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PROTESTANT THEOLOGY IN EASTERN EUROPE PRIOR TO 1989

By James E. Will

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The political and religious history of what is now considered Eastern Europe has left the German Democratic Republic as the only society whose majority tradition is protestant. The Lutheran reformation, propelled by its initial success in Saxony and the support of the Prussian kings, also spread strongly through East Prussia into the Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia, now the only republics with a dominant protestant tradition in the Soviet Union. Initially influential in what is now Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, but later defeated and diminished by the counter-reformation, protestantism lives a minority existence in these Roman Catholic societies—a very small minority in Poland, a more significant minority in CSSR, and a strong minority in Hungary. Hungary is the only state where the Calvinist reformation was more successful than the Lutheran, so that its Reformed Church of two million members is more than three times as large as its Lutheran Church. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the Calvinist tradition now exercises its influence mainly through unions with the larger Lutheran churches in Czechoslovakia and some of the regional churches in Germany, where they are the legacy of the enlightened and ecumenical theology of giants like Schleiermacher plus the Prussian government’s concern for unity.

The dominant religious tradition in the rest of Eastern Europe is Orthodoxy. Emanating from Byzantium, it has constituted national churches in Georgia, Russia and the Ukraine in the USSR, Bulgaria, Romania, and Serbia in Yugoslavia. The Armenian Apostolic Church
in the Soviet Union is similar to the Orthodox, though it has a non-Chalcedonian element in its tradition. The other two large north Yugoslavian republics, Croatia and Slavenia, remain Roman Catholic as a legacy of long Austrian influence. But almost the whole of the southern tier of Eastern Europe is solidly Orthodox, extending then northward into Russia when it reaches the Ural Mountains at the eastern boundary of the European peninsula. Orthodoxy knew no reformation and was much less influenced by the renaissance and enlightenment than the Roman Catholic and Protestant cultures to its north and west. Following the Byzantine policy of "symphony" between church and state, it left little room through much of its history for protestant churches. Thus protestantism lives a very small minority existence in the Soviet Union, Romania and Yugoslavia and is almost invisible in Bulgaria.

This brief sketch of Eastern European religious history indicates why most contemporary protestant theology emanates from the theological faculties of the German Democratic Republic. While there are contributions coming from Hungarian Reformed faculties in Debrecen and Budapest and the Budapest Lutheran faculty in Hungary, the Comenius faculty in Prague and the Lutheran faculty in Bratislava, CSSR, the ecumenical faculty of the Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw, and the small ecumenical faculty in Yugoslavia, there is little resource or time for creative theological work in most of the very small protestant communities of Eastern Europe.

Thus the longest section of this essay will be a discussion of theological developments in the G.D.R. Indeed, the whole of the essay could be devoted to theology there. Time, space, and limited experience, however, will allow discussion of only some examples. The earlier sections of this essay, however, will be devoted to describing the theological work being done in other parts of Eastern Europe where protestantism constitutes a more minority tradition.

The Soviet Union

The only protestant theological faculties in the Soviet Union are very small Lutheran Institutes in Estonia and Latvia. Estonia once had a very significant theological faculty at the University of Tartu (Dorpat in German) founded in 1632 when it was ruled by Sweden, and reorganized in 1802 by the Germans. This faculty, however, has been closed since Estonia became part of the Soviet Union, only partially replaced by a small part-time faculty in the Theological Institute organized under the Consistory in Tallinn. They educate about fifty students, in part by correspondence, with one week of classes per month in Tallinn. There is a similar small Lutheran faculty in Riga, Latvia that trains pastors for congregations in that republic, as well as a few for the neighboring, largely Roman Catholic republic of Lithuania. The forty students must do their work almost entirely by correspondence.
Neither of these faculties, however, is in a position to do creative theological work or publication, being fully engaged in the struggle to maintain the major characteristics of their Lutheran tradition, which was and remains very pietistic. Dr. Edgar Hark, Archbishop of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church until his recent death, wrote in 1983:

Martin Luther said, the way to blessedness is open to those who have the Word of God. Our Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church will hold fast to this teaching, protect this truth, and proclaim it everywhere. May the Word of the Lord admonish us: "Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown." (Rev. 3:11)

Estonia is also the only republic in the Soviet Union where an annual conference of the Methodist Church is to be found. But none of the ministers of its fifteen congregations have had the opportunity for formal theological education. The last one to have had this opportunity is its now retired Superintendent, Alexander Kuum, who studied in the Methodist seminary in Frankfurt, Germany before World War II. All of its pastors are now trained as deacons in their largest congregation in the capital city, Tallinn. This spiritually lively and active congregation is also the largest Methodist congregation in all of Europe and thus provides a creative context for practical pastoral training. Perhaps a significant threshold has been crossed in 1988, however, when the first student from Estonia was enrolled in the Methodist Theological Seminary in Bad Klosterlausnitz in the German Democratic Republic.

The largest protestant institution in the Soviet Union is the Union of Evangelical Baptist Christians, which also includes Mennonites and Pentecostal congregations and stretches across all of Russia, the Ukraine, the Baltic Republics, the trans-Caucasian Republics, and Siberia. It has been able to send a small number of its pastors to western societies for higher theological education, especially Great Britain and West Germany, thus preparing a faculty for a resident seminary that it hopes to begin in the near future. But up to now it has had to train its pastors through a correspondence school organized in its center in Moscow, which regularly enrolls about 100 students. Many of its correspondence courses originally were adapted from materials of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, though they have undergone further development.

Evaluatory generalizations may only be very carefully made for so large and complex a state as the Soviet Union, but it seems fair to conclude that no protestant church or faculty there has been in a position to do creative theological work. Whatever time and energy has been able to be organized for theological education has had to be almost, if not entirely, devoted to practical pastoral training and the maintenance of endangered traditions. This is not as true of the three seminaries and two academies of the Russian Orthodox Church in Leningrad, Odessa, and Zagorsk (Moscow), but that is another story.
Poland

Poland has one of the most unique theological institutions in the protestant world. The Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw is predominantly protestant and even Lutheran, but ecumenically unites a faculty of three sections: Old Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. It was organized in 1954 to replace the Evangelical Theological Faculty of the University of Warsaw, that had united the theological work of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches since 1921. This ecumenical structure is the fruit of a long history of Polish tolerance, greater than that of most other European nations, for different churches living together in the same society. Despite the great predominance and sometimes intolerance of the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox, Lutheran, Reformed, and other churches, to say nothing of the largest Jewish population in Europe, had lived together there in relative peace for centuries, and to some extent still do, though the minority churches are a much smaller minority after the borders of Poland were redrawn following World War II.

As a university level faculty, the Christian Theological Academy has the right to grant degrees up to the second (habilitation) doctorate, as well as the right to publish its own monographs and a theological journal twice a year. Though the preparation of priests and ministers for the eight minority churches united in the Polish Ecumenical Council is the first priority, careful attention is also given to creative theological research and publication. To satisfy the need for manuals in its basic degree programs the faculty in the Protestant section have published a number of books during the last two decades. Prof. Waldemar Gastpary, the long-time rector (d. 1984), published a three-volume Church History in 1967, second edition 1971, and a two-volume History of Protestantism in Poland in 1977. Prof. Victor Niemczyk published his Philosophy of Religion in 1964, with a second edition in 1987 and his History of Dogma in 1961, second edition 1984. Prof. Jan Niemczyk and Alfred Tschirschnitz published their manual on The History and Ethnology of the Old Testament in 1987. The professor of systematic theology, Dr. Witold Benedyktovicz, has published Christian Irenology in 1965, Protestant Theological Ethics, 1975, and intends to finish his manual on Protestant Dogmatics in 1989. The achievement of this degree of publication is quite astonishing when one considers the range of practical responsibilities carried by many on this faculty. Professor Benedyktovicz, for instance, has been simultaneously the pastor of the Methodist congregation in Warsaw, General Superintendent of the Methodist Annual Conference in Poland, president of the Polish Ecumenical Council, as well as "full-time" professor.

This spirit of ecumenical openness and cooperation has also led this faculty in recent years to develop systematic cooperation with the Protestant Theological Faculty of the University of Bonn, with an annual exchange of faculty lecturers. There is a similar

Polish scholars in the so-called Warsaw school of logic have made internationally recognized contributions in the area of semantics and semiotics. Inter-disciplinary dialogue on the problems of religious language has been increasingly facilitated in the last decades by the fact that there are a number of practicing Christians among the logicians in these secular institutions. Scholars in the Christian Academy of Theology: Witold Benedyktowicz, Michal Klinger and Janusz Maciuszko have published their contributions to this on-going dialogue in recent editions of the *Journal* (year book) of the Academy.²

It is obvious that there is an amazing amount of creative theological work and publication accomplished amongst a relatively small group of protestant scholars in contemporary Poland. It is in part the fruit of the ecumenical and inter-disciplinary communication that has been developing there, especially in the last decade. The political turbulence associated with the emergence and suppression of the Solidarity union has both revealed and masked this on-going, underlying development in Poland for many in the West. But it continues to bear both good cultural and theological fruit within Polish society.

**Czechoslovakia**

Czechoslovakia was well-known in the late 1960's as the center of creative Christian-Marxist dialogue. Josef Hromádka had left his professorship at Princeton Theological Seminary after ten years to return to his native land and original faculty in 1947 to become Professor of Theology and Dean of the Comenius Theological Faculty in Prague with just this creative intention. While retaining his place in the international ecumenical movement, e.g., as a leading participant in the World Council of Churches, he helped found and become the first president (1956-68) of the East European based Christian Peace Conference and was a leading figure in the development of the dialogue with Marxists.³ His principal partner from the Marxist side was Milan Machovec, professor of philosophy in the Charles University in Prague until 1970, and leader of the Christian-Marxist seminar in that university during the 1960's. What was barely tolerated in its beginning became publicly
celebrated in the Dubček regime, making its own contribution to the creation of "socialism with a human face" during the all-too-brief "Prague Spring." I experienced one of the public events in May 1968 where almost a thousand Prague citizens submitted questions for five hours to ten Marxist and Christian scholars for discussion under Professor Machovec's leadership.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact forces in August 1968 brought almost all of this creative work to an end. Prof. Hromadka resigned his leadership of the Christian Peace Conference in protest and died shortly thereafter in 1969. Prof. Machovec was removed from his professorship in Charles University in 1970, though he has said that the principal problems did not arise so much from his leadership of the Christian-Marxist dialogue as from his presidency in the Prague Society for Human Rights. He continued his personal research and publication in this area, however, becoming even better known in the West for his widely-read Jesus für Atheisten, translated into English under the title A Marxist Looks at Jesus. 4

It is remarkable that precisely in the German Democratic Republic, a state that participated in the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, what was then and there aborted is now remembered and even supported. We shall return to the dialogue that is increasingly manifesting and even institutionalizing itself in the G.D.R., but it is relevant here to note that Manfred Punge, the referent for theological studies in the Federation of Protestant Churches in the G.D.R., not only borrowed Hromadka's title "An der Schwelle des Dialogs" for his essay on the current dialogue between Christians and Marxists in the G.D.R., but extensively quoted both Hromádka and Machovec. 5 It gives cause to remember what a close colleague of Hromádka had said in 1971: "Just as the martyred John Hus was a Czech forerunner of the reformation that succeeded in Germany a century later, the Czech leaders in the reformation of socialism in the 1960's would prove to have led the way toward developments that would also later succeed."

Be that as it may prove to be, Czechoslovakia has been a difficult and even restrictive place to do theology in the last two decades. This appears to have been more true at least during the 1970's for the more ecumenically oriented Comenius faculty of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren (a union of Lutheran and Reformed Churches) in Prague, than for the Lutheran faculty in Bratislava. The stimulation of the celebration of the 500th anniversary of Luther's birth in 1983 led at least two scholars from the Bratislava faculty to creative reflections on the engagement of their Lutheran tradition with contemporary society.

Igor Kiss, a dozent on the Bratislava faculty, who more recently has become an active participant in the Christian-Marxist dialogues held in Hungary and the G.D.R., examined Luther's two-kingdom teaching from the standpoint of Karl Barth's powerful critique that Luther failed to understand the positive analogy between church and state. 6 Kiss not only
defends Luther from Barth (because Barth allegedly knew Luther primarily through Ernst Troeltsch), but presents Luther as a forerunner of Barth's own teaching. Luther not only gave the state—the "kingdom of this world"—a legal basis, but, like Barth, grounded its meaning in the gospel. Thus Lutherans as Lutherans may not understand the state as the sovereign source of its own laws ("eigengesetzlichkeit"). Just as one may not mix and confuse the two kingdoms, so one may not separate them. Though Luther strongly attacked the analogy of being, he accepted and used the analogy of faith, so that he could relate the biblical revelation to human life in this world. Kiss notes that both Barth and Bonhoeffer prefer the similar term *analogia relationis*, which allows them to articulate the relation between Christian and secular ethics. The social and political structures of this world, according to Kiss's understanding of Luther, are to reflect and approximate as nearly as possible under the conditions of sin the Kingdom of God. When the social ethic of later Lutheranism separated the two Kingdoms, they distorted and even falsified Luther's original teaching. The humanism that is the basis for civil law must be analogous to the love of God revealed in the gospel. Only a humanistic state may fulfill the criteria of the Christian and Lutheran social ethic. The importance of this essay is clear in that it clarifies the theological basis for the Lutheran church's engagement in its society for peace, justice, freedom, and human rights.

Karol Nandrasky, professor of Old Testament in the Bratislava faculty, undertook an even more comprehensive task in interpreting Luther in the context of the hellenization and dehellenization of Christendom. It is not theologically surprising that as an Old Testament scholar he grounds theology in God's action in history. But the sharpness of his "attack on Christendom" goes even beyond Kierkegaard, whom he also cites. Kierkegaard's prophecy of a dark future for a Christendom which no longer was Christian has been more than fulfilled. The church in much of Europe has become like the remnant of North American Indians telling old stories on their reservations far removed from the dynamics of contemporary life. Nandrasky sees this as a consequence of an abstract hellenized theology that had misled the church into losing its living relation to the God of history. Luther's struggle against scholastic theology then should been as an unfinished process of bringing the church back to a proper relation with the living God. Even Melanchthon had allowed the philosophical snake, Aristotle, back into the church's garden to tempt it again to eat from the wrong tree of knowledge. Thus, even Lutherans fell again into the same kind of sterile orthodoxy that caused the death of Catholic Christendom. The living God has become questionable, strange, and even enemy in Europe because even God's people have become estranged from Him. Orthodoxy's hellenized abstract God is dead. The hellenistic dualism between spirit and matter has banished the living God from our life-world. But truth is concrete and human sin is concrete. Thus the church must return via the metaphorical form
of biblical theology to a theology of transition, transformation, and synthesis that will allow it more faithfully to follow Jesus into the future God has promised for all of humanity. Lutherans may also thus follow Luther in his struggle to de-hellenize the church before it completely dies.

The slightly hysterical form, as it seems to me, of this nevertheless powerful theological reflection perhaps derives from its too limited possibility for richer ecumenical engagement. Its thesis is similar, however, to the kind of theology that characterizes the work of the more ecumenically engaged Comenius faculty in Prague. It is here that the magnificent influence of Josef Hromádka continues among his former students and colleagues. Some are better known in the West: J.M. Lochman because he left his professorship in the Comenius faculty in the early 70's to become professor of theology in Basel. Milan Opočensky because he was the General Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation in Geneva for almost a decade in the 1970's before returning to his professorship of social ethics in Prague. Lochman is known among English readers for his book Church in a Marxist Society\(^8\) and Opočensky for his work on Christians and Revolution: A Breakthrough in Christian Thought.\(^9\) Opočensky's book was translated into German with an additional chapter in 1982 (Widerstand und Revolution, München, Kaiser Verlag).

Opočensky takes Nandrasky's similar concern that theology again become more biblical, dynamic, and historically relevant and examines it in the light of the social, economic, political, scientific, and technical revolutions that humanity is undergoing in the twentieth century. He bases his theological reflection not only on the Bible and Luther but also relates it especially to the Hussite history of his own people, some of the early work of the Christian Peace Conference, and most extensively to the world-wide reflections of the ecumenical church that have been stimulated and coordinated by the World Council of Churches. It is thus appropriate that Philip Potter, then the general secretary of the WCC, wrote the foreword to the German edition. Opočensky's continuing relation to the ecumenical movement and the appearance of his book in several languages indicates that Czech theologians, despite the limits they have experienced especially since 1968, have significant opportunities for theological publication and influence.

Some Czech theologians, however, have remained at home more completely than Lochman and Opočensky. Indeed, some have remained at home under difficult restrictions. One notable instance is Jakub Trojan, a pastor of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, whom the state has refused to license so that he is unable to work in the church. One of the reasons for his difficulty with the state is his participation in the human rights group "Charter 77," which publicly criticizes the state for not fulfilling the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. Nevertheless, like the Marxist philosopher, Machovec, Trojan continues
to write and publish. His book *Entfremdung und Nachfolge* (Estrangement and Discipleship) appeared from the Kaiser Verlag, München, in 1980.

Ludek Brož, Lochman's successor as professor of theology in Prague after he went to Basel, has had his book on *The Gospel for Today* published by the SPCK in Madras, India in 1985. Josef Smolik, professor of practical theology and dean of the Comenius faculty for the last decade, has also continued his significant leadership and participation in his church, the Christian Peace Conference, and the oekumene. One of the fruits is that a collection of his essays (a Sammelband) was published by the Evangelische Verlaganstalt Berlin (Ost) in 1982, *Erbe im Heute* (Heritage for Today), which interprets the meaning of Hus, Comenius, and Hromádka for contemporary ecclesial and social issues.

Professor Smolik and his colleagues in the Comenius faculty also have sought to nourish and make use of this heritage by holding consultations on "The First and Radical Reformation." The second consultation held in June 1987 brought more than thirty representatives to Prague from eight related churches: Church of the Brethren, Czechoslovak Hussite Church, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Hutterian Brethren, Mennonite, Moravian, the Society of Friends, and Waldensians. Professor Smolik began the consultation with a reflection on "strength through weakness" based on 1 Cor 2, where he pointed to the fact that their churches traditionally have looked at history from below and suggested this offers a unique perspective of solidarity with those marginalized by society. Professor Opočensky stressed the importance of recovering the original reformation's eschatology as a resource for the contemporary ecumenical church's witness in peacemaking, economic justice, and the ecological integrity of creation.10

Professor Smolik also has taken part in the new series of Christian-Marxist dialogues that began in Hungary in 1984. His contribution in this first meeting reveals again the characteristic Czech concern to bring the dynamic eschatological dimensions of Christian faith to bear on their social engagement: "Die Bedeutung der christlichen Eschatologie im Dialog" (The Meaning of Christian Eschatology in the Dialogue).11 Smolik argues that the church's loss of its eschatological perspective and commitment is now deeply and properly challenged by the "secular eschatology" of Marxism. Though these eschatologies are far from identical, the fact that both the Church and Marxism are characterized by historical hope and engagement for human fulfillment makes their dialogue possible and their cooperative work meaningful.

It is especially the work of theologians like Smolik that demonstrates the possibility of living through and overcoming the tragedy of 1968 by remaining faithful to the rich heritage they received especially through the influence of Josef Hromádka. The real political restrictions they have known have not been able to overcome their Christian freedom and responsibility.
Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia

The reference above to the new series of Christian-Marxist dialogues that began in the Reformed Theological Seminary in Debrecen in 1984 has already brought us to some of the contemporary theological activity in Hungary. Hungary is institutionally better equipped for protestant theological work than are the Soviet Union, Poland, or even Czechoslovakia. It has two long and well-established Reformed theological schools in Debrecen and Budapest, and a Lutheran Theological Seminary also in Budapest. There is no other predominantly Catholic society in Eastern Europe that has quite so strong protestant theological institutions. Indeed, Debrecen has historically been so strong a center of the Reformed Church that it has been called the "Protestant Rome," though that title seems more apt for Geneva. The long episcopal leadership of Bishop Tibor Bartha in Debrecen and the more recent astute episcopal leadership of Bishop Károly Tóth in Budapest has maintained the strength of these institutions, as has the strong support of the Lutheran World Federation for the Lutheran Seminary. The Lutheran Bishop Zoltán Káldy was the president of the LWF until his recent death in 1986, and his successor, Béká Harmati, was a member of the Lutheran faculty on leave to serve as the Study Secretary for the Conference of European Churches in Geneva until his election as bishop.

This already indicates the good possibilities for ecumenical interaction that many leaders in the Hungarian church have enjoyed. Bishop László Kürti, now resident in Miskolc but director of the Debrecen school until his episcopal election, was one of the two representatives from Eastern Europe on the Working Committee of the Churches' Human Rights Programme for the Realization of the Helsinki Final Act, and made important contributions to this ecumenical work of the Conference of European Churches, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, and the Canadian Council of Churches. Bishop Toth has been president of the Christian Peace Conference since 1978 as well as holding responsible positions in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and World Council of Churches. All of this indicates the openness that has increasingly characterized the Hungarian society as it recovered from its severe crisis and Soviet invasion of 1956. As the result of a steady policy ever since of support for the foreign policy of the Soviet Union internationally and of gradual and continuing liberalization internally, Hungary now provides its citizens more freedom of expression and of travel than anywhere else in Eastern Europe. This, of course, has had its good ecumenical effect on its theological work.

On the other hand, the national program of support for Soviet foreign policy has required certain limits. In my experience of many Eastern European church leaders, none was more sycophantic in his support for Soviet policy than Bishop Bartha, while none could be so creative while remaining within its limits than Bishop Toth. The emergence of more
authentic peace initiatives in Soviet foreign policy along with a genuine commitment to 
glasnost under Mikhail Gorbachev, however, has significantly changed the Soviet limits under which Hungarian leaders work. One of the evidences for this is the re-emergence of Christian-Marxist dialogue in Hungary in cooperation with scholars from Czechoslovakia and especially from the German Democratic Republic.

There have been four conferences in this series, three of which have taken place in Debrecen. We have already referred to the first in 1984. The second took place at the end of May 1985 on "The Ethical Implications of Humanity" and the fourth in April 1988 on the theme of "Justice." The third in the series took place in Güstrow, GDR in 1986 on "The Meaning of Life and Labor." This program has now organized itself under the title of "The Conference of Systematic Theologians of the Socialist Countries of East Europe," under the leadership of Prof. Helmut Fritzsche of the German Democratic Republic, Prof., now Bishop (since 1987) Elemér Kocsis of Hungary and Prof. Josef Smolík of Czechoslovakia. Thus far, however, almost all of the participants (30-50 for each conference), whether Christian or Marxist, have come from Hungary and the German Democratic Republic. But the title indicates the expectation of a growing participation from other East European societies.

Thus far only the papers from the first two series in Debrecen have been published, both edited by Prof. Kocsis in the German language. The first on Ergebnisse und Möglichkeiten des Christlich-Marxistischen Dialogs (Experiences and Possibilities of Christian-Marxist Dialogue) contains eight Christian and three Marxist contributions from the thirty theologians and five Marxist philosophers who participated. The concluding Protocol summarizing the conference says in part:

... the development of socialist societies has reached a point in which questions of human consciousness, ethics, individual responsibility, and especially the tension (abstimmung) between individual and social interests are coming more and more into the foreground. Therefore it is important to recognize the specific, and also always the contradictory, developing tendencies in the society and to seriously consider their ethical challenges. In the light of the testing situations created by the contradictions developing in socialist societies, the cooperation of Christians and Marxists for social progress toward a more humane society becomes ever more necessary.

That so clear a statement of the problems emerging within socialist societies could be accepted by the Marxists present indicates that this discussion was not the first such in Hungary, but followed upon the first public Marxist-Protestant dialogue in Debrecen in 1981, and the first international Christian-Marxist Dialogue in Budapest in February 1984, organized by the Philosophical Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and led by Prof. József Lukács (d. 1987). Prof. Lukács' presentation to the 1984 Debrecen conference was a remarkably astute and irenic interpretation of the earlier dialogue and the possibilities and problems of continuing dialogue.
The second volume on *The Ethical Implications of Humanity*, published in German in Debrecen in 1986, is equally constituted of five essays each by Marxists and Christians. What is under discussion in various ways is the relation of anthropology and ethics. The Marxists' contributions range from a beautifully sensitive and literary discussion of the difficulty and wonder of human relations by Prof. Eva Ancsel of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences to an almost sterile rendition of the "orthodox" marxist ideological interpretation of international relations by Prof. István Konya. These two marxist essays seemed to reflect again the inner freedom of the Hungarians to deal creatively with their personal and social lives as long as they remain rigidly orthodox in their view on foreign relations. Prof. Konya expressed his expectation that "all that the theologians will say [about the humanization of international relations] will harmonize with what I have said" (p. 124). But this was not entirely the case. The Czech Lutheran theologian we have already discussed, Igor Kiss of Bratislava, related his concrete hopes for the humanization of international relations far more to the United Nations and the associated development of an "international conscience of humanity" (p. 106) than to Konya's "socialist internationalism" centered in the Soviet Union (p. 122).

In any case, the political, economic, and social situation in Hungary is now such that creative Christian-Marxist dialogue can take place, and even on such sensitive issues as international relations and both domestic and international justice, which was the theme for 1988.

Neither Romania nor Yugoslavia have anything like the basis for theological work that Hungarian protestants enjoy, largely because they are such small minority churches. Nevertheless, the long-established German minority in Siebenburgen is largely Lutheran, while the Hungarian minority in this western part of Romania remains largely Reformed. Though the Lutherans had already in the eighteenth century unsuccessfully tried to create their own university in Hermannstadt (now Sibiu), it was not until 1949 that they had a theological school at the university level. The United Protestant Theological Institute in Klausenburg was founded following World War II to educate students of Romania's four protestant churches: the Lutheran, Reformed, Unitarian, and Evangelical Synod Presbyterian (Hungarian Lutheran). The German-speaking Lutheran section of this Institute, located in Sibiu, is the largest, having about forty students and five full-time, plus three part-time professors. Their relation to other protestant churches in this Institute has led to greater ecumenical openness in these confessional churches, as well as to Orthodox-Protestant dialogue with the majority Romanian Orthodox Church, to which about 85% of all Romanian citizens belong. Romania, however, remains one of the most strictly controlled societies in Eastern Europe, strictly limiting the number of students who may prepare for the ministry and providing little opportunity for publication or international participation of its faculty.
Though Protestants are even a smaller minority in the predominantly Roman Catholic and Orthodox parts of Yugoslavia that are historically Christian, they have much more freedom for travel and publication. The most viable protestant theological institution in Yugoslavia today is the Biblical Theological Institute in the city of Osijek in Croatia. Led by the pentecostal pastor and scholar Peter Kuzmić, it has a genuinely ecumenical and even international form—one of its full-time teachers, Gerald Shenk, is a Mennonite from the U.S.A. It also incorporates Baptists and Methodists on its board or faculty. A very important connection with the cultural heritage of the larger Croatian society was the 1983 publication in Zagreb of Kuzmić's book on The Vuk-Daničić Translation of the Bible and the Bible Societies in Serbo-Croatian. This was Kuzmić's dissertation for his Dr.Theol. degree in the Roman Catholic faculty of Zagreb, the first Protestant to receive this degree from that faculty. Because Vuk is such an important figure in Croatian literature, Kuzmić's publication has received wide recognition in Zagreb and Belgrade newspapers. Some of Kuzmić's work has also been published in English, notably his "History and Eschatology: Evangelical Views," in In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility, Eerdmans, 1985, pp. 135-163, and "The Church and the Kingdom of God," in Nicholls, ed., The Church: God's Agent for Change, Paternoster, Australia, 1986, pp. 49-81.

The most published member of this faculty is Miroslav Volf, who finished his Dr.Theol. degree with Moltmann at Tübingen in 1986. Judy Gundry-Volf, an American who is Miroslav's wife, also finished her doctorate at Tübingen in New Testament studies in 1988, which she teaches on this faculty. Miroslav Volf's dissertation with Moltmann was on Zukunft der Arbeit - Arbeit der Zukunft (The Future of Work - The Work of the Future), which is now being published by Chr. Kaiser Verlag, München and Matt. Grunewald Verlag, Mainz. Volf also has published several works in Yugoslavia, based on and interpreting the religious poetry of their notable nineteenth-century poet, Aleksa Santic. His 1987 book in Serbo-Croatian is titled I Know that the Sun Does Not Fear the Darkness: Theological Meditations on the Religious Poetry of Aleksa Santic. He also is publishing an article in the Serbian Orthodox Journal in Belgrade on "Nature between God and Humanity," which is a theological-ecological reflection again related to the work of this Serbian Orthodox poet. Volf also has published something of his pneumatological understanding of work in English in Pneuma, the Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Fall 1987, pp. 173-193. He critiques the predominant protestant understanding of work as vocation--cooperating with God in continuous creation--from his more pneumatological understanding that work is cooperation with God in the transformation of the world.

It is obvious that a very small minority is learning how to exercise its theological creativity both within the Yugoslavian culture as well as internationally.
The German Democratic Republic

We return in conclusion to the one society in Eastern Europe where the protestant church is the major tradition, and thus where most of protestant theology is to be found. The German Democratic Republic is the home of the Lutheran reformation in Saxony and has carefully preserved the Luther memorials in Wittenberg, Eisenach (the Wartburg), and Erfurt (the Augustinian monastery) and as a state and society joined the church in great public celebration of Luther's 500th birthday in 1983. Which is to say that this Marxist-led state has learned to accept and even to a degree celebrate its religio-cultural heritage. The state, of course, also celebrates, and perhaps more wholeheartedly, the work of the reformer Thomas Müntzer, who led the peasant revolt that Luther so violently rejected. They see a more direct relation between Müntzer's foiled attempt and their own successful revolution in the twentieth century. Müntzer's memory also functions as a cultural counter-balance from the radical reformation to the conservative use of Luther still sometimes found. A degree of pluralism, ambivalence, and ambiguity remains in this secular but basically protestant society, which is also nourished by the impact that the West German mass media has on the majority of the population who can regularly see and hear its television and radio.

The ambivalence in the relation of church and state is clearly marked in its structures for theological education. More than half of those trained to be pastors in the eight regional churches are educated in the theology sections of six state universities in Berlin-Ost, Greifswald, Halle, Jena, Leipzig, and Rostock. The number of students has significantly increased during the last decade from approximately 400 to 600. The number in Rostock, for instance, has gone from about 30 to 70, with the larger faculties like Leipzig having 120. The more than fifty professors and instructors (dozents), plus an equal number of assistants, are all employees of the state, just as are all of the other faculty of these state universities. There are always some in the West who are amazed to find theological faculties in Marxist-led state universities and conclude that they all must have accommodated their theology to an atheist and materialistic world view. But any who have had opportunity to get to know some of these theologians or have read their writings know this is not true. The only obvious limitation they face is an inability to advocate the return of their socialist society to a capitalist form, but many have proposals for its improvement.

Another 400 or so students study in the theological colleges (Kirchliche Hochschulen) that are entirely under church direction and support in Berlin-Ost, Leipzig, and Naumburg and the Preaching Schools (Predigerschulen) in Berlin-Ost and Erfurt, which prepare those who do not have the academic qualifications to enter one of the other colleges or universities. The faculty of these schools are entirely chosen and paid by the church. But the organization and curricula of the university faculties and church seminaries are very
much the same, both following the tradition of Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Systematic Theology, Practical Theology, and the classical languages of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, plus perhaps Ecumenics. The faculty of the church's theological colleges, if they have doctoral degrees and habilitation doctorates, have usually gotten them from study and research in the state university theological faculties.

There is no characteristic East Germany theology and there are no widely recognized theologians who stand out in the way that Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg do in West Germany. Theology in the German Democratic Republic remains strongly under the influence of the Lutheran Confessions, the Barmen Declaration of the Confessing Church during the Hitler period, and the theologies of Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The influence of the liberal tradition deriving from Schleiermacher and Ritschl also remains. The fact that there are no theological stars has less to do with internal limitations on their publishing possibilities than the fact that they are little read in the West beyond some circles in the Federal Republic of Germany. But some are very learned and erudite theologians indeed, who actually publish a great deal in both East and West Germany.

It is possible only to give some examples, and so I choose two whose work is based in Berlin. Wolf Kröcke is the professor of systematic theology in the church-based seminary in Berlin-Ost, the so-called Sprachenkonvikt. He is very much in the school of Karl Barth, as his first book shows: Sünde und Nichtiges bei Karl Barth (Sin and Nothingness in Barth's Theology), which was published in East Berlin in 1970 and republished in West Germany by the Neukirchener Verlag in 1983. I also am acquainted with two other of his publications: a series of lectures he gave in 1984 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Barmen Declaration, published in Berlin-Ost in 1986 under the title: Bekennen, Verkündigen, Leben: Barmer Theologische Erklärung und Gemeindepraxis (Confession, Preaching, Life: The Barmen Theological Declaration and Congregational Praxis), and a collection of his essays, most of which were published in the G.D.R. during the 1970's and '80's, now published as a Sammelband by Chr. Kaiser Verlag in München in 1985 under the title Die Universalität des offenbaren Gottes (The Universality of God's Revelation). His theological concern is to have the congregation understand God's revelation as a free and freeing event that took and takes definitive form in Jesus Christ but is universally available to free persons for genuinely human relations of justice and love. He stringently criticizes any abstraction from the revelatory event that would transform revelation into a principle or world-view because in his judgment the revelation then loses its dynamic transformative power for concrete human beings and their communities. His theology is almost entirely oriented to the life of the Christian congregation, though it can require a high degree of theological sophistication to understand some of his argumentation with other theologians.
had opportunity to lecture and participate in conferences in Western Europe and the USA, and has twice published articles on "The Security Debate in the G.D.R." and "Christian-Marxist Cooperation in the German Democratic Republic Since 1945" in Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe in 1987 and 1988; published in the USA.

He is presently involved in a far-reaching effort to institutionalize a creative form of Christian-Marxist dialogue in his university in Rostock. The Theology Section has proposed the creation of a "Research Center for Christians and Marxists in Dialogue over Peace and Society," in cooperation with the Philosophy Section on Marxism-Leninism and the Section on Latin American Studies. The proposal recognizes that the success of the research center depends upon a consensual clarification of its basis in social theory. The dominant Marxist understanding of historical materialism dare not be used any longer to exclude ideological questions if relevant answers for critical social and personal questions are to be found. If Christians as Christians are to be active participants in a socialist society, they must have the possibility of bringing their total perspective into the dialogue. This cannot mean, however, that Christians may seek to ground their world view and ethical concepts directly in revelation in the dialogue with Marxists. Revelation is not communicated in this way and thus cannot be the basis for dialogical consensus. Dialogue is a new form of communicative understanding between social subjects with common and different perspectives, interests, etc. Such social subjects are individuals as well as groups, classes, communities, nations, etc. Christians are social subjects who share a religious consciousness and religious values, which may be characterized in part as (1) "passivity" in terms of receiving the world as it really is; (2) "wholeness" (Ganzheitlichkeit) as seeking for the whole truth which is always more than the sum of its parts; and (3) "concretion" in terms of the "I," "You," and "We" who are participants in the whole. Religious consciousness thus seeks to move from isolated appearances toward concrete truth in subjects who recognize themselves to be both passive and active in suffering and loving.

It is not clear yet whether Marxists in the university and communist party (SED) will be able to accept such a socio-philosophical theory as a basis for common research on actual social problems. But if they do, this Research Center will be a unique place to develop a theory of dialogue that will allow Christians as Christians and Marxists as Marxists to work on such social problems as (1) the transition from adolescence to maturity, (2) the process of group formation, (3) counseling in medical and social ethics, (4) cooperation of Marxists and Christians in Latin American liberation theology, and (5) European security. The Theology Section has already prepared an intensive course in Spanish so that some of its students and staff will be prepared to work on the fourth area of Latin American studies. And Prof. Fritzsche is presently writing a book on the theory of communication that makes
creative use of Hobermas' theories of communicative action to relate the cultural meaning of religion to the dilemmas of modern culture and society.

There is no more space in this essay to demonstrate what I hope is already clear: that there is genuine creativity in the theological circles of the G.D.R. to undergird the church's increasing engagement on personal and social ethical issues in its society and world. It thereby undergirds the concrete theology also articulated in the theological studies section of the Federation of Protestant Church and by church leaders such as Bishop Albrecht Schönerr, Bishop Werner Krusche, and Gen. Supt. Günter Krusche, who was professor of practical theology in the Berlin Theological Seminary until his election as Gen. Supt. of the Church of Berlin-Brandenburg. Good work has also been done for many years in the Gossner Mission, directed for a quarter of a century by Bruno Schottstadt, who is known in some U.S. church circles, and in the Evangelical Academy, directed for many years by Elizabeth Adler, who is also well known for her ecumenical work in the World Council of Churches.

Prof. Gerhard Bassarak also has provided a real service as professor of ecumenics in the Humboldt University in his work in the Christian Peace Conference and in providing publication opportunities for theologians in societies with much smaller protestant churches by editing volumes on *Luther und Luthertum in Ost-Europa* (Luther and Lutheranism in Eastern Europe), 1983, and *Oikumene in Polen* (Ecumenism in Poland), 1982, of which we have made much use in earlier sections of this essay. Theologians in the much smaller theological faculties of the free churches in the G.D.R. seldom publish. But Karl Zehrer, who succeeded Rüdiger Minor, recently elected Bishop of the Methodist Church in the G.D.R., as lecturer in church history in the Methodist Seminary at Bad Klosterlausnitz, has recently published a critical history of the Evangelische Freikirchen und das Dritte Reich (Evangelical Free Churches and the Third Reich), Berlin-Ost, 1986, which analyzes the sometimes tragic failure of these churches to provide an adequate witness during this fateful period in their recent history.

The church in the German Democratic Republic has become clearer and firmer than most in its witness to peace with justice and support of ecological activism. Its official rejection of "the spirit, logic and praxis of deterrence" preceded the positions taken by U.S. Catholic and Methodist bishops more recently in the U.S.A. Its support for youth determined to contribute to social change is often more courageous than many other churches around the world. A recent study by Bishop Minor has shown that 40% of the Methodist young people eligible for the military draft in the G.D.R. choose alternative service. The state and the church are moving with difficulty toward consensus that there no longer can be military solutions to international tensions in our world. All of this indicates that the theology of the East German churches has contributed to an increasingly active witness of Christians on crucial issues in their society.
Endnotes


10. Unpublished report written by Dr. Gerald Shenk, "Reformation Consultation in Prague on Eschatology and Social Transformation."


