

News from the Centre

MICHAEL BOURDEAUX

We launched the first issue of this journal on 27 February 1973 with a press conference in London at St. Bride's, Fleet Street. The interest was considerable, with both the secular and religious press represented. No less than five people attended from various sections of the B.B.C., which encourages us to hope that *Religion in Communist Lands* will arouse interest both at home and abroad through the good offices of the media. Our editor, Xenia Howard-Johnston, spoke on the "Sunday" programme on Radio 4 on 4 March, introducing the journal to a new public.

We also sent out 9,000 copies of the first issue, about half of which went to people and organizations in Britain and the other half spread over just about every other country of the world. About 6,000 went to individuals and organizations that we have been in touch with at various times; and 3,000 complimentary copies to British dioceses, Councils of Churches, member-churches and Central Committee members of the World Council of Churches, and to various other organizations. Of all these, about 1,000 have already supported us financially. We urgently need subscriptions from a further 3,000 at least if the journal is to go forward as our Council plans. If we gain more support than this (and we think such a goal to be a modest one) we shall be able to progress confidently to the next major stage of our development: the provision of adequate facilities for the storing and reading of our documents and for our office requirements.

We continue to be encouraged by the number of students interested in what we are doing, and consider the help we provide for them to be among our highest priorities.

The First A.G.M.

Another occasion early in 1973 which offered us great encouragement was the first Annual General Meeting, held at the Methodist Hall, Chislehurst on 5 January. The room was full. Over fifty people had come from as far afield as Oxford, Nottingham, Birmingham, Ipswich, the South Coast and all over the Home Counties. Our financial accounts were accepted, eleven members of the old Council stood again and they were joined by Revs. Roger Hayden, Bernard Tidball and Martin Gosling, all of whom were elected *nem. con.* Anyone looking around our office can see how sympathetic we are to Women's Lib. and we earnestly hope we shall be able to find the right female to fill the remaining place on the Council!

The A.G.M. continued with my report on how the Centre had developed from the earliest stages up to the present. A lively and most helpful discussion ensued, followed by a report by the Chairman and Xenia Howard-Johnston on their recent visits to the Soviet Union.

Future Meetings

1 May at 1.15 : the Director speaks at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London.

2 May at 8 p.m. : the Director speaks at the Sevenoaks (Kent) World Church Fellowship. For further details contact Miss E. D. Spence, 20 Vine Court Rd., Sevenoaks.

11 May at 7.30 p.m. : Sir John Lawrence to address a meeting of the Great Britain/USSR Association in Swansea on the Church in Russia.

12 May at 8 p.m. : Xenia Howard-Johnston speaks at Iona House, Norwich.

19 May at 9.30 a.m. : Xenia Howard-Johnston leads a discussion group at the Methodist Laymen's Conference in Swanwick.

3 June : Day of Prayer for Eastern Europe. The Director preaches at St. Nicholas, Chislehurst, at 11 a.m.

22 & 29 July : The Director preaches at St. Mary's, Isles of Scilly, Cornwall.

Day of Prayer: 3 June

The Day of Prayer (mentioned above) is a special occasion for all our friends who are able to organize prayer and support for us in their own local congregations. Next year it will move to January to fall on the same day as that marked by some other organizations. Meanwhile, please do make every effort you can to help us in any way on 3 June. It is the most appropriate time for parishes to support us financially and we shall be most happy to send out books on a sale or return basis. Over the last year we have received £295 from parishes, schools and colleges, for which we are immensely grateful. We feel that there is still room, however, for much more widespread support in this way. This and the previous issue of *Religion in Communist Lands* contain numerous prayer-pointers, but we will provide additional ones for any groups which care to ask for them.

Our Symbol

Several people have written to me asking me to explain our symbol (see the front cover of this journal). One person thought it was a ground plan for our future office. Ingenious, but not a direct fit! The secret is to look at the spaces, not the lines. Then, as if by magic, the letters CSRC emerge.