longstanding links between the Catholic Church and the various nations represented by the pilgrims from Eastern Europe. He also reiterated his intention to set the Catholic Church on the offensive in the struggle for the hearts and minds of the peoples of the region, saying there is "a great need for social renewal and the reevangelisation of our continent". Special greetings to refugees from Transylvania were included in the Pope's address.

The papal visit to Trausdorf has raised questions about similar visits to the communist countries of Central Europe. There is virtually no chance of the Pope travelling to Czechoslovakia as long as militant anti-clericalism remains a prominent feature of the government's policy towards the church. However, there is still hope within the Czechoslovak church that the Pope will be permitted to visit in 1989, when the Blessed Agnes of Bohemia will be canonised. According to the Croatian Archbishop Kuharić, the orderly pilgrimage to Trausdorf will strengthen pressure for a papal visit to

Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav government has already rejected the idea at least eight times. Political unrest in the predominantly Catholic Province of Slovenia and the country's sensitive nationality conflicts are strong factors working against such a visit. The lack of political problems arising from the pilgrimage to Trausdorf has led the new General Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party Károly Grósz to abandon the caution of his predecessor, János Kádar, and to try to use a papal visit to strengthen the Hungarian state's fragile, but potentially powerful, political alliance with the Catholic Church. In August 1988, during nationwide celebrations in commemoration of the death of St Stephen — the founder of the Hungarian kingdom and the Hungarian Catholic Church — the government and the Catholic Bishop's Conference issued a joint invitation to the Pope to visit the country. Pope John Paul II has accepted and is expected to tour Hungary in 1990.

JOHN V. EIBNER

Summer Festivals in the GDR

In June this year four Protestant church festivals (*Kirchentage*) were held in East Germany:

3-5 June: in Görlitz (on the River Neisse), for Christians of the Görlitz region;

10-12 June: in Erfurt, for Christians of the province of Thuringia;

16-19 June: in Rostock, for Christians of the province of Mecklenburg, and of the Greifswald region;

23-26 June: in Halle, for Christians of the province of Saxony.

Each *Kirchentag* comprised a bewildering array of different events, although in general, the following were to be found at each: special events for children and young people; musical presentations, both large and small; films; plays, especially Bible dramas; prayer meetings; spiritual counselling. There were, of course, many church services, some liturgical and others informal. One noteworthy feature common to all was the final gathering in the open air — at Erfurt, for example, in the Cathedral Square; at Rostock, in a tree-lined arena within a big city park.

Every one of the four was described as Protestant (*Evangelisch*). Although the main initiatives came from the provincial Protestant churches, the Roman Catholic Church always played a considerable part, providing buildings in which impressive ecumenical services were held. Thus thousands of Protestant visitors gained valuable experience of liturgical worship; Catholics swelled the crowds at other events.

It is thought that a total of between 80,000 and 100,000 participated in the *Kirchentage* in one way or another, with some 8,000 people taking part in the more formal consultations and workshops.

Last year the East Berlin *Kirchentag* was bedevilled by friction between the church leadership and the members of the *Kirche von Unten* (the "church from below", — or grass-roots church). This year all did not run smoothly in this respect, but in general suitable opportunities were found for the younger and less conformist elements, however much they might upset more conservative church people. For example, at Rostock premises were set aside for a group of Christian homosexuals to make their standpoint known.

Every *Kirchentag* required most careful planning, and as a general rule, the visitor could not but admire the painstaking work that had been done — largely by voluntary labour. One could, for example, be served with a nourishing lunch in the open air within a few minutes of joining a queue a quarter of a mile long.

The practical arrangements for the *Kirchentage* shed light on the relationship between church and state at more than one level. The church leadership had to undertake lengthy and complex negotiations with the relevant local authorities to arrange such things as special trains, the feeding of visitors, and the holding of *Kirchentag* events on land belonging to the state. In such matters cooperation, if awkward, was nearly always possible. Many guests were astounded by the ease with which the *Kirchentag* proceeded in a largish city — and, even more, by the frank speaking on sensitive topics: for example criminality, alcoholism, mental illness, the problems of those released from gaol as well as support for the state of Israel. On the other hand, the security forces in plain clothes were very much in evidence at big open-air assemblies. During the weeks after the *Kirchentage*, the church press experienced great difficulties with the state in attempting to print objective reports for a wider public. Perhaps as much as a quarter of the material which the church wanted to print had to be withdrawn — on the grounds that the church was concerning itself with the state's business.

There is no doubt that the *Kirchentage* made an impact on the life of the four centres in which they took place, and that they witnessed to the existence of an active and vigorous Christian community.

ARVAN GORDON

Religion and the 19th Conference of the CPSU

At the end of June delegates to an extraordinary conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union gathered in Moscow. Their brief was to examine the successes and failures of *perestroika* and to