

dent action to limit its effects — with the consequent tensions between local believers, denominational leaders and Department of Cults such as have surrounded

the Oradea and Mediaş churches over the past two years or more.

PAUL BOOTH

Yugoslav Catholics on Keston College

The following comment on the award of the 1984 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion to Rev. Michael Bourdeaux, General Director of Keston College, appeared in AKSA (Aktualnosti Kršćanska Sadašnjosti) (Contemporary Christian News Service), officially published weekly in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, by Croatian Catholics.

Action, the bulletin of the World Association for International Christian Information, No. 89 (April) reports that the Templeton Prize for 1984, worth \$200,000, has been awarded to the Protestant priest Michael Bourdeaux, who for the last twenty years has worked for the extension of links between Christians in Eastern Europe and those of the West. To further this aim in 1969 he founded an independent institute at Keston College in Great Britain. When Michael Bourdeaux first visited Moscow in 1959 he was deeply moved by the sufferings and difficulties of believers there, and this stimulated him to collect information about the problems encountered by these people in communist countries. It is the task of Keston College to find out as much as possible about these problems, and to endeavour to inform as many people as possible in both East and West about them. This is done in two ways: by co-operating with the BBC in compiling radio programmes for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and by publishing three different periodicals, distributed throughout Europe, the USA and Australia. These are *Keston News Service*, (a fortnightly publication mainly used by radio stations and the religious and secular press), *Religion in Communist Lands* (a quarterly* journal with detailed analytical surveys, and *The Right to Believe* (also published quarterly*, which gives information about the fate of individual believers in Eastern Europe.

Information is derived from both official and unofficial sources, from the ecclesiastical

hierarchies of these countries, from ordinary believers and from the so-called "rebel" Christians who are trying to establish a greater degree of democracy. The information and reports received from both priests and laymen usually refer to believers who are in prison or facing legal charges. For example, *The Chronicle of the Lithuanian Church* which is circulated in the Soviet Union contains an exhaustive list of churches whose work is hampered by the state. There is even a Catholic Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights, and an increasingly wide dissemination of so-called *samizdat* literature — uncensored texts in which the believers oppose repression by the government.

However, although more and more information is now reaching the West, it seems that this is not leading to any improvement in the position of Soviet believers. In addition there is a widely prevalent view in Europe and the USA that priority should be given to the nations of the Third World, and it is often forgotten that believers in communist countries also need help.

In Great Britain there have been some initiatives in this direction: the British Council of Churches has printed a publication dealing with Christianity in Eastern Europe*, and the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Baptist minister David Russell have recently talked about the problems at the Assembly of the WCC in Vancouver; but the rest of the world ecumenical movement has not, so far, done very much.

The Rev. Bourdeaux considers that "cooperation between churches throughout the world must be more life-giving and should show more understanding of others. We must not forget the words of St Paul: if one part of the body is sick, the whole body suffers." (AKSA 15.6.84)

* *Discretion and Valour* by Trevor Beeson. London: Collins/Fontana, 1974; revised edition Fount Paperbacks, 1982 — *Ed.*

*In fact, three times a year since 1982 — *Ed.*