RELIGION, STATE & SOCIETY

Volume 24 Number 1 March 1996

Editorial 5

Notes on Contributors 7

The Armenian Church Under the Soviet Regime, Part 1: the Leadership of Kevork
FELIX CORLEY 9

Russian Catholicism
YULI SHREIDER 55

Russian Jews and the Church: a Sociological View
LYUDMILA VORONTSOVA & SERGEI FILATOV 63

Book Reviews 67

Errata 77

Religion, State & Society, Vol. 24, No. 1, 1996

Editorial

In the year 301 Armenia became the first state in the world to proclaim itself officially Christian. The Armenian Church went on to detach itself from the Universal Church after the Council of Chalcedon in 451, naming itself 'Apostolic'. The reasons for the break were more political than theological: rather than asserting a preference for monophysitism, the Church was simply struggling against Byzantine hegemony. Since then, throughout its history, the Church has been the symbol and preserver of Armenian national identity.

The seat of the catholicos, the head of the Church, has moved in response to successive invasions and foreign occupations of Armenia over the centuries. From the end of the thirteenth century the catholicos was located in Sis, capital of the Kingdom of Lesser Armenia in Cilicia which evolved as the homeland of the Armenian diaspora. In the fifteenth century clergy in the monasteries of the eastern Armenian homeland took the initiative to transfer the catholicosate back to Echmiadzin, the original home of the Church. The clergy in Cilicia, however, refused to recognise the move. Controversy over the rival legitimacy was not settled until 1652, when by agreement the two primates divided ecclesiastical jurisdiction between them. It was perceived that the arrangement would guarantee the continuity of the Armenian Church if either see should fall to foreign conquerors. The Church is thus now run by two catholicosates: that of Echmiadzin in the Armenian republic itself, and that of the Great House of Cilicia at Antilias near Beirut. The two sees have equal spiritual and administrative rights, but the catholicos in Echmiadzin enjoys 'primacy of honour' over the catholicos in Cilicia.

The history of the relationship between the two catholicosates has sometimes been an uneasy one. From the start of the Cold War in the 1950s the dual jurisdiction acquired a political significance, with the Echmiadzin catholicosate dubbed 'prosoviet' and the Cilician catholicosate 'antisoviet'; but this recent polarisation has tended to obscure a polarisation of much older historical origin.

The eleventh and twelfth centuries, during which the kingdom of Lesser Armenia was consolidating itself, was the period of the Crusades. In an age of creative exuberance Western Christianity was assuming an active responsibility for the fate of the Holy Places and other lands under Turkish control. In 1204 the Fourth Crusade was to be fatally diverted from its ostensible goal: on their way to the Holy Land the Crusaders were enlisted into the political struggle within the Byzantine Empire and stayed on to sack Constantinople. This event was a major milestone in the process of deteriorating relations between Eastern and Western Christianity. It was just before this debacle that Levon, prince of Lesser Armenia, was achieving significant success on the international political stage. Fearing the Ayyubids, whose *jihad* was then reducing the neighbouring Crusader states, and distrusting Saladin's Byzantine allies, he decided on close collaboration with the West. It so happened that Armenia fitted well into the Hohenstaufen dream of universal Empire. Levon gave support to the

0963-7494/96/01/0005-02 © 1996 Keston Institute

Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. Part of Levon's policy was to work for a union with Rome. In 1198 or 1199 he and his catholicos recognised the supremacy of the Holy See. For the next two hundred years, until the end of the Kingdom of Lesser Armenia, the question of relations between the Armenian Church and Rome was to be the cause of chronic dissension within the Armenian nation. Antiwestern and anti-catholic factions in the Cilician kingdom could normally find sympathy amongst the clergy of the eastern Armenian homeland, themselves already long reconciled to foreign rule.

Similar historical tensions have made themselves felt at various times in other parts of Europe; and in many countries the end of communist rule has revealed their continuing existence. The article by Yuli Shreider in this issue of *Religion State & Society* highlights some important issues associated with Catholic–Orthodox relations in Russia today. There is widespread dismay within the Russian Orthodox Church at the fact that the Vatican has now established a Catholic episcopate in Russia. It is Shreider's personal view that Catholics in Russia should openly recognise the Patriarch of Moscow as having 'primacy of honour' on Russian territory. Shreider's article reminds us of historical issues that are once again topical: questions of 'canonical territory', problems connected with 'proselytising' and suspicions on the part of some churches about the real loyalties of parts of their 'flock'.

In April 1995 an election was held in Echmiadzin for a new catholicos. The highest legislative body of the Armenian Church, the National Ecclesiastical Assembly, gathered for the first time for 40 years; and for the first time in history the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia was elected Catholicos of All Armenians. A new chapter in the history of the Armenian Church has thus begun. Rich new archival resources are simultaneously becoming available. In this issue of *Religion, State & Society* we are publishing the first of a series of articles which use these resources to document in much more detail than has hitherto been possible the story of the Armenian Church since the Second World War.

The new catholicos, Karekin, has spoken of the urgent need for reform and rejuvenation in his Church. The second in a series of round tables took place in Echmiadzin in March this year. Under the auspices of the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Catholic Church and Protestant denominations discussed the setting up of new programmes of religious training and education for clergy and people in Armenia on a basis of ecumenical cooperation. The celebration of the 1700th anniversary of Armenia's acceptance of Christianity is scheduled for the year 2001. Catholicos Karekin anticipates that the celebration will be a 'new Pentecost' for the Armenian nation. During the next five years he and his colleagues will have a unique opportunity to articulate the meaning of this 'new Pentecost' both for Armenia and for the wider world.

April 1996 PHILIP WALTERS

Notes on Contributors

Janice Broun, a graduate of Oxford University, is a freelance journalist specialising in religion in communist and former communist countries. She is the author of *Conscience and Captivity: Religion in Eastern Europe (1988).* She gave the 1996 Gonzaga Lecture in Glasgow on the subject of the Catholic Church in Eastern Europe.

Felix Corley is a writer and broadcaster on religious affairs in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, with a special interest in the Caucasus. His book *Religion in the Soviet Union: an Archival Reader* is to be published this year by Macmillan.

Segei Filatov graduated from the History Faculty of Moscow University. He has worked at the Centre for the Study of the USA and Canada in Moscow, and since 1989 at the Analytical Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences. His book on Catholicism in the USA appeared in 1993, and he has also collaborated with Fr Gleb Yakunin on a book on religion and democracy.

Serge Keleher, a Greek-Catholic priest, graduated in political science from Michigan State University and has an MA in theology from the University of Toronto. A research fellow of the University of Toronto's Chair of Ukrainian Studies, he has been associated with Keston Institute since 1988.

Yuli Shreider was born in 1927. He graduated from the Mathematics Faculty of Moscow University and worked in computer science and information technology. He became a Roman Catholic in 1970. He is president of the board of the Centre for Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology of Religion, and since 1991 he has been a member of the board of the Russian Bible Society. In 1992 he organised a course on ethics at the St Thomas Aquinas College of Catholic Theology in Moscow.

Lyudmila Vorontsova graduated from the History Faculty of Moscow University. She is the author of a series of books on religion in medieval Russia and has organised exhibitions of medieval Russian art. Since 1989 she has worked at the Analytical Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences.