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## Editorial (Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe: Volume 22, Number 3)

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## **EDITORIAL**

Soon after the collapse of communist regimes across Eastern Europe and the USSR, there was an upsurge in nationalism. This was not really a surprise to those who had observed historical developments carefully. I recall a conference of specialists in Chicago in 1986 where a common theme was to point to the widespread search for community. The romantic nationalisms of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had resulted in wars that eventually engulfed all of Europe and beyond. The special promise of the Marxists was to present a vision of a new inter-nationalism, a new community of workers of the world, united around their common needs, no longer drawn into the manipulations of national sentiments. There was too the new approach for building the Soviet Union where in the end Homo Sovieticus would be superior morally, culturally, etc. to the varieties of nationalities (over a hundred) under the Russian Empire. Yet it was the decades of intolerable nationalities policy that in no small measure contributed to the collapse of the USSR.

So now it was the turn of the churches to offer a better experience of community, of identity, of direction for nation building. Although Christian unity at an international, indeed global, level was a theological presupposition that had energized the ecumenical movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, not only have we now witnessed much greater difficulties in inter-church relations, for many church leaders the task has become more difficult because of the ultranationalists who have relied on the scapegoating of the 'other' and claimed religion for the national cause.

This issue presents two papers on the theme of Russian Orthodoxy and ultranationalism. In the first, Stella Rock, concentrates on lay movements, known as Orthodox Brotherhoods, in order to examine how they fit the label 'fundamentalism', now widely applied to militant piety. The second paper, by Alexander Verkhovsky, whose organization PANORAMA has been publishing a series of findings from their monitoring of radical-nationalist movements, seeks to delineate the degree to which the Russian ultranationalists are pagan, semi-Orthodox or Orthodox. In so doing he shows the progressions of a gradual rise of influence, that has at least "changed the ideological landscape of Orthodox nationalism".

In a very different vein, Miroslav Ki.'s theological reflections - to some extent stimulated by the writings of Miroslav Volf and Donald Shriver on reconciliation - take us through the stages of how we make enemies. That is, if winning friends demands discipline and nurture, so too our enemies - we foster the

‘relationship’ with care and intent. Fundamentally, since Ki· takes seriously Jesus’ injunction to “love your enemies”, the degree to which the ultranationalists rely on building the nation by making and naming enemies serves as foil for the intended road to peacemaking, to which Ki· calls his fellow Christians, especially his fellow countrymen in the Balkans. We conclude with a brief report on the National Prayer Dinner (not breakfast) held in Macedonia on May 23, 2002, which Brad Joseph describes as an effort to foster a dialogue of respect. More reports and papers from the Skopje Trialogues are forthcoming.

Walter Sawatsky

