

Reports

News from the Centre

THE PAST YEAR

Writing the last instalment of News for 1973, I naturally look back over the first year in which the CSRC has been in a position to undertake a few of the many tasks which confront it. It is a year during which the work has moved forward more rapidly than any of us would have dared hope at the end of 1972. And in taking the opportunities which have confronted us, we have not ceased to insist on the solid foundations which we believe must undergird any such enterprise, if it is to be pleasing in the sight of God.

The year began with the first Annual General Meeting on 5 January, at which I was able to announce that a basic budget for a nucleus staff was now secure and that our "first-phase" appeal target had been achieved with the last post of 1972. That post brought something better than a promise of money: it was the promise of a man who would work on assignment with us for three years, seconded by the Mennonite Central Committee (Akron, Pennsylvania). Walter and Margaret Sawatsky arrived from Canada with their small daughter on 3 October, and in welcoming them to our work, we know they bring an important contribution to the CSRC. We have much research for Walter to do, and in addition he and his family are keen to meet our supporters and move around the country on various speaking assignments which Walter will undertake. We hope those who invite them will ask them to come as a family.

Throughout the year we have been faced with more work than was humanly possible to complete. The fact that we successfully launched this journal and have not fallen too far behind on other work was due to the loyalty of the growing permanent staff, marvellously aided by some others who have helped on short-term assignments during periods of special stress. We hope to make one more permanent appointment soon to replace Katharine Murray, who leaves our full-time employ at Christmas. This is for the best of all reasons—she is expecting her first baby in March. As she and David live close by, we hope to continue to see much of them. Katharine has been busy these last few months on a book about young people and religion in the Soviet Union which Marshall, Morgan and Scott are to publish in 1974.

Another undertaking to be completed shortly is a book containing the major writings of Anatoli Levitin. Far less well known than he should be, Levitin should be seen after this book as a talented writer, an outstanding Christian and a fearless human rights activist, a man of far greater importance than some of the cult figures of human rights today. Sheldon Press (S.P.C.K.) have given us the opportunity to accomplish something I have long wished to see done. Because of the generosity of the Harold Buxton Trust, we were able to put some extra finance into this book and secure the services as editor of Mikhail Meerson-Aksenov, who, until he left the Soviet Union earlier this year, was a close friend and disciple of Levitin himself.

I have personally been kept away from writing far more than I had hoped by administrative responsibilities and the obligation to travel almost constantly. This was necessary for the development of our work internationally – and it is likely to continue through 1974. The Royal Institute of International Affairs has been most understanding in all this. It has paid half my salary for the past two years. I now leave it with gratitude, but with the intention of finishing my writing for Chatham House before too long.

DEVELOPMENT

This, however, brings me to a key announcement about the future of CSRC. The administrative burden has for some time been well-nigh intolerable and it is likely to increase. The Council, therefore, took the decision that someone must be found to share this with me, to release me once again for some of my own research. The person has been found in the best possible place – within our own Council. Peter Fahy, by the time these words are in print, will already have taken over the office of Deputy Director, initially on a part-time basis. All those who know him will realize that the CSRC is a very fortunate body indeed.

Peter will have much to confront him – but the challenge will be exciting for everyone in any way connected with our work. The CSRC is quite clearly developing as an international organization and to respond to the immense opportunities we now urgently need permanent premises – an International Centre.

We have found a possible site – the Church of England Primary School at Keston, to be vacated as soon as the new school building is completed. We are now reviewing the financial possibilities of acquiring the freehold and converting it to suit our own particular needs, bearing in mind the increasing number of students who want to come to us.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMME

- Dec. 3 at 10.30 a.m. Director at Ipswich Ministers' Fraternal.
at 8.15 p.m. Director at Holy Trinity, Northwood, Middlesex (showing of film *The Bitter Cup*).
- 4 at 8.00 p.m. Lecture (private) to Rochester diocesan priests' retreat at Graham Ghiesman House, Chislehurst, Kent.
- 7 at 7.15 p.m. Sir John Lawrence on "Church and Society in the Soviet Union" at Pushkin House, 46 Ladbrooke Grove, London, W.11.
- 9 at 6.30 p.m. Walter Sawatsky at Merrow Parish Church, Guildford, Surrey.
- 16 at 6.30 p.m. Walter Sawatsky at Holy Trinity, Hounslow.
- Jan. 4-5 Director and Peter Fahy in Holland for various consultations.
- 11 & 13 Special day of prayer for Christians in Eastern Europe. Various societies have decided to mark this day, in response to a direct request from the Soviet Union. Sunday 13 provides an opportunity for special prayers and preaching in church. The CSRC will provide literature and help upon request and hopes that parishes will take this opportunity of supporting its work.
- 14 at 7.30 p.m. Walter Sawatsky at University of Lancaster (contact Mr. T. C. B. Timmins at St. Martin's College).
- 15 at 8.00 p.m. Director at the United Reformed Church, Portsmouth Rd., Guildford, Surrey.
- 18 at 7.00 p.m. CSRC second AGM at Foxbury, Kemnal Road, Chislehurst, Kent. Transport will be provided from Chislehurst Station (upon notification). The evening begins with supper at 7 p.m. The rest of the weekend (19 and up to lunch on 20) will be devoted to the first residential conference of the Centre in the London area. There are still places open at £6 per person, payable on booking. Foxbury is the spacious and delightful conference centre run by the Church Missionary Society and all those who come will be given the fullest opportunity to share in the thinking and planning for the future of the CSRC, as well as learning about the Soviet Union.

- 26 Xenia Howard-Johnston speaks to the Christian Union, Bangor University.
- 27 at 8.00 p.m. Xenia Howard-Johnston speaks at St. Martin's, Trafalgar Square, London.
- 27 at 11.00 a.m. Director at Farringtons School, Chislehurst, Kent.
- 28 at 5.45 p.m. Walter Sawatsky at Trinity College, Stoke Hill, Bristol.

MICHAEL BOURDEAUX

Conferences

A number of conferences of interest to CSRC were held in Europe this summer. Two of particular importance, at which Rev. Michael Bourdeaux was present, took place in Italy and Switzerland respectively. The first, at the end of August, called together a number of people involved in work on behalf of Christians in Russia. Among those present were Professor Nikita Struve of Paris, author of *Christians in Contemporary Russia*; Mrs. Irina Poznova, director of the publishing-house "La Vie avec Dieu" in Brussels; Dr. Nadezhda Teodorovich of Munich, editor of the monthly publication in Russian and German, *Religion and Atheism in the USSR*. The conference benefited from the participation of Mikhail Meerson-Aksenov, a recent émigré from the Soviet Union and a close friend and disciple of Anatoli Levitin. Meerson-Aksenov was able to share a great many fascinating and often amusing experiences and insights about Christian life in Russia today. Himself a Russian Orthodox Christian, he had friends among Baptists and Pentecostals in Moscow. Participants considered the present state of the churches in the USSR and practical ways of communicating with Christians in that country.

The discussions were continued at the second conference, which took place a week later in the beautiful old Swiss town of Chur thanks to the invitation of the Roman Catholic bishop of Chur. This conference was called by our Swiss colleague, Rev. Eugen Voss (see *RCL* 4/5, p. 61) and brought together a wide range of individuals involved in publishing, mission, research, etc. Among those present were Dr. Alexander Steininger, editor of the learned journal *Osteuropa*; Ingemar Martinson, head of the Slavic Mission in Stockholm; Valery Tarsis, exiled Soviet writer now working at the Swiss East Institute in Bern; Dmitri Panin, Soviet émigré and friend of Solzhenitsyn; Dr. Hans Heibly of the Inter-University Institute for Missiology and Ecumenism in Utrecht; Rev. Blaho Hruby, editor of the New York publication *Religion in Communist Dominated Areas*; Dr. Albert Boiter, head of research at Radio Liberty, Munich.

The second conference also discussed various aspects of the present situation of religion in Eastern Europe, and underlined the need for greater communication and cooperation between groups working in this field. Some concrete proposals were made to further such cooperation. The conference included a public meeting in Chur, which was well attended. It is hoped that a single conference next year—possibly in Holland—will draw together all the groups represented here, and others not present on these occasions.

Abolition of Torture

Amnesty International, a non-aligned organization working for the release of prisoners of conscience all over the world, has launched a campaign for the abolition of torture. Signatures are being collected for a petition to be presented to the United Nations. The climax of the present stage of the campaign will be an international congress in Paris on 10 December. One of the photographs featured on the cover of the campaign brochure "Epidemic: Torture" is that of Ivan Moiseyev, the young Baptist who was tortured and killed while serving in the Soviet Army in the Crimea last summer. One of the signatures already received for the petition is that of Anatoli Levitin, Russian Orthodox publicist and defender of human rights.



Letters to the Editor

L. La Dany from Hong Kong writes:

I have just received No. 3 of *Religion in Communist Lands*, containing a very good article on China by Victor Hayward. I would like, however, to add one point.

One has to distinguish between what visitors to China see and what they are told by church dignitaries whom they are allowed to meet. In the article Bishop Ting is quoted as having said that "he knew of churches where religious services were well attended". Also, words of Dr. John Fleming are quoted: "The Catholics still had a seminary with about twenty students and six full-time teachers".