

# RELIGION, STATE & SOCIETY

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## Editorial

In this issue of *Religion, State & Society* I am delighted to present the fruits of recent collaboration with Mike Dennis, professor of modern German history at Wolverhampton University, on the subject of Jehovah's Witnesses under two dictatorships.

Since the collapse of the communist system in the German Democratic Republic in 1989/90 it has become possible to undertake the construction of a comparative history of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic, on the basis of newly available primary sources, especially those held in the Berlin branch of the Federal Archive and the archive of the federal commissioner for the records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic, as well as the testimonies of Witnesses themselves. This issue of *RSS* brings together the work of four British and German scholars who have conducted research in recent years on the experiences of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic. The original papers were presented at a workshop held at Stafford in February 2004 which was co-organised by the Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Education and Research, Staffordshire University, and the History and Governance Research Institute of the University of Wolverhampton. The revised articles, which focus on the tribulations of Jehovah's Witnesses in the concentration camps and prisons of the Third Reich and the GDR, the experiences of the children of Witnesses during the years 1933 to 1989, the policies of the two regimes, and the persecution of the Witnesses by the Ministry of State Security, are intended to explore and stimulate further research and discussion of the modalities of state control and everyday life under the two dictatorships.

February 2006

PHILIP WALTERS

## Notes on Contributors

**Mike Dennis** is professor of modern German history at Wolverhampton University. His major research area is the German Democratic Republic. His recent publications include *The Stasi: Myth and Reality* (London, 2003) and (co-edited with Karin Weiss) *Erfolg in der Nische? Die Vietnamesen in der DDR und in Ostdeutschland* (Münster, 2005).

**Annegret Dirksen** studied economics in Dresden. She was refused further advancement in the academic world because of 'political unreliability' and from 1981 was employed as a textile and clothing purchaser in Dresden. In 1983 she emigrated to West Germany. Since then her research has focused on the persecution of minor religious communities. Her publications include 'Kinder der Zeugen Jehovas: Staatliche Ausgrenzung und soziale Repression' (with H.-H. Dirksen), in Clemens Vollnhals and Jürgen Weber (eds.), *Der Schein der Normalität: Alltag und Herrschaft in der SED-Diktatur* (Munich, 2002) and 'Die Steuerung der Presse zur Kriminalisierung Andersdenkender in der SBZ/DDR', in Gerhard Besier and Clemens Vollnhals (eds.), *Repression und Selbstbehauptung* (Berlin, 2003).

**Hans-Hermann Dirksen**, a lawyer, studied in Kiel and obtained his LL.D. in Greifswald. He has been involved in a number of research projects on the history of minor religions in Eastern Europe in collaboration with the Ruprecht-Karls University in Heidelberg and the Hannah-Arendt-Institut für Totalitarismusforschung in Dresden. His publications include 'Jehovah's Witnesses under communist regimes', *Religion, State & Society*, 30, 3 and 'Keine Gnade den Feinden unserer Republik': *Die Verfolgung der Zeugen Jehovas in der SBZ/DDR 1945–1990* (2nd edition) (Berlin, 2003).

**Johannes S. Wrobel** is a writer and researcher on the history of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany and their persecution during the national socialist and communist periods. Since 1966 he has been head of the Watchtower History Archive of Jehovah's Witnesses in Selters/Taunus (Germany). He has lectured in Austria, England, Germany, Russia, Sweden and Israel and contributed papers to Hans Hesse (ed.), *Persecution and Resistance of Jehovah's Witnesses during the Nazi-Regime 1933–1945* (Bremen, 2001) and Gerhard Besier and Clemens Vollnhals (eds.), *Repression und Selbstbehauptung: die Zeugen Jehovas unter der NS- und der SED-Diktatur* (Berlin, 2003). His most recent essays were published in *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte/Contemporary Church History* (2003) and in Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel (eds.), *Der Ort des Terrors: Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager* (vols 2 and 4, Munich, 2006).