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RELIGION, STATE & SOCIETY

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Editorial

The papers included in this issue of *RSS* were first presented at an international conference 'Religions in Europe in the Twentieth Century' held in April 1997 at the Department of Religious Studies at the Open University in Milton Keynes. The conference was conceived by Dr Terry Thomas and organised by Dr John Wolffe and Dr Anna Zelkina. Dr Zelkina has been a close associate of Keston Institute for many years, and I am delighted that she has been able to respond to my invitation to contribute the editorial introduction to this issue.

November 1999

PHILIP WALTERS

The aim of the conference was to invite scholars from a variety of academic disciplines to combine their expertise to produce a complex study of developments in the religious landscape of twentieth-century Europe. We proceeded from the belief that the European setting has created a specific religious environment which is in many ways unique.

It is in Europe that the modern tendency towards separation of church and state originated and where it has been implemented in a variety of forms. In Western Europe separation of church and state was the result of a gradual process which started in the late eighteenth century and which developed on the basis of traditional Christian values. In Eastern Europe, twentieth-century communist governments saw religion as a threat to the very basis of the state system and embarked on a policy of unqualified secularisation through terror and persecution.

As our conference successfully demonstrated, however, the similarities in the development of religious life in Western and Eastern Europe are deeper and more significant than they might appear at first sight. On the basis of examples offered by developments in both Western and Eastern Europe Steve Bruce outlines the fundamental principles which determine the social location of religion in the modern world. His general conclusion, that religion today flourishes in areas characterised by adversity and ethnic conflict rather than by pluralism and diversity, was endorsed by case studies presented by other participants. Jonathan Luxmoore and Jolanta Babiuch, for example, show that communist power reinforced the position of the Catholic Church as guarantor of social justice and champion of civil rights; at the same time they and other contributors demonstrate that new conditions of pluralism and freedom in postcommunist countries have produced new challenges to the established religions. The 'ethnicisation' of religion has often been seen as a by-product of communist rule; yet taking the example of Wales D. Denis Morgan shows similar processes at work in a Western European country where religion has become an integral element of the local social and political framework. The conference also challenged the idea that communist rule had necessarily meant a forcible interruption

of the religious tradition in the countries affected: Philip Boobbyer persuasively argues for the survival of a powerful Christian ethic amongst some strata of society in the Soviet Union. Another theme the conference considered was that of the rise of politically active antiseccularist movements. My own article in this issue of *RSS* looks at the phenomenon in postcommunist Muslim nation-states; but it is observable throughout Europe as an implicit by-product of the twentieth-century secularisation process.

The political division of Europe in the twentieth century has resulted in a corresponding division of scholarship in many areas, including that of the study of religion. The main impulse behind the planning of this conference was our belief that it is impossible to gain a complete understanding of the main patterns of the social relocation of religion in twentieth-century Europe without addressing developments in both West and East. For conference participants the discussion of religious developments in a variety of European environments was both informative and intellectually stimulating. We were therefore surprised to find that most prospective publishers of our papers were suspicious of the idea of including studies of both Western and Eastern Europe within one volume. To our relief our unwillingness to sacrifice the comparative aspect of the volume was shared by Keston Institute. It is therefore a special pleasure for me to thank Dr Philip Walters both for accepting the volume for publication and for his painstaking editorial revision of the contributions.

November 1999

ANNA ZELKINA

Notes on Contributors

Jolanta Babiuch is a lecturer at Warsaw University in the fields of business ethics and public administration. She is co-author with Jonathan Luxmoore of the book *The Vatican and the Red Flag* (Geoffrey Chapman, 1999).

Paul Richard Blum has recently been teaching at the Péter Pázmány University in Budapest. Before that he was head of information at the international headquarters of the Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need in Königstein, Germany.

Philip Boobbyer is a lecturer in modern European history at the University of Kent at Canterbury. He is the author of *S. L. Frank: the Life and Work of a Russian Philosopher, 1877–1950* (Ohio University Press, 1995) and of *The Stalin Era* (forthcoming from Routledge).

Steve Bruce received his PhD at the University of Stirling and taught at the Queen's University of Belfast from 1978. Since 1991 he has been Professor of Sociology and Head of the Department of Sociology at the University of Aberdeen. He is the author of 13 books on the sociology of religion, religion and politics, and terrorism, including *God Save Ulster: the Religion and Politics of Paisleyism*; *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right: Conservative Protestant Politics in America 1978–1988*; and *Religion in the Modern World: from Cathedrals to Cults*.

David Herbert is a staff tutor at the Open University, based in Cambridge. His PhD from Leeds University concerned the controversy surrounding *The Satanic Verses*. His main interest is relationships between religion, democracy, human rights and their social context, especially with reference to Muslims in Western Europe and Christians in Eastern Europe. He is the author of many articles and chapters in books, and of *Religion and Civil Society: Multiculturalism, Democracy and Ethics in the New Europe* (forthcoming from Ashgate).

Hartmut Lehmann has been the Director of the Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte in Göttingen since 1993. He is also Adjunct Professor of Church History at the University of Kiel and Adjunct Professor of History at the University of Göttingen. His recent publications include *Max Webers 'Protestantische Ethik'* (1996) and *Protestantische Weltsichten* (1998).

Jonathan Luxmoore is a Warsaw-based British journalist specialising in church affairs. He is co-author with Jolanta Babiuch of the book *The Vatican and the Red Flag* (Geoffrey Chapman, 1999).

D. Densil Morgan is a senior lecturer in the School of Theology and Religious

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Anna Zelkina currently holds a three-year fellowship in the Politics Department at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, researching oil and security in the Caspian region. Before that she was a research lecturer at the Open University. She is a specialist on Islam in the former Soviet Union.