

# News from the Centre

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For me personally, the publication of the first number of *Religion in Communist Lands* represents the culmination of twenty years of preparation—almost to the day. I well remember the date when I began learning Russian as a national serviceman early in 1953, because Stalin died almost immediately afterwards. My interest in religion was there already at the time, but had I not been drafted on to this special course, that interest would never have been channeled the way it was. No-one could describe the subsequent path as a smooth one and only recently have I ever been able to see round the next corner. If I look back, however, over university, many months spent in Russia, visits to all the European communist countries (except Albania), work in a parish, the beginning of serious research for writing books, the value of the slow progress is unquestionable, the logic clear, the guiding hand of God tangible.

## *The CSRC—A Permanent Organization*

The progress over the last two and a half years, since the establishment of the Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism, has been astonishing. This has been due both to the decisive guidance of our Council of Management, under the chairmanship of Sir John Lawrence, and to the support of so many of you who will be reading these lines. I take this opportunity of expressing the most heartfelt thanks to all who have helped in any way, but I do so only in the name of the millions—I think I do not exaggerate—of religious people both in East and West who will have cause for rejoicing that the CSRC now permanently exists.

Our financial appeal opened on 1 January 1972 and reached its “first-phase” target with the last post of the year. This means we have enough money assured to maintain a minimum staff—but not to subsidize this journal nor to acquire a permanent headquarters (in view of the unbelievable rise in property prices since the initial target was fixed).

## *This Journal*

We have reached only the end of the beginning, but move forward in confidence. All the real tasks lie ahead. This journal is now the focal point for the establishment of fact and a forum for discussion of all aspects of religion in the Communist countries. Our principal object is to promote the advancement of education in religion—the education of people towards a greater understanding of the religious situation in Eastern Europe.

There is no other publication with such aims, though we earnestly hope that in the near future associated journals will appear in other languages. (We are ourselves indebted to the largely-unsung efforts of *Russia Cristiana* in Milan and *Religion in Communist-Dominated Areas* in New York, and our work is in no sense a duplication of theirs). The key to our further development is the gaining of many new subscriptions to this journal. It is with the greatest pleasure that we are already able to announce that from the second issue there will be coverage of China, as well as the Soviet Union. This is because we are forging a permanent link with the "China Study Project" just instituted by the Conference of British Missionary Societies and other supporting bodies. If we can gain five thousand new subscriptions, we shall be able to expand our coverage considerably, as well as securing the physical base for our work in a permanent new headquarters. Full details of the subscription are on an inserted leaflet, but the basic rate is £2 for the six issues of 1973 (£2.75 for overseas seairmail, £4 airmail).

This first issue will reach thousands of people who have not subscribed in any way to our work. Could I urge on them the need to place an immediate permanent order, so that the succession of issues is not broken? We hope that there will be a particular response from secretaries of national church bodies and of councils of churches. Such officials can be of great help to the CSRC in recruiting new readers and ordering block subscriptions. In 1972 Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, then General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, in an open letter to the General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, called upon all members to make greater efforts to find out the facts of religious life in the Communist world and to be prepared to make a financial contribution to securing them. The work of the CSRC offers the most concrete opportunity of responding to that request.

I would like to add a few words more generally about *Religion in Communist Lands*. It is not—and a journal devoted to education could never become—a "record of persecution". It intends to cover all aspects of religious life, putting the persecutions and pressures in perspective, while emphasising positive features, particularly the spiritual rebirth which seems to be occurring in church life in so many Communist lands.

The scope will not be confined to the Christian faith. The task of the CSRC is to cover all aspects of religious and spiritual life and the journal will reflect this. Nevertheless, our many Christian readers will find in every issue many prayer pointers, and those who preach a quarry for material. Anyone who wishes to follow up with more specific subjects for prayer may do so by writing to us. The CSRC already produces a regular prayer

leaflet which is put out by Miss Elizabeth Hunkin of Winchester. As last year, we have designated a special day of prayer for Eastern Europe and request parishes to support our work on that day. This will fall on Sunday, 3 June, but from 1974 it will be in January, to be in line with specific requests from Russian Christians already being followed by some organizations.

### *Our Contributors*

Naturally, the most stringent steps are taken to assure the authenticity of documentary evidence emanating from the Communist countries, but the CSRC will print many views of writers living both in East and West with which it does not necessarily agree. This journal is a forum for discussion and its editor will gladly consider contributions or letters from any of its readers.

We would also like to carry regular news from those engaged in research projects within the CSRC's field of interest. As the number of people concerned is so small compared with the importance of the subject, this could be a way of avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort and a help in locating sources of information. Please keep such items as short as possible. We here in Chislehurst have already been greatly encouraged by the number of students visiting us to use our files and we hope this facility will be greatly expanded when we have a permanent headquarters. The day may not be so far away when we can accept people for residential study, for we have developed so far that this is now merely a financial question, and already we know of one or two possible sources for scholarships.

### *Our Staff*

We are sorry that our staff resources are still too meagre to allow us to do anything like the amount of lecturing we should wish. However, we will in each issue publish a list of what we have been able to accept over the next three months, so that supporters will have the opportunity to come to meetings when there are any in their area.

In January 1973 I have had meetings in Paris during the week beginning 8th. I preached at the Chapel Royal, Hampton Court, on the 21st, gave a series of lectures at the University of Utrecht, Holland, between the 22nd and 24th, and lectured twice at All Nations Christian College, Ware, Herts, on the 26th. On 18th February the Rev. David Knight was booked to preach for us at St. Paul's College, Cheltenham, and Miss Kathleen Matchett was at Christ Church, Orpington, Kent.

### *Forthcoming Meetings:*

February 20th at 8 p.m. : Dr. Bohdan Bociurkiw on "Eastern-Rite Catholics in Eastern Europe" at the Unity Centre, Charlton Rd., London S.E.7.

March 5th at 8 p.m. : Miss Xenia Howard-Johnston speaks at Borough Road College, Isleworth, Middlesex.

March 11th : the Director preaches at St. Bees Parish Church, Cumberland.

March 20th at 8 p.m. : Miss Xenia Howard-Johnston addresses the Harrow Council of Churches.

March 20th-April 17th (approx.) : the Director is to undertake a lecture tour at the invitation of the South African Council of Churches, with possible stops at one or two other places in Africa on the way.

May 2nd at 8 p.m. : the Director addresses the Sevenoaks World Church Fellowship.

Please note these dates ahead, for both of which accommodation will be strictly limited : November 23-25, 1973—CSRC conference at Holly Royde, Manchester; 18-20 January, 1974, CSRC conference, combined with second AGM, at Foxbury, Chislehurst.

### *Recommended Reading*

I intend to take the opportunity from time to time of recommending books, some of which have perhaps received less attention than they deserve, but all of which give an insight into the life of believers in the Communist world. All are available on order from the CSRC— but please add extra postage for foreign orders.

No book has ever given a more touching picture of Russians as people than *Russians Observed*, by our chairman, Sir John Lawrence, the fruit of a lifetime of personal contact and sympathetic observation (£1.50 + 15p postage and packing).

Perhaps the outstanding study of the Soviet Union in recent years is *Uncensored Russia*, by our Council member, Peter Reddaway. He analyses the movement of dissent, as mirrored in the unofficial Soviet journal, the *Chronicle of Current Events*, and shows clearly the place of religion in this context. (£5 + 10p).

The effects of Stalin's treatment of minorities are still very much with us. A good short study of two Soviet nationalities, one Muslim and the other Protestant, is : *The Crimean Tartars and Volga Germans*, by Ann Sheehy (30p + 10p).

There may be some who have no knowledge at all of the Orthodox

Church. For them, an excellent elementary introduction very suitable for young people is *The Orthodox Church*, by Sergei Hackel (40p + 5p).

The most comprehensive recent history of the Russian Orthodox Church is still *Christians in Contemporary Russia*, by Nikita Struve, excellent value at a reduced price (£2 + 15p).

### *Helen Tier*

Helen Tier worked with us for a year and a half and died on 2 January 1973, aged 32. She had been seriously ill earlier and knew her medical condition. Her bravery was an example to all of us. I never once heard her complain. When I had my accident in January 1972 she was the first to visit me in hospital (my wife was away for the day)—and I shall never forget the way she encouraged me to bear pain. Helen kept our records, looking after the mailing list and financial contributions. She never made a mistake and often came to the office when she was not well enough to do so. We shall not forget her as a person, nor the work she did. She now rests in peace with God.

## Editorial

In this first issue of the CSRC's new journal we present articles, documents and bibliographical material on various aspects of the religious situation in the USSR. This vast conglomerate of differing national groups presents in itself a complex field for research—and it is this field which up to now has been studied by those working at the Centre. However, in future issues of this journal we hope to redress the balance by publishing material on the religious situation in other countries of Eastern Europe and China. In addition to the articles and documents which we shall be publishing on the Christian Church, we hope to include informative articles on other religious groups, such as, for example, the Jews, the Buddhists and the Moslems in the USSR.

The Centre hopes that *Religion in Communist Lands* will be of educative value and will become a forum for the presentation and discussion of *all* aspects of the religious situation in Communist societies—both the positive and the negative aspects—for the Centre is a research organization, not concerned with presenting a particular viewpoint; it is non-political and independent of denominational affiliation. We would hope rather to try to emulate that balanced, luminous figure of the Russian nineteenth