

News from Keston College

The situation for religious believers in most of the countries we study is becoming more and more complex, and the research work which Keston College needs to do continues to grow. The staff are working hard to fulfil the demands on our insufficient manpower. We have responded in our publications to such events as the conference "Religious Workers for Saving the Sacred Gift of Life from Nuclear Catastrophe" hosted by the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow this May and the visit to Great Britain of His Holiness the Pope. To coincide with the latter we published a pamphlet *Catholic Poland*, a historical survey of Poland up to and including the period of martial law in the light of the faith of the majority of its inhabitants. We have received a small grant to support the regular production of our Bibliography of religious writing from the USSR, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The interest of the media in our work, which was stimulated by our coverage of events in Poland earlier this year, continues: for example, a twenty-minute summary of Alexander Tomský's article on Czechoslovakia published in the last issue of *RCL* was recently broadcast by the BBC External Services in Czech.

Staff members have taken part in a number of important conferences. Alexander Tomský and Marite Sapiets spoke at a background briefing at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in March on the theme "Roman Catholicism in Eastern Europe and the USSR"; and Alexander Tomský was able to focus delegates' attention on the importance of the religious revival in communist countries at an Eastern European Casework Conference held by Amnesty International in May, as was Philip Walters at a conference on Dissidence in Eastern Europe at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor, in June.

We have had a number of successful visits to Eastern Europe, and we are again looking actively into the possibility of co-operating with a travel firm to organize tours to one or more of these countries in 1983. Michael Bourdeaux has been starting to co-ordinate our international work, and will himself be hoping to travel widely in the western world; but other staff members too continue to represent Keston College at international meetings. Philip Walters has just returned from an important conference in Liechtenstein on the subject of religious freedom.

The new library is almost complete now, and will provide us with a much-needed room for meetings, services and visiting scholars. Treatment of extensive dry rot is also reaching a successful conclusion. We have no money left, however, for any further building expansion, and we still desperately need to increase our regular income substantially if we are to do our work properly. Our fund-raising committee has plenty of good ideas; but we also need one staff member who will be able to devote all his or her time to following these through in a consistent and thoroughgoing way.

DR PHILIP WALTERS,
Executive Director

July 1982

International Department

At this stage of my work, I am trying to look more systematically than has ever been possible before at the whole international development of Keston College. I have constantly been aware in the past that the day-to-day administration of our affairs has precluded any adequate overview, and yet, as the only institute of our kind in the English-speaking world, we do have the broadest possible international perspective to which we need to respond. It is not just a question of doing our best for supporters in something like seventy different countries of the non-communist world, but even more it is looking at policies, particularly as they affect the developing international religious scene.

By and large, the degree of awareness among church leaders of the problems connected with religion in the communist countries remains disappointingly low. There has been a growth of concern among ordinary church members in some places, but this still finds relatively little reflection in policies that are made. I would not expect my new appointment to lead to dramatic changes overnight, but at least I hope to have time for a proper consideration of what might be done.

Immediately, and now confronting me with practical urgency, there is much that must be done to develop our existing branches and associated groups in the USA, Australia and New Zealand. Alan Scarfe is leaving SSRC, so we are urgently looking for a replacement in the USA. My wife and I are spending the summer holiday period on a visit to Australia and New Zealand, where our second winter in six months will be spent hoping to develop our work in both countries. The Australian part of this will be brief, preparatory to a longer stay there next year.

The hope is that before too long the funds for the needed expansion of Keston College will come, at least in part, from overseas. We need at the very least to cover those countries of Eastern Europe for which we do not at present have staff.

But more important than fund-raising is the building of a truly international community with common concerns, based on the original Keston ideals of serving those who cannot freely speak for themselves.

REV. MICHAEL BOURDEAUX,
International Director

July 1982