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IN PRAISE OF SAINTS PAUL (PEACHEY & MOJZES)
by James Will

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During the years I was privileged to serve as president of CAREE, a large part of that privilege was having as colleagues Paul Peachey and Paul Mojzes. They both knew from experience and study very much about Eastern Europe, enriched by their professional competence as sociologist in Prof. Peachey’s case and ecumenical theologian in Prof. Mojzes’. During those years, CAREE initiated two new projects that bore fruit for years to come.

Much of this fruit was delivered through publication: In large part from Prof. Peachey’s leadership of CAREE’S program on human rights, a special issue of the interdisciplinary journal Soundings was published in the Summer 1984 issue on “The East-West Encounter over Human Rights; Its Religious and Social Context.” And, of course as the location of this brief essay in this journal indicates, for more than three decades the publication of what was originally named “Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe,” which, because of the excellent editing of Paul Mojzes, soon went beyond “occasional” to become Religion in Eastern Europe.

Paul Peachey lived, worked and studied in various European countries, often as a Mennonite with the Mennonite Central Committee and the American Friends Service Committee, traveling frequently in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The last decades of his career were on the faculty of the Catholic University of America in Washington DC as Professor of Sociology.

Paul Mojzes had even deeper roots for his outstanding contributions in helping many understand Eastern Europe because he was quite literally “at home” there. Paul was born in Yugoslavia of parents who served as pastors of a Methodist congregation under both Nazi and Communist governments. Paul’s mother continued to serve the congregation as pastor after her husband died, both having to deal with the restrictions of a communist government after the earlier oppression of a Nazi regime. Such was the foundation in early experience of Paul’s life-long commitments to freedom and justice.

Before coming to (and remaining in) the United States as a graduate student, Paul was educated in Yugoslavian schools. This, of course, is the foundation of his competence in Slavic and German languages, which so benefitted his editorial labors, and even more importantly, the depth of his understanding of the issues in the papers he was publishing. During his distinguished career as Professor and Dean, he also actively led many programs advancing Christian-Marxist dialogue.

So I celebrate these two Pauls, not only calling them friend and colleague, and referencing their honorific titles of Professor and Editor, but also testifying to their faithful witness as Christians, and even daring to embarrass them by thinking of them publicly as Saints. Saints Paul (Mojzes) and Paul (Peachey) brought light and truth to many of us, and we are grateful.