



# NEW WORLD NEWS

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## RUSSIAN DISSIDENTS LIGHT FLAME IN DARKNESS

TWO PROMINENT Russian dissidents paid tribute last week to the work of Norwegian artist Victor Sparre in the struggle for freedom in the Soviet Union. They were speaking at the press launching of *The Flame in the Darkness*, a book by Victor Sparre on the dissident movement.

'It's a marvellous book,' said Vladimir Bukovski, who after years in and out of Soviet labour camps and psychiatric hospitals was exchanged for the Chilean Communist leader Luis Corvalan in 1976. 'His

understanding of inner freedom helps him understand how to help us.'

Vladimir Maximov, author of *The Seven Days of Creation* and editor of *Kontinent*, described the impact Sparre's concern had made on him when they had met in Moscow in 1973, at a time of bitter attack against the dissidents. 'Now when I fall into despair—and I do so here, as much as when I was in the Soviet Union, in the face of human deafness and the inability to understand—I remember Victor and people like him. While

such people walk the earth we must go on working.' Mr Maximov has written the foreword to *The Flame in the Darkness*.

At the press conference, attended by many journalists whose concern is the Soviet Union, the three men announced that a third 'Sakharov Hearing' would take place in the United States later this year. It will deal with conditions of labour in the Soviet Union. Mr Sparre spoke too of what he had learnt from the dissidents. 'The problems of

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## Archbishop welcomes Columba

LAST MONTH IN NORTH WALES the turbulent life and times of St Columba were re-enacted in a Cathedral founded by one of his Celtic contemporaries.

The Cathedral Church of St Deiniol in Bangor, established in the year 546, provided the setting for the opening of a new production of *Columba* by the Adamnan Players. The play, by Juliet Boobyer and Joanna Sciortino, tells the story of the Celts' contribution to the making of Christian Europe.

'So true to history and so relevant to today,' commented the Archbishop of Wales, Dr G O Williams. 'What a marvellous way to proclaim the gospel.' The Archbishop, who sponsored the play's visit to Bangor, was attending a matinee performance for schools. With him was Dr J A Davies, Principal of the Bangor Normal College and co-sponsor of the invitation.

Host to the cast for their three performances in the Cathedral was the Dean of Bangor, Ivor Rees. Among those seeing the play were the Mayor of Bangor and her husband, Dr Christie.

Joining the cast in this production were professional actors Kevin Scott (who plays Columba), John Locke and actress Vendela Löfgren came from Sweden to take part.

The play's visit to Bangor was featured on the front page of the North Wales edition of the *Liverpool Daily Post*. A picture story in the *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald* said

the play provided 'strong links with the days when all the Llans (early churches) of Wales were established'. From Bangor the play moved to Colwyn Bay and Wrexham.

Asked in an interview on BBC Wales' Sunday morning programme 'This is the Day' why Columba was chosen as the subject of a play, director Elisabeth Tooms spoke of the fascination of Columba's character. 'He was at the heart of the beginnings of our nation and of our heritage,' she said.

Questioned about the distinctive music of the play, Miss Tooms spoke of composers Elaine Gordon of Ireland, Duncan Morrison of Scotland and Hawys Glyn James of Wales as contributing to its 'truly Celtic flavour'.

A Franciscan nun who saw the play in Bangor came again to Colwyn Bay. 'I just couldn't keep away,' she explained. A man active in civic life said, 'I am going away a

new man.' A Welsh minister described the play as 'a weapon for reconciliation'. Bangor has recently seen considerable friction over the Welsh language issue.

Mainly responsible for the invitation to Wrexham were Welsh Presbyterian Minister Pryderi LLwyd Jones and Welsh Congregational Minister W Efon Powell, who is President of the Wrexham Council of Churches.

Roman Catholic nuns from the Bishop's House spoke as eagerly of the 'inspiration' the play had brought them as the Welsh nonconformists who helped fill the ultra-modern Regent St Methodist Church. Ministers came from as far as Dolgellau, Bala and Carwen to be present.

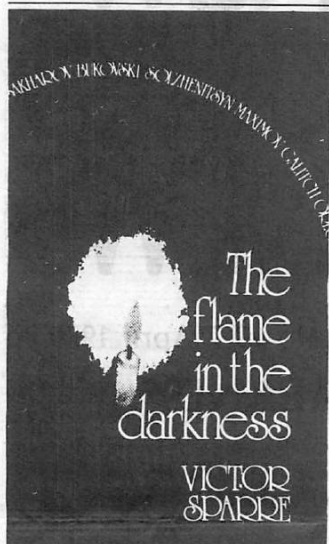
A pamphlet in Welsh on the life of Columba was printed especially for the North Wales tour.

**TEPW**



Scene from *Columba* at Wrexham

## OTHERWISE THINKER



WHEN SOLZHENITSYN found himself exiled and deposited at Frankfurt, the first thing he decided to do was to go to Norway to see Victor Sparre. He gave instructions that Sparre should be the only person to meet him on arrival there.

Then followed three hectic days, dodging the press and hurtling round Norway looking for a house. The friendship between the two men, bred in Sparre's long distance fight to help Solzhenitsyn at the time of his expulsion from the Writers' Union and since, ripened, and in his book Sparre paints the great

man—as well as many other leading dissidents—with an artists' eye for colour, detail and character.

Solzhenitsyn—himself barred from writing for so many years—could not understand how Sparre could bear not to paint for three whole days. 'What makes you, a busy Norwegian painter, such a persistent fighter for the freedom of my country?' he demanded.

'Because I believe that the rebirth of faith will come from those who have suffered most,' replied Sparre. It was a partial answer, and this book is, amongst other things, a fuller one. What he did not tell Solzhenitsyn at the time was that, at one point, he had put aside his brushes not for days, but for two years, in order to get the experience and training in faith which makes him an effective fighter today.

### Dangerous

Sparre first tells of the adventures into which helping the Russians has led him. He was refused a visa to Russia, but went as one of a package-tour party, breaking free for evenings in the homes of the Sakharovs and of Galitch, the troubadour of the resistance, of whose songs a million tapes are circulating in the Soviet Union. 'Are you a believer?' was Galitch's first question as he opened the door, and Sparre soon found that while Western intellectuals often turn to atheism, more and more Russian artists and scientists are turning to faith.

He gives a full account of the battle to obtain the Nobel Peace Prize for Sakharov,

in which he had a major part, and of the 'Sakharov Hearings' in Copenhagen; of Mrs Sakharov's visits to Italy and to Norway; and of his and his wife's reception in their home of other 'otherwise-thinkers', as the dissidents call themselves, like Bukovski, Sin-yavski, and Leonard Plyushch. Of all of these—and many others—perceptive portraits emerge, as well as an understanding of the moral and spiritual revolution which, they believe, will in the end bring freedom to Russia.

Sparre answers Solzhenitsyn's pregnant question more fully in a brief autobiographical chapter and another about his art, which he aims to make 'dangerous to evil'. He tells of his liberty-loving family, the faith they found when Frank Buchman came to Norway, his own enlistment in the resistance against the Nazis, his struggle to become a Christian and relevant artist at a time when most art was Marxist—in fact of his continuing fight for independence, faith and artistic integrity. 'All these', he writes, 'brought me to the conclusion, which I later found to be held by so many Russian dissidents, that inner freedom comes from following your inner conviction, wherever it leads—and that, when you do that, revolutionary things happen.'

The book is beautifully produced, with excellent photographs, and a cover incorporating one of Sparre's pictures. High praise is due to the brothers Alwyn and Dermot McKay, who have translated Sparre from the Norwegian and helped in many ways in the creation of this unique and powerful book.

GARTH LEAN



'Russia Awakes' painted by Victor Sparre in 1974. On the left is the group he met in the flat of Andrei and Elena Sakharov when he visited Russia. That meeting, he writes, 'changed my life for the second time. The first change had given me a faith; this second bound my life for ever to a band of men and women. I decided then and there that for the rest of my life, to the best of my ability, I would serve in their struggle for freedom.'

## Solzhenitsyn— 'devastating but constructive'

PRINCE CHARLES, speaking last week in Australia, emphasised the contribution that Solzhenitsyn has made to the West. Describing his lecture at Harvard University last year as 'devastating but constructive', Prince Charles said, 'I doubt that Solzhenitsyn is exaggerating when he talks about a decline in courage being possibly the most striking feature which an outside observer notices in the West in our days.'

Quoting from the lecture that 'whenever the tissue of life is woven of legalistic relations there is an attitude of moral mediocrity paralysing man's noblest impulses,' Prince Charles went on:

'It is clear, I think, that we have neglected the moral factor in man. Karl Marx assumed that the goodness of man would assert itself automatically when the economic changes had been achieved, but he did not see that a better society could not be brought into life by people who had not undergone a moral change within themselves.'

'I consider it now essential to consider the human aspects and to examine industrial society from the standpoint of what it does to the human qualities of man, to his soul and his spirit.'

## WHOSE CHRIST?

Norwegian television carried a 40 minute programme on Sparre's work on the day he came to Britain. In this extract from his earlier book *Stenene skal rope* (the stones cry out) he tells of the making of one stained glass window:

A NEW CHURCH had been dedicated. In the middle of the celebrations afterwards an elderly lady stood up and broke in with an authoritative voice, 'While the artist is present, let me say that when I came into the church today and saw the big picture of Christ over the altar, I said to myself, "That is not my Christ".'

There was dead silence. I rose not knowing what to say. I stammered, 'It is not my Christ, either.'

A house of God must never be conventional. People should not meet what they expect, for they expect too little. On the other hand, there are artists who confront churchgoers with such a strikingly original and personal interpretation of the Bible that one feels that it would be more at home in an art gallery than in a church.

### Glass and cement

As I worked on the eight-metre-high crucifix for this church, I went through a personal crisis that was connected in a remarkable manner with the great task. The person I am closest to in life is an independent person who in a great many respects looks at things differently from me. It is precisely this quality in her that gives me joy, but it has taken time to understand it.

It has always been important for me to get others to look at everything just as I do. I often deceive myself by saying that I am fighting for the truth, when in reality I am



Translators Dermot (left) and Alwyn McKay with Victor Sparre at the Westminster Theatre, London. Alwyn McKay is a nuclear scientist, while Dermot, now in commerce, trained at the Slade school of art. 'Like all courageous defence of values,' says Dermot, 'the heroic stand for truth and freedom of the Russian scientists and artists is ultimately for all mankind and all mankind should know about it. This is why we have translated this book.'

out to dominate others. Every person is an original work of art. And the most valuable of human rights is the right to be ourselves. When we try to take that freedom from anyone, we crucify Christ anew.

The crucifix had been made by a technique new to Norway in which the glass is cut and cast in reinforced concrete. A trial casting was made of the head crowned with thorns, and was a complete failure. That meant I would have to go all out to complete the work so that the church could be ready in time. In this situation I was helpless. It was no longer any use forcing my will on the glass or on other people. I had to pray for help.

The day came when the most important part of the cross should be cast. A heap of coloured pieces of glass, a steel frame, and a dark puddingy mass of cement—could all this glide together to form a whole? Could a head of Christ emerge from this material—a

head suffering from a crown of thorns but surrounded by a light of hope?

The casting is a difficult part of the process because the pieces of glass easily get displaced, and because one cannot know with any certainty whether one has cut the right pieces until the cement has set and one can see the final result.

After some days the time of waiting was over, and the plate of glass and cement could be lifted up against the light. Everything seemed to have been switched around. The glass had shifted, not a single thing was as I expected, and yet—yet it was the head of Christ, deeply scorned, as He said, 'It is finished.'

The Christ Who stepped out of the glass and concrete was not the Christ I had imagined. He was not my interpretation of Christ. But He approached something I could dare to call a picture of Christ Himself.

## Lost in the gold rush

WHAT IS the relationship between democratic freedom and the moral and spiritual freedom of which the dissidents speak? To what extent can we achieve political freedom as an end in itself—or is it the by-product of something much deeper?

Such questions will be discussed during the session hosted by the peoples of the British Isles at the MRA Assembly at Caux, Switzerland, from 5-19 August. One of the themes of the session will be 'What future and what price for freedom?'

British housewife and playwright Juliet Boobbyer explains why this topic has been chosen. 'The dissidents found complete freedom in the Russian prison camps, where everything had been taken away from them and they came face to face with the truth,' she says. 'In the West as we rush after gold—like Midas—we see the freedoms we love and inherit dying. But the experience of inner freedom—the truth that sets you free—is not restricted to the prison camp. It is available to anyone who will pay the price. Caux is there to help people find it.'

### FLAME contd from p1

the world are so complicated they can only be solved through the individual. All the theories have failed—capitalism or socialism or whatever. The answers have got to come first through individuals. That is what these men are demonstrating.'

During the following days Mr Sparre brought his verve and insight to a great variety of occasions. He broadcast on the BBC Russian service, which is listened to widely in the Soviet Union. He spoke on Radio Oxford and Radio Medway, and to audiences in Oxford, Cambridge and other centres.

At the Westminster Theatre, addressing 400 people, he spoke of his belief in a rebirth of the spirit of Britain. 'I have a sense here of people on the offensive,' he said.

'I am grateful to meet your new British citizens. You have a great richness here.

'I believe that each of you must see who you are, and respect the way God has created you, so that each becomes what he or she is called by God to be.

'God is a great artist. He does not repeat himself. The dissidents see this. They have

got tired of conformity. They have learnt the inner freedom to live creatively.

'When you start to be absolutely free, you don't accept what others say, you start to find out the truth for yourself. There is a spiritual force that we can be directed by, that we can listen to and follow. Everyone can work this out and experience it for himself.'

JCB

### THE FLAME IN THE DARKNESS by Victor Sparre

Hardback £4.95pp

Paperback £2.15pp

Cassette of highlights from the book's launching £2.70pp available soon

Full colour lithographs by Victor Sparre  
Sjeransky and Ginsburg on the road to  
Emmaus; The Bridge over Russia  
54cm x 44cm £50

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## SOUTHERN AFRICA Radical remotivation

THE PRESIDENT and members of the Cabinet of BophutaTswana, South Africa's newest state, were hosts to a Moral Re-Armament programme in the capital, Mmabatho, earlier this month.

Manasseh Moerane, former editor of the African newspaper, *The World*, introduced the film *Freedom* to a crowded audience of Members of Parliament and the administration, in the caucus room of Parliament. Mr Moerane, who was interviewed on Radio BophutaTswana, was one of those who wrote and acted in the film, which tells of the struggles of a country approaching independence. On the following evening Mrs Mangope, wife of the President, was hostess to a packed house for another MRA film.

A group of students from Atteridgeville, the African township near Pretoria, undertook a programme in the schools and colleges culminating in a meeting with 300 from the Student Christian Movement of BophutaTswana's three leading educational institutions.

As young radicals—some of whom had been in detention—the students had not found it easy to go to a homeland which, they felt, had fallen in with South African Government policy by opting for independence. They had decided to go to BophutaTswana not because they supported her policies, but to help people find the remotivation which they believe is essential to change in all parts of South Africa.

The visitors stayed in the homes of President and Mrs Lucas Mangope and some of the Cabinet. Chief Mangope urged further action of this sort in his country, and asked for the showing of another MRA film.

HJBH

## MALTA Russian question

MALTA has been host to the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) during the past six weeks. While the 35 nations worked for agreement on concrete projects for co-operation in the Mediterranean, a group of young Maltese were holding a series of seminars on how the ordinary man and woman can help to bridge the gaps which are dividing our world.

Among the overseas guests invited to speak at these seminars were Frank Ledwith, Director of a shipping insurance firm, Elizabeth Bradburn, lecturer in education,

Liverpool University, and John Chiddell, a retired senior civil servant from Whitehall.

MRA films were used to illustrate the problems and their solution. Lively discussions ensued. Was it necessary to be 'a believer' to apply Moral Re-Armament in the political field, asked a Russian journalist after seeing *The Dictator's Slippers*, which deals with power and freedom in a totalitarian state.

During the discussions it emerged that honesty was the only firm basis for unity. This always involves change and often involves apology. Forgiveness, if practised, would be a powerful political force. The only place to start applying these principles was with yourself. IMS

## SRI LANKA Democracy—not just elections

A PAMPHLET, *Prospects for Democracy in Asia*, has just been published. It is a report of the MRA seminar on democracy held at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, Colombo, in January, and opened by the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, R Premadasa. Here we print some extracts.

'Are you able to put yourself in someone else's shoes? If democracy is a civilised way of life, which it is, then it follows that you have to have the readiness to wear the other man's shoes and look at a problem from his angle.

'Who is your brother? Is he the man who speaks your language? Is he the man who is in your religion? Is he the man who is in your

trade union? Is he the man of your race? Or are you prepared to extend the horizons of your concern? If democracy is to succeed we will have to grow step by step into the conception that the world is my family.'

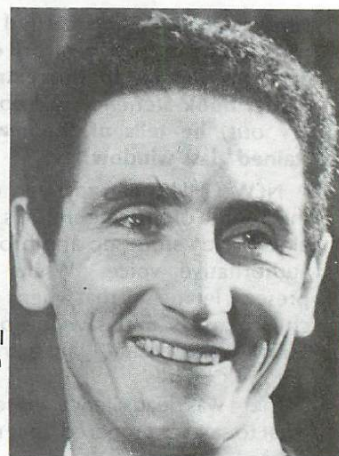
RAJMOHAN GANDHI, India

'Democracy for me does not today mean just elections every four or five years when we elect a member of parliament and then we transfer all our rights to the member of parliament and retain only one right: the right to criticise him. The future prospects of democracy in Asia will depend on how every one of us is committed, at the individual level and in society. And only then can we secure allegiance and commitment for the basic freedom that democracy provides.'

K HARIDAS, Malaysia

'*Prospects for Democracy in Asia*' available from Grosvenor Books, price 54p inc. p&p.

## One man Francis



Michel Orphelin

REHEARSALS BEGIN this month for *Poor Man, Rich Man*, a one man show based on the life of St Francis of Assisi. Written for French mime artist and singer Michel Orphelin, it will open at the Netherbow Arts Centre, Edinburgh, on 11 June.

'St Francis poses a drastic alternative to the acquisitiveness of the "Consumer Society",' writes playwright Hugh Steadman Williams. 'He had a revolutionary approach to property, money and possessions and a profound respect for the natural environment. All creation was, to him, God's creation, of which man was just a part. Perhaps the nearest modern parallel would be found among the North American Indians.

'His genius was to apply the teachings of the gospels totally—so completely that it takes one's breath away. The leader of the most successful movement of his day, he convinced his colleagues by the force of his self-sacrificial life rather than by the force of argument. He turned the values of his age upside down and poses a considerable challenge to ours.'

Kathleen Johnson composed the music for the show's twenty original songs, and the story is told through mime and monologue as well as visual projections and sound tapes. It will be directed and designed by John Dryden, who directed *One Friday* and *Love All* at the Westminster Theatre.

From Edinburgh the show will visit Cardiff, Tewkesbury, Bridgwater and Bristol, ending with a matinee at the Westminster Theatre, London, on 24 June. Michel Orphelin will perform the show at Caux, Switzerland, at the beginning of the World Assembly there this summer, and return to the Netherbow for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. The show will be presented by Westminster Productions in association with MRA.

Production costs are estimated at £7,500 and have been promised by 'Enterprise 100', a group of ladies who raise money for plays of this sort through individual pledges to find £100. Already five have taken on such pledges for this production.