

News from the Centre

MICHAEL BOURDEAUX

OUR STAFF

When I sit in my office and think about the Centre's policies and activities, I begin to feel that we are settling into a pattern. People in the Churches and universities are beginning to know of our work and the response from new contacts continues to be world-wide.

Old friends are beginning to ask, "Can it really be that the Centre is so new? How did we manage to get such information before it came into existence?"

All this is very satisfying, but we shall not become complacent. We are far too busy for that, and we try to remember every day that all the essential tasks lie ahead. What has been achieved here is merely the beginning of a beginning. Nevertheless, now we have a growing staff to help in the work as it unfolds before us.

Kathy Matchett looks after the files and periodicals library, and every visitor is impressed with the ease with which the Centre's materials can be found and with the extensive cross-references in the system. She also produces the "bibliography" and does many of the translations for this journal. Look out for shots of both of us in a BBC TV film about human rights in Russia (produced by Mischa Scorer) to be put out this autumn.

Katharine Murray has now been with us nearly a year and is moving increasingly into the research work, where she is able to give badly needed help. She has made a big impression with her first major article in an outside journal - "Soviet children in conflict over faith" published in the *Church Times* on 29 June and in the *Atlantic Baptist* (Canada) on 15 June.

There is a secretarial vacancy to be filled and we shall shortly welcome Walter Sawatsky, a Mennonite from Canada, who has been seconded to us by his Church for three years. His arrival with his wife will be a landmark for us. We are deeply grateful to the Mennonite Central Committee for making this possible.

Our part-timers render irreplaceable service, also: Mrs. Mavis Perris (secretarial), Mrs. Vivienne Brown (financial) and now Mrs. Shura Kolarz (research). The latter is the widow of the late Walter Kolarz, to whom all of us who work on religion in Russia owe a tremendous debt for his outstanding pioneering work (*Religion in the Soviet Union*, Macmillan, 1961). Mrs. Kolarz renders fine service in an honorary capacity, reading

Russian documents and newspapers. Finally, the part-timer who does what in an affluent organization would be a full-time job is Xenia Howard-Johnston. The reader will now be able to judge for himself her work as editor of this journal.

The fact that the Centre's work is taking such a clear direction is due to the voluntary support we receive from our elected Council of Management. Unlike the councils of some organizations, it takes all the important policy decisions and has never failed to reach unanimity. In between the four meetings annually, its members are kept fully informed of all matters of substance which occur.

A PERMANENT HEADQUARTERS

The main problem facing the Council over the next few months will be the provision of a permanent headquarters for our work : 34 Lubbock Road is a private house and planning permission is not indefinitely forthcoming for what we do here on the rented top floor. To move and pay a commercial rent would place a new burden upon us, so we aim to purchase a permanent headquarters, where there will be adequate library and office facilities, and where we can make provision for the growing number of students from many countries who wish to use what we have to offer.

Owing to the success of our fund-raising campaign last year, we have been able to establish the nucleus of a building fund and we can add a little to it annually. Only recently we received the promise of an anonymous donation for £2,000, which is to go towards the provision of a library – so this is added to the £5,000 which was specifically designated for the building during the campaign. We now have a building in mind, in the right area near London. It would cost a great deal to convert, but would wonderfully cover all our needs if we are successful in our bid to acquire it. If the Council's offer is accepted, I shall immediately release further details.

Naturally, we shall need much more money yet (the tremendous rise in property-values occurred after we had launched our campaign), but we feel we now have an excellent case for persuading one or other of the major trusts to support us. Further, we have not yet approached our American and Canadian friends for financial support. There are still ways in which our existing supporters can help us – for example, by recruiting many more subscribers to this journal (we will send sample copies to anyone) or by offering us interest-free loans for a short period.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMME

As this is a double issue and I am writing before the summer holiday, I am not able to be as precise as I would have liked about all the autumn lectures and conferences in which the CSRC is involved. Here, however, is what the October and November programme looks like at the moment (September was contained in *RCL* No. 3 and No. 6 will reach you before December).

Oct. 1 at 8 p.m. Showing of film, "The Bitter Cup", by our new staff member at United Reformed Church, Duncanson House, Widmore Road, Bromley, Kent (Bromley U.N. Association).

8 at 10.30 a.m. Director at Catford Ministers' fraternal.

9 at 8.15 p.m. Open meeting (with film?) by new staff member at Young People's Fellowship, Above Bar Church, Southampton.

9-13 Director in Paris (available for meetings and consultations).

16 at 1.15 p.m. (preceded by lunch at 12.30). Director at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church (junction of Shaftesbury Ave. and New Oxford St.), London, W.C.2. This is a postponed meeting from 1 May, when there was a train strike.

18 at 8 p.m. Katharine Murray speaks to the Methodist Church Wives' Group, Epworth Hall, Bromley Road, Beckenham.

20-22 Director at council meeting of International Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in the Soviet Union : Turin, Italy.

Nov. 5 at 10 a.m. Director at fraternal of Southern Group of London Baptist Association, Honor Oak Baptist Church, Forest Hill Road, S.E. London (showing of film, with aim of interesting London Baptist Churches in it).

12 at 1 p.m. New staff member at Middlesex Polytechnic, Queensway, Enfield, N. London.

14 at 8.15 p.m. Director at AGM of Chislehurst branch of British and Foreign Bible Society, Christchurch, Lubbock Road, Chislehurst.

18 at 9.15 a.m. New staff member preaches at Bishop Otter College, Chichester, Sussex.

23-5 CSRC residential conference at Holly Royde, Manchester. Sir John Lawrence and most of our staff will be participating. There may still be a few places left, so would any of our northern supporters, who would like to be included, please write at once.

25 (evening service). Director preaches at Tettehall College, Staffordshire.

29 at 8 p.m. New staff member at Emmanuel Church, The Ridgway, Wimbledon. Open meeting.

In addition to this heavy programme, Sir John Lawrence will probably be going to South Africa on behalf of the Centre early in 1974 and I have been invited to go to Australia and New Zealand in late March and early April.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This is the most important occasion in the period beyond that covered above. The second AGM will be on the evening of 18 January 1974 at Foxbury, Kemnal Road, Chislehurst. It will be preceded by supper at 7 p.m. The rest of the weekend (until Sunday lunch-time) will be occupied by our first residential conference in the south of England. It is possible of course, to come just for the AGM, but the conference itself will provide the fullest insight into the Centre's work and the situation in the communist countries. Booking for this is now open (maximum residential capacity is 35) and the inclusive cost will be £6 per person, payable to CSRC at the time the reservation is made. Foxbury is the spacious and delightful conference centre run by the Church Missionary Society and we are grateful to them for making it available to us.

The International Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in the USSR

The year 1971, International Human Rights Year, saw the formation of a new organization to support the courageous stand made by some Soviet citizens in defence of human dignity and freedom in the USSR. Founded following a suggestion by the Belgian Socialist M.P. Henri Simonet, the International Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in the USSR is a non-partisan organization acting on humanitarian principles.

Its declared aim is that of informing world public opinion about the situation of Human Rights in the Soviet Union and of arousing sympathy for those who are suffering violation of those rights. Far from being negatively critical in its approach, the Committee would welcome constructive discussion with the Soviet authorities, and looks forward to a time when détente between East and West is combined with an equal respect for the rights of the individual in all parts of Europe.

Under the presidency of Nobel prizewinner M. René Cassin, the Committee's headquarters is in Brussels; its General Secretary is M. Hubert Halin. It was in Brussels that the Committee held its first major event in