honecker himself led the battalions that built the Wall, and he puts on record for the first time the day-to-day events and considerations that prompted the East German leadership to risk dividing the city of Berlin.

Honecker's book is also useful for understanding current affairs. We get a strong sense of East Germany's priorities in aiding the country's development. The East German elite, like the leaders of all socialist states, is obsessed with economic and technological growth, with raising productivity, and with—as they put it—"meeting the socialist Plan." Yet what also emerges from Honecker's account is that these are not just ends in themselves but means for bettering the country's international image and proving the efficacy of socialism in action. So much of what the East Germans do, whether in sports, science, cultural matters, or economics, is geared toward raising "the esteem of our socialist state and gaining us respect abroad." To understand this point we must remember that for many years the East Germans were almost totally ostracized by the Western world. Only in the last decade have they been able to assert themselves outside of the socialist camp; and—judging from their achievements in politics, economics, and athletics—they have done this with a vengeance.

Here and there Honecker gives us a good idea of some of the major problems the East Germans face, at