

Editorial

RCL enters its tenth year with a much bigger issue and a slightly changed format. After much thought, we have substituted a section entitled *Chronicle* for the old *News in Brief*, and replaced the *Bibliography* with a new section called *Sources*. The latter change has been made only after ensuring that Keston College will still be able to provide a comprehensive bibliographical service to all who require it. (See p. 69 for details.) The increase in materials reaching us from Eastern Europe means that we no longer have space in *RCL* to provide the fully comprehensive bibliography required by specialists. Rather than continue to provide an ever more highly selective bibliography in the Journal, we have decided to make separate and fuller coverage of the various countries and denominations available to those who request it. This means that *Sources*, which covers the same range of subject-matter as the *Bibliography* section did, is now devised to meet the requirements of the general reader rather than the specialist. Sources from Eastern Europe, especially *samizdat*, the uncensored voice of the believers themselves, provide much valuable material for study and reflection, prayer, sermons and talks.

A welcome feature of the new expanded *RCL* is that we are able to treat important subjects in greater depth. The *Chronicle* can bring *RCL* readers up to date on matters of importance not covered in articles in a way that the shorter items in the old *News in Brief* section could not do. Moreover, significant issues can be given the considered treatment they deserve in major articles. In this issue, Alexander Tomsky's article "*Modus Moriendi* of the Church in Czechoslovakia", and a wealth of supporting documentation (pp. 23-53) describe the initiative and energy displayed by growing numbers of Czech and Slovak Catholics despite unrelenting efforts to stifle church life.

Graeme Jackson's article "An Assessment of Church Life in Vietnam" (pp. 54-61), by contrast, shows how greatly the situation of the Church can vary from one communist country to another. He concludes that there is no evidence to show that Vietnamese Catholics are persecuted simply for being Christians (though they may suffer the political repression and economic hardship which are the lot of most Vietnamese citizens.) The appended statements by two Vietnamese bishops amplify the situation. Speaking openly at public meetings, they point out that Catholics are in fact discriminated against in daily life, though they do not speak of outright persecution. They welcome the Vietnamese government's decision to proclaim freedom of religion, but feel that thus far it exists more on paper than in practice. Both the Vietnamese bishops and a group of young Slovak Catholics (pp. 50-53)

refuse to accept that the State should be the final arbiter of how they should live as Christians. Despite hardship, their attitude is wholly positive: to live for God rather than to complain of their sufferings.

The subject of religion in communist lands extends far wider than Church-State relations, crucial though these relations are. Several items in this issue testify to the power of the transcendental and the creative Christian response to it in different communist countries. In both Yugoslavia (see pp. 4-9) and China (see pp. 91-6) apparently supernatural events have inspired tens of thousands of people publicly to express their Christian allegiance. It is not so much the nature of the events themselves that is of interest, more that the report of them quickly revealed the inadequacy of decades of atheist propaganda. Similarly, in the Soviet Union, the late *starets* (elder) Tavrion used to attract thousands of people from all over the USSR simply by the eloquence of his preaching and his devotion to the Gospel (see pp. 96-100).

The Russian Orthodox artist Vitali Linitsky (see interview on pp. 10-22) sees his painting as an expression of his Christian commitment. His rich, striking canvases are an attempt to portray and interpret Christian truth. (We are able to reproduce eleven of Linitsky's paintings thanks to a special grant towards the cost of including four extra pages of photographs, including two in full colour, in this issue of *RCL*). Though now forbidden to exhibit officially in the USSR, Linitsky does not bemoan the lot of Soviet Christians: "The task of religious art is creation and not destruction. More important for me is the blossoming Church, which transcends all that is human, the Church, the Bride of Christ as an eternal hymn of salvation." No doubt the young Slovak Catholics, the Vietnamese bishops and the elder Tavrion would agree with him.