

"Scientific Atheism" clouds Ukrainian landscape

by John Kenney



Reverend Michael Bourdeaux.

"There is no concept of religious freedom as a whole in the Soviet Union - there is only religious worship," claimed a visiting speaker at a university lecture Tues. night.

The speaker, Reverend Michael Bourdeaux, is director of the Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism at Keston College, England and a recognized authority on religion in the Soviet Union.

He spoke to about 150 people gathered in Tory TL-II on the topic "Religion and Human Rights: The Case of the Soviet Ukraine."

According to Bourdeaux, the legal status of religious worship in the Soviet Union was established by Stalin with Law Under Religious Associations (1929).

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church was then completely abolished and left with no legal status from a law passed in 1946.

"The Ukraine, despite the extreme restrictions on religion imposed by Soviet laws has, through the centuries, maintained an intense religious life," said Bourdeaux.

Half of the remaining Orthodox churches were closed down under Krushchev and only nine of 38 Ukrainian monasteries survive. "There hasn't been a recognizable part of the Ukrainian Orthodox (Autocephalous) Church since the end of WW II," he said.

Apparently, those persons who try to arrange religious education or publish a religious tract are arrested and jailed for breaking religious laws.

"There are persons in the Ukraine, not less than 82, on whom we have extensive files who are in Soviet prison for breaking religious laws," Bourdeaux said. "These are not just ordinary men - these are 82 leaders."

Bourdeaux testified that some monks were imprisoned for the reason that they couldn't move (all the while restricted by the law) and so were sent to prison or committed as mental patients.

Bourdeaux told the audience that anti-religious museums travel the country to spread "scientific atheism." It is a compulsory course in all colleges in the Ukraine and there is a scientific atheism club with 575,000 members in the Ukraine.

"Trends would seem to be that faith of these Ukrainian Catholics is strengthening. I don't believe the Soviet Union would spend the money if there wasn't something there" commented Bourdeaux.

In response to an audience member question Bourdeaux outlined the links between state and church. "I'm not suggesting that all priests are communist plants," he said, "but at the highest levels where the appointments of a diocese or an

international position come up... people in this position are every bit as responsible to the state as they are to the church and

perhaps even a bit more so (responsible to the state)."

The lecture will be broadcast on QCTV on Oct. 10 at 4 p.m.

None of these activities are ever described as an anti-religious attack, continued Bourdeaux, but as breaking the law.

All citizens are issued a passport with the place or origin written into it with the provision that the citizen is to stay in the area designated.

Sneak freak preview

SAN FRANCISCO (ENS-CUP) - The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers, those dope-smoking underground comix characters, will finally find their way onto the silver screen. Producer Paul Badu and Richard Dupell say, early next year, they will begin filming the Freak Brothers in *Gone With the Weed*.

The story will involve the brothers' efforts to remain high, while avoiding the ever-present Norbert the Nark. The feature-length film is tentatively set for release next fall.

The Freak Brothers film will feature live actors, rather than animation.

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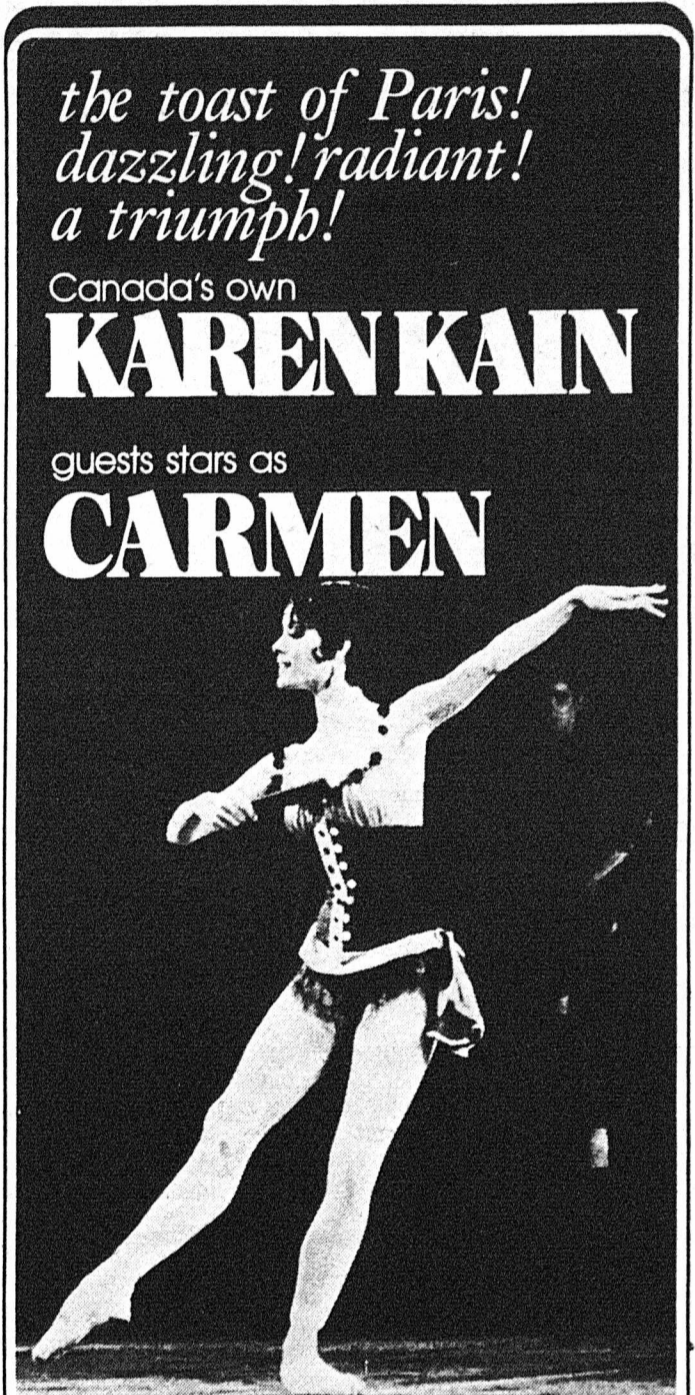
Information concerning Jackson Hole Dec 18-24 can be obtained here.

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