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Editorial

Paul Mojzes

Rosemont College, Rosemont, PA, pmojzes@rosemont.edu

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EDITORIAL

Our intention is to provide analyses of the religious situation in Eastern Europe by interested observers and participants from both West and East. It was to be expected that most of the articles would be written by scholars living in the West, but we are making efforts to obtain contributions by those living in Eastern Europe. In a few instances we have used materials previously published in Eastern Europe, and we had hoped for original contributions, but some of our colleagues from Eastern Europe who initially considered writing for OPREE have not done so. It seems that we now have some clues for their reticence. One colleague from an Eastern European country, whose identity is best left obscure, wrote an article on a topic not controversial in the East which could, it seemed, be published in Western scholarly journals with no risk for the author. However, we were informed that this particular manuscript could not be published in OPREE because we have previously published an article which was not complimentary to the author's country, and the authorities of that country would not look favorably upon theologians being associated with OPREE.

Such a state of affairs is often described by our Eastern European colleagues as their "limitations," and material which is uncomplimentary to the authorities is described privately as "problematic," while in public it may evoke a harsher condemnation. I do not here want to make an issue of the regretful predicament of our colleagues either by berating them for their lack of courage or for having to make some compromises as they sense the limits of their possibilities. It is probably the prudent thing to do; an article in OPREE certainly is not worth risking unpleasant confrontations with or explanations to the authorities. Rather it seems to me to be a damning indictment of government censorship of both incoming and outgoing material. In 1984, the year of Orwell's "Big Brother," this seems particularly ominous. In some Eastern European countries at least, "Big Brother" is watching for even the slightest hints of potential noncompliance. OPREE seems to me particularly harmless; it has a small circulation and only a few copies, to our knowledge, are being mailed to Eastern Europe--all to institutions in good working relations with their governments. Yet it seems that the authorities in some of these countries are aware of the

contents of certain of our articles! Instead of the authorities being eager perhaps to offset an uncomplimentary article with one written by a theologian generally sympathetic to the government, the atmosphere of repression not only affects what is being written but even determines which publications are deemed safe. This is clearly a case of guilt by association!

An informed observer may correctly surmise that many statements made by our colleagues in Eastern Europe--both Christian and Marxist--are very carefully couched because they are intended not only for the person or groups to whom they are addressed but also for those in positions of power who have the ability to review and perhaps condemn the statements. We do not wish to belabor this point here, though much more could be said about governments which three decades or more after assuming power still need to intimidate even their more trusted citizens. As for OPREE, we shall cherish even more those contributions which we might get from Eastern European contributors because we have an appreciation of the cost to the writers. And we feel sadness and compassion for those for whom the risk is too high.

To us the preferable approach would be that, if any of our readers from East or West disagree with any of our author's appraisals, views, facts, or interpretations, they either write their own versions and send it to us for publication, or write a letter to the editor providing an alternate view. Surely there will be articles which will be displeasing to someone; intelligent discourse requires entering into a dialogue on controversial matters. We are ready to offer OPREE for such dialogue.

The three papers in this issue were written by authors with first-hand experience in Eastern Europe. As announced in the previous issue, Walter Sawatsky's article on the Soviet Evangelical Baptists is being published in this number. Sawatsky is certainly among those who know the Soviet Protestant Christians most thoroughly, and he writes about them objectively and sympathetically. The second article is by Paul Mojzes on the relationship between the Marxists and Christians in Yugoslavia since World War II, offering here a basic overview of the changing interactions between the two. Finally, in the third article, Emmerich András focuses on the renewal of the Greek Catholic Church in Hungary.

Paul Mojzes, Editor