

Editorial

This issue of *RCL* features a lengthy and important article, “The Russian Church, Religious Liberty and the World Council of Churches”, by Michael Bourdeaux, Keston College’s founder and General Director (pp. 4-27). The article carefully analyses the relations, since their inception, between the WCC and the Russian Orthodox Church — including both its official and its independent spokesmen. Mr Bourdeaux concludes in no uncertain terms by describing WCC policy towards the Russian Orthodox Church (and, by implication, other churches in the USSR and Eastern Europe) as seriously deficient: “It is only realistic to suggest that the WCC policy towards the Soviet Union has failed” (p. 26).

We hope that this article may serve as a starting point for debate about, and possibly re-evaluation of, the policy of the WCC — and indeed, of western churches generally — towards the churches of Eastern Europe. The World Council was invited to respond to Mr Bourdeaux’s article in this issue of *RCL*, but the new General Secretary, Emilio Castro, has chosen not to respond in this particular manner. He writes: “It is not our practice to respond in publications which carry comments on the World Council of Churches. We respect the freedom of writers and journalists to make up their own minds and arrive at their own conclusions. The life of the World Council is totally open. Other professors, other journalists, may come to different conclusions. For me, what is important is to read and listen to every voice — critical or supportive — with the question ‘how can we improve our service to the churches in the mission of love and solidarity with the oppressed people?’ In this spirit I have read Mr Bourdeaux’s lecture and related comments, and I hope that all of them will contribute to the permanent search of the World Council of Churches.”

¶ We are however publishing a very lively debate on the issue of religious liberty in the Soviet Union and the response of western churches (pp. 63-68). This is in the form of letters (reprinted from the *Church Times*) between, on the one hand, Sir John Lawrence and Peter Reddaway, founders and Council members of Keston College, and on the other, Canon Paul Oestreicher, now Deputy General Secretary of the British Council of Churches, who as a former member of Keston College Council has been involved with the College’s work for many years. Their disagreement over the issue of church delegations to the Soviet Union gives much food for thought. Readers’ comments on this correspondence, as well as on Michael Bourdeaux’s article, will be welcomed.

On pp. 33-34 we publish a detailed profile of Bishop Zoltán Káldy of Hungary, the newly-elected President of the Lutheran World Federation. The appointment of a church leader from an Eastern European country to

such a key position has generated some controversy, particularly as Bishop Káldy is known for his openly pro-government, pro-socialist, and anti-western views. This thorough analysis of the development of Bishop Káldy's thought includes his comment that there can be no third way for the churches between capitalism and socialism, and therefore: "We stand unambiguously on the side of socialism" (p.41).

We also print a short description of Marxist-Christian dialogue in Hungary (pp. 48-53), which outlines the chief comments made by leading contributors to it since the word "dialogue" was officially adopted in 1981 to replace the formerly-used phrase "ideological struggle". The author concludes, however, that despite the change in atmosphere signalled by the new terminology, the "dialogue" is between unequal partners.

Father Jerzy Popiełuszko features not only on our cover, but also in the "Chronicle" section, where there is a brief account of his life and activities (pp. 89-90). The tragedy of his murder has shown, even more clearly than all the other astonishing events in Poland recently, the total bankruptcy and helplessness of a regime confronted with a united, vital church led by resourceful and deeply spiritual men. The quality of Father Popiełuszko's life and beliefs was shown in a recent *RCL* article by Grażyna Sikorska (Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 149-56), containing lengthy quotations from his sermons. Father Popiełuszko believed that: "to serve God is to speak out about evil as a sickness which should be brought to light so it can be cured. To serve God is to condemn evil in all its manifestations." (p. 151). The sad fact that he has paid for that belief with his life only serves to underline the truth of it.

Grażyna Sikorska took leave of absence earlier this year to write a book about Father Popiełuszko, which is to be published on 11 April (see p. 68 for details). Another addition to the long list of Keston books has been *Light through the Curtain*, a collection of testimonies to their faith by believers in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, compiled by Philip Walters. (See p. 27 for information on ordering copies). Several other books are currently being prepared by other staff members and associates; this continues to be an important part of Keston College's aim to present to the world a balanced and comprehensive picture of religious life in communist countries.

This issue see the start of a new section in the journal, "Theses" (pp. 82-88). It is a list of doctoral theses written on subjects in the area covered by *RCL*, which we hope will be of use to researchers. The "Sources" section has been extended in this issue by coverage of the journal *Muslims of the Soviet East* (p. 75).