

Letter from the Director

Religion in Communist Lands is a unique publication with a unique record. It is the only academic journal in the world devoted to this particular subject. As such it has been gaining an increasing reputation amongst lecturers, students, authors and researchers of all kinds. The number of university and faculty libraries subscribing to *RCL* grows steadily. Over the years, *RCL* has done pioneering work. Definitive studies of religious groups of all kinds in a wide variety of communist countries are to be found within its pages and nowhere else. The Bibliography of the journal is widely acclaimed as the only reliable regular guide to religious and anti-religious writing as it comes out of the countries of the communist world.

It is not only in the West that *RCL* is valued. Religious believers who live in Eastern Europe are anxious that the general public in the West should hear detailed and factually correct accounts of their experiences. The truth is the strongest weapon in the armoury of these believers: when a Soviet citizen, for example, is accused, on the basis of what he has written, of spreading "anti-Soviet propaganda", his only defence is that he was telling the truth. *RCL* in its turn tries to relay this truth to its readers. We constantly hear reports that the believers in Eastern Europe, on whose behalf we are working, are obtaining copies of our journal and that they completely endorse the work it does. We are delighted to find that sometimes they are even able to reprint our material. For example, the article "The Living Church 1922-1946" by Philip Walters, published in *RCL* Vol. 6, No. 4, recently reappeared in translation in the Polish Catholic *samizdat* journal *Głos*.

The past six months have been difficult ones for Keston College from a financial point of view. Over the last few years our work has gone ahead in faith, but with the tightest possible budget. We have received continuing loyal support from a variety of generous donors, but despite persistent efforts we have not yet succeeded in building up a broad base of regular financial support: in other words, we have never had any kind of guaranteed yearly income. The present severe

economic climate has therefore affected us more seriously than it has some other organizations which are insulated to some extent by a "cushion" of financial reserves. We have therefore had to examine all our activities with a view to saving considerable sums of money immediately.

The Council of Management of Keston College reluctantly decided last December that a number of staff members would have to be made redundant and that only two issues of *RCL* could be produced in 1981. The Council acted in the full knowledge that *RCL* is unique and irreplaceable, but they were forced to take their decision because of one factor alone: the huge expense of producing the journal. Last year the compiling, writing, editing, printing and distribution of four issues of *RCL* meant a total financial loss to the College of £16,000. This represented the biggest single item of College expenditure (apart from salaries). Without reducing this loss in some way it would have been impossible to cut back Keston's expenditure sufficiently to produce a credible budget for the financial year 1981-82.

All recipients of *RCL* will already have received a preliminary circular apologizing for the fact that only two issues will appear this year, and appealing for considerable financial support. As I write this letter it is still too early to know what kind of response the circular will produce; but while you are reading these words the financial position may already be improving. If you yourself have been able to respond to our appeal, we would like to thank you most humbly not only on behalf of Keston and *RCL*, but, more importantly, on behalf of those in communist countries who find a voice in our journal.

It is too early to say yet what will happen to *RCL* in 1982. Everything depends on the amount of money which becomes available to finance it, and the situation is under constant review. Meanwhile, with our reduced resources we shall be channelling our energies into our fortnightly *Keston News Service*, which, in addition to the latest news on believers in communist countries, will be carrying a larger number of full-length articles, documents and biographical studies. The work of Keston College will go on.

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MICHAEL BOURDEAUX