

Editorial

The election of a Polish cardinal as Pope has forged a powerful link between the Church in Eastern Europe and the Church in the West. It has long been Keston College's belief that the spiritual experience of Christians in Eastern Europe is of vital importance for the life of the Church in the West. As Solzhenitsyn said last June in the USA (*The Times* 26 July 1978) "we (in Eastern Europe) have been through a spiritual training far in advance of western experience".

In a profile of the new Pope (pp. 220-2) – formerly Cardinal Wojtyła – Alexander Tomsy discusses the effect of the Pope's experience in Poland on his outlook and convictions. His view of man grew out of his war-time experience when, as a labourer in a chemical plant, he joined a secret study circle: "here, in opposition to the racial and collectivist theories of national socialism, he developed his 'personalist' view of man and his preoccupation with the moral order" (p. 220). He came to believe that man as a spiritual being is not determined by the society or State in which he lives. Last May in a sermon about work Cardinal Wojtyła showed his concern for individuals, for their well-being and for the growth of their mental and spiritual resources: "' God rested on the seventh day after all the work which He had done.' . . . These words were written for man. They were written to tell man that he needs to rest . . . Man has to rediscover himself, restore and reclaim himself . . . man is not just a lump of matter, a lump of coal or scrap-metal, nor even the finest of statues. Man is made in the image of God." The former Cardinal's concern for individuals made him very popular. This came over movingly in a BBC Television programme, *Everyman* (29 October), in which some students and other citizens of Cracow were interviewed soon after the announcement of the new Pope's election. All stressed his humanity, his approachability and courage *vis-à-vis* the authorities. Most, while excited at the election of "their bishop", showed how sad they were to lose someone whom they had been able to rely on for support.

Alexander Tomsy in his article emphasizes the Pope's insistence on the primacy of the spiritual over the temporal. This, however, does not

mean that he is not interested in social and political problems. In Poland he was interested in human rights, individual freedom and in the position of Christian believers in Polish society. His sermon on the feast of Corpus Christi this year, which he preached in Cracow, stressed the importance of each individual's rights: "Our prayer with the Holy Father for justice and peace in the modern world, for justice and peace in our own country, Poland, is a prayer for man, for every man. It is a prayer for the rights of man . . . for the rights which must not be curtailed to fit systems, to fit doctrines, but which must be seen in the context of the whole truth about man's greatness, about man's freedom . . . Man may not be deprived of his rights . . . he may not be restrained . . . trampled on . . . he may not be imprisoned for his beliefs." He insisted on the right to religious freedom and demanded that the Church be legally recognized by the State so that believers could have the same guarantees as other Polish citizens. He is known to have taken up the cause of exploited workers, of students who could not get information about Polish history and culture, and to have helped parents who had difficulty in obtaining religious education for their children.

Censorship in Poland is the subject of two documents published in this issue of *RCL*. The Polish bishops, including Cardinal Wojtyła, issued a strongly-worded letter (see p. 254) last September attacking state censorship of the mass media in Poland. Christians in Poland, they demanded, must have some control over the programmes transmitted; they must not be bombarded with official propaganda. The bishops even went as far as to demand that the Mass be transmitted on radio and television as well as sermons and other religious programmes. The second document which we publish contains the official instructions for censors dealing with religious publications. Until recently little was known about the mechanism of control over the press in Poland. But last year a former censor, Tomasz Strzyzewski, brought with him to the West a large collection of confidential instructions to the censors. These have now been published in Polish under the title, *Black Book of Polish Censorship*, and a translation of the section on religion is printed on pp. 256-9 of this issue of *RCL*.

The demands being made by the Polish bishops and the problems which the laity in Poland face will now be well understood in Rome. As yet it is too early to tell what effect the new Pope will have on church affairs in Eastern Europe and on the Vatican's *Ostpolitik*, but we can be sure that when appeals from believers in Eastern Europe are sent to the Pope, they will not be ignored but read with intense concern.

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