

Reports

News from Keston College

It is with some sense of relief that I sit down to write *News from Keston* for the first issue of *RCL* in 1975. As those who attended the AGM will realize, our financial position has been so precarious in the last few months (due mainly to the burden of debt we have incurred with the purchase of the old school at Keston to house our work), that we took a decision not to publish the journal until the situation had eased. Because of the disastrous economic situation, Peter Fahy, our Development Director, found it impossible to raise the money we need for our headquarters. As a result of this, we were forced to make cuts in our salary bill, and we had to say a sad goodbye to Peter at the end of January. In November and December he spent several weeks travelling all over the United States and Canada with an energy which characterized all the work he undertook for us, but the results were disappointing.

However, we clung on tenaciously and countless people prayed for us. The prayers were answered in the form of a gift from the Dutch Reformed Church (Algemeen Diakonaal Bureau and Stichting Rotterdam) of £3,000. They have further promised an interest-free loan of £4,500, *provided* that this can be matched by the British churches. I am convinced that people in Britain have as much compassion for Christians in Eastern Europe as people in Holland, and I am sure that churches here will respond to our appeal (as some individual churches already have). Several wonderful friends sent financial help as soon as they knew of our difficulties, and it is now certain that we shall be able to continue our work in support of believers in Eastern Europe. My wife and I spent five days in Moscow in February (see following report) and our Russian friends begged us to continue to publish *RCL* at all costs.

We held a successful AGM on 11 January. 60 people attended and we welcomed Kathy Matchett (formerly on our staff) as a new member elected to our Council of Management. We were sorry to lose Archbishop Michael Ramsey as a Patron, but are delighted that Dr. Donald Coggan and Cardinal Heenan have accepted patronage.

Our work has been more and more in demand and there has been a stream of visitors to Keston from all over the world. George Patterson, who has been a missionary in China and has travelled widely in Tibet, now visits Keston once a week to advise and help us in Asian Affairs. He plans to visit Australia and New Zealand on our behalf in April. In the

same month, Rev. Roger Hayden, a member of our Council of Management and a Baptist minister, will be visiting the United States to talk about our work, mainly to the Southern Baptists in the Nashville, Tennessee, area.

Membership of Keston at £3 entitles people to receive *RCL* and use the facilities of the building. Those who have subscribed for 1975 are, of course, automatically members. We urgently need more members and congregations which will give us regular financial support. Please help us.

MICHAEL BOURDEAUX

Director's Visit to Russia

Only twice in my life have I felt impelled to kiss the tarmac of the runway in honour of the country in which I was about to set foot. Both times I resisted – in Israel I was younger and more easily embarrassed than now. Last February in Moscow I thought it would have been a little too demonstrative for the watching eyes of officialdom. I did, however, pick up a symbolic handful of snow and squeezed it tight.

I suppose that not many people would feel such an impulse on entering the land of the KGB, but for me it meant more than any other comparable experience of my life. Even more than Israel, Russia to me is the Holy Land.

This is not just because, if you go to the right places, talk to the right people in their own language, you still see the vision of and hear the words *Svyataya Rus* ("Holy Russia"); but, more personally, because I have found my life's vocation in serving the wonderful Russian people and because I believe that their *podvig*, their spiritual triumph over adversity, has carried the triumph of the suffering Church of the first three centuries right over into the twentieth.

When the last full stop is put to the Christian history of the modern age, the theme will be not how we have helped them in their desperate plight, but how they have helped us to re-establish priorities in a materialistic world full of confusion and temptation. If Keston College (Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism) does not maintain this priority above all others, it will have failed in the most essential of the many tasks to which it is called today.

And so my wife and I re-entered the Holy Land of Russia on 3 February; for me the first time in ten-and-a-half years, for her in almost 14.

I tried to make my too-brief visit of five days a balanced one, apportioning my time between contacts with more conservative official Church representatives and the younger, more flexible intellectuals; between the