

religious education, and the general shortage of religious literature.

Bishop Sokol said at his consecration that the church in Czechoslovakia was entering a new era. "I am convinced", he said, "that this was the first step and that many more steps will be taken." With progress made over the important question of

the bishops, there must now be real hope of meaningful change in other areas. Catholics in Czechoslovakia will be hoping that Bishop Sokol's conviction proves to be correct.

*Compiled by members of
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The Pope at Trausdorf

Over 80,000 Catholics from Central Europe attended a mass said by Pope John Paul II at Trausdorf, Burgenland on 24 June of this year, the first full day of the papal five-day tour of Austria. The mass at Trausdorf was intended to give the Pope an opportunity to speak directly to pilgrims from the communist countries of the region which have not yet been able to share Poland's experience of a papal visit. Trausdorf was chosen as the venue of the papal appearance because it lies near to Austria's borders with Hungary and Czechoslovakia and formerly belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary. (Indeed, before the end of the First World War, present day Hungary, Slovakia, Transylvania, Croatia, Voivodina and Burgenland were drawn together under the Holy Crown of St Stephen.) Among the prelates concelebrating the Mass were the Hungarian Primate, Cardinal László Paskai, the Croatian Primate, Cardinal Franjo Kuharić and the newly-consecrated bishop of Trnava in Slovakia, Ján Sokol. The Pope read messages in Hungarian, Slovak, Croatian and Polish. The Mass was broadcast live by Austrian television, which can be received in the border regions of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia.

The reactions of the Czechoslovak and the Hungarian authorities to the

Pope's approach to their Catholic citizens contrasted sharply. Both governments wish to prevent the Catholic Church from acting as an independent force in public life but whereas the Hungarian authorities seek to achieve this mainly by means of a political alliance with the church, their Czechoslovak counterparts are inclined to use repression. The Hungarian hierarchy was allowed to organise transport to Trausdorf for over 50,000 Catholics in cooperation with a state travel agency. Special arrangements were made for five hundred handicapped pilgrims. Hungary's secular and religious press provided extensive coverage of the event. The Czechoslovak authorities, on the other hand, refused to grant exit visas to those wishing to travel to Trausdorf. In the event only two hundred Czechs and Slovaks were present to see the Pope, and most of them concealed their intention to attend the Mass by applying for visas to visit relatives in the West. The announcement of the presence of Bishop Sokol at the Mass was greeted with great applause in recognition of the obstacles experienced by would-be Czech and Slovak pilgrims.

Pope John Paul's message at Trausdorf was devoid of controversial political themes. He did, however, emphasise the close and

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 Kádár, 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 be-

wildering 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.