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Book Reviews

Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society between Europe and the Arab World, by H. T. Norris. London: Hurst and Company, 1993. xxii + 304 pp., £32.50.

Muslim Identity and the Balkan State, edited by Hugh Poulton and Suha Taji-Farouki in association with the Islamic Council. London: Hurst and Company, 1997. Paperback, 250 pp., £16.50.

Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities of Bulgaria, by Ali Eminov. London: Hurst and Company, 1997. (Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs Council Book Series no. 6). xxii + 218 pp., £35.00.

Hurst and Company are to be congratulated on their excellent coverage of Balkan affairs and especially of its Muslim communities, long denigrated and then forgotten in the West, until the catastrophic events which accompanied the collapse of communism. All three books should become standard reading in university and theological college libraries, though Norris' *Islam in the Balkans* is primarily aimed at students of Islam seeking to explore its fascinating and complex development and culture. It presumes specialised background knowledge which the other two books do not.

Ali Eminov, now professor of Anthropology in Nebraska, writes as a Turkish Bulgarian who emigrated in 1960. His approach in *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities of Bulgaria* is systematic, objective, concise and readable and he provides ample documentation and revealing statistical tables. Unlike Poulton and Taji-Farouki he does provide some maps, though they do not cover every place mentioned in the text. In an area where names and locations are unfamiliar, maps are essential. Although he gives adequate coverage to the Pomaks he makes no attempt to cover in any detail the vexed question of the Roma, the most persecuted and vulnerable minority and the special target of police repression; they merit a separate study.

In the chapter 'Education of Turkish speakers in the People's Republic' he shows how by the later years of communist Bulgaria children were being educated solely in Bulgarian from kindergarten upwards and thus a kind of mongrel Turkish containing many Bulgarian loan words and grammatical mistakes evolved. His young relatives could write only Bulgarian. The final stage of the assimilation campaign which sought to stamp out Turkish and all Islamic practices had the opposite effect from what was intended, however: it hardened the resolution of Turks to maintain their language, culture and identity in private. It is a sinister fact that the present Bulgarian Socialist Party has mooted projects to prohibit minority languages in the media and a return to banning the use of Turkish in public places. The sad result of all these policies, Eminov notes, is that nowadays Turks, to a greater degree than in the past, limit their contacts with Bulgarians to official encounters and the workplace.

Eminov, unlike Poulton, makes no systematic analysis of the present relationship with Turkey.

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In a key chapter, 'Conversions to Islam: voluntary or forced?', Eminov challenges the popular Bulgarian historiographical view that there were massive forcible conversions of Bulgarian Orthodox to Islam under Turkish rule. He argues that the very survival of Orthodox religious institutions and the Bulgarian people over 500 years is a testimony to the success of the *millet* system in providing for the peaceful coexistence of different religious systems. The evidence for forced mass conversions of Orthodox in the central and western Rhodope mountains consists of three chronicular notes purporting to describe eyewitness accounts of several brutal Ottoman military campaigns in the area during the 1660s. None of the three documents exists in the original; all were published by Bulgarian nationalists in the late nineteenth century and promptly vanished. Even at that time their authenticity was challenged. The information they provided was resurrected by the communist government, however, and exploited for its anti-Turkish and anti-Muslim campaigns. Only since 1989 has it been possible to discuss the texts again. Eminov quotes Antonina Zelyazkova who notes that there is no confirmation of the campaigns from any other source, either in detailed, comprehensive Ottoman military records or in the accounts of western diplomats and travellers in the Rhodopes during the 1660s, who would have been only too keen to draw attention to Islamic iniquities. Several of the villages were *vaqf* (religious trust) territory belonging to the Suleymeniye mosque in Istanbul and as such enjoyed special protection from the Sultan and immunity from local authorities and military units. Zelyazkova argues, as do several other Balkan scholars, that mass conversion was not in the interests of the Ottoman state because it deprived it of revenue, and that conversions of Pomaks took place for economic reasons or by choice. Pomak communities tend to function as collectives, hence the existence of entire Bulgarian Muslim villages.

Eminov also proves that the communist government exaggerated Turkish birth rates, which had in fact dipped since the 1950s far more sharply than Bulgarian.

In the useful chapter 'Islam and Muslims from 1945 to the present' he blames the Bulgarian Socialist Party for the unresolved schism within the Muslim establishment, a parallel to that in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, as he does for the fragmentation of the largely Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF). In both cases rather more detail about the personalities and manoeuvres involved might have been welcome. While praising the restraint and sophistication of the MRF programme he avoids discussing allegations of corruption within the MRF leadership. The book was written when there was no real prospect of any change in a BSP government which was reverting to Zhivkov's chauvinism.

Muslim Identity and the Balkan State excludes Bosnia, since the nature of the state was at the time of writing uncertain, although Poulton contributes a final chapter on the Dayton Agreement. Although the editors recognise the importance of Islam as a living faith they make no attempt to provide a systematic overview of Islamic convictions and rituals or to discuss specifically Islamic institutions, administration, religious education, publications or religious events. This is a pity because most of these issues are not adequately addressed by other publications and there is, as the editors admit, a need for further research to document and analyse the impact of communist rule and secularisation on individual and collective religious life in terms of both belief and practise, as well as developments since the collapse of communism.

In his excellent introduction on 'Islam, ethnicity and state in the contemporary Balkans' Poulton suggests that with the recent revolution in communications and growth of concern for ethnic minorities in the world community the day of the

'homogenised' nation state has finally run its course; 'total assimilation is a thing of the past as the state no longer monopolises the means of propagating culture'.

In his perceptive 'From religious identity to ethnic mobilisation: the Turks in Bulgaria before, under and since communism', Wolfgang Hopken devotes considerable space to the religious aspect, including recent surveys which seem to indicate resilience among the older generation and rural population, whereas younger Turks and Muslims have much in common with their Bulgarian contemporaries in their acceptance of urban and 'Central European values and morals'. Neither he nor Eminov attempts to explain how the number of religious leaders ('hodzhas') in Bulgaria was reduced, from 15,000 in 1944, through 2,400 by the early 1950s, to 460 in the early 1960s. There is no mention of show trials; did Islamic clergy escape the selective elimination used to destroy the Christian churches? Testimonies of experience of persecution would have given both books an added depth.

Both trace the devious paradoxes of Bulgarian communist policy towards the Turks. In prewar Bulgaria they had been happy to continue being educated in their religious schools. It was particularly ironical that though the communists were the first to tackle seriously the modernisation of the Turkish educational curriculum and even promoted a cultural renaissance in the postwar years, this went hand in hand with the suppression of Islam.

Poulton examines the very complex 'Changing notions of national identity among Muslims in Thrace and Macedonia', emphasising how much these have been, and still are, in a state of flux, especially in Macedonia since the arrival of Bosnian refugees. He concludes that while the major groups, Turks and Albanians, have few identity problems, the minor groups do. In Greece the previously slavophone Pomaks seem to be turning to Turkish, the language used in elementary schools, mosques and Quranic schools. It is a pity that an overlapping chapter, Natasha Gaber's 'The Muslim population of FYROM (Macedonia)', limits itself to the results of opinion surveys. She concludes that Islam is incapable at present of overcoming the primary influence of ethnicity; all the Islamic parties couch their programmes and demands in purely secular terms. Whereas the Turks and Roma feel their status is reasonably satisfactory, the Albanians complain of discrimination on several fronts. She fails to mention the destruction of at least two mosques in 1994.

Yulian Kostandinov deals with Bulgarian Pomaks in 'From religious identity to ethnic mobilisation'. He looks at different perceptions of Pomaks, from the viewpoint of the official nation-state and academic discourse on the one hand and from that of vernacular discourse on the other. Pomaks seek to define their distinct identity not only in relation to the Bulgarian Orthodox majority but also in relation to the Turkish minority.

For readers seeking to understand the reconstitution of Islam from rock bottom Nathalie Clayer's 'Islam, state and society in post-communist Albania' is most illuminating as she compares the impact of religious freedom and outside support on the differing communities, Sunni, Bektashi and Sufi. She provides ample specific information about personalities and places where worship has been reestablished. Her conclusions are that the substantial amount of cash for the reconstruction of hundreds of mosques – about which the Catholic bishops, incidentally, complained bitterly – and of local religious life and facilities for young Muslims to pursue further study abroad is not yielding much fruit. Islam, even more than Christianity, was deeply undermined by Albania's draconian persecution and the initial wave of enthusiasm has evaporated. Seventy per cent of young Muslims sent abroad on scholarships discontinue their religious studies. On a practical level Albanians regard

help from adjacent Albanian communities and from Turkey as the most beneficial. What is disturbing, from the point of view of Albanian culture, is the development of Sunni Islam at the expense of the Bektashi community, which, largely through lack of foreign backing, has been able to reestablish only five or six of its 60 lodges ('tekkes'). Albania's Muslims do not have the same urgent need to define themselves as there is no tradition of hostility towards Christians and they are not confronted by alien ethno-religious groups as they are in neighbouring countries.

In 'The Kosovo Albanians: ethnic confrontation with a Slav state' Poulton and Miranda Vickers provide a balanced survey of the history of relations between Albanians and Serbs, emphasising the elements of continuity in the Albanian response to Serb domination; the Albanian parallel educational system is nothing new! The authors give due weight to the religious factors but they emphasise that the main source of Albanian dissatisfaction is ethnic rather than religious. Uniquely in the Balkan scene, Muslims and (Catholic) Christians collaborate closely to try and defuse interethnic tension. The authors fail to mention how they also called for an end to feuds which could have fragmented their opposition to the Serb government.

Milan Andrejevich points out how basically good local relations between Serbs and Muslims in the Sanjak have been jeopardised by the rise in assertive Serb nationalism propagated by the Serbian state elite and how Yugoslav army irregulars have wreaked havoc on Muslim property and mosques in Montenegro.

Poulton contributes an important chapter on 'Turkey as kin-state: Turkish foreign policy towards Turkish and Muslim communities in the Balkans', in which he points out how Turkey's generally cautious policy (relations with Greece being an exception) is now at odds with the activities of increasingly aggressive Islamic groups which are taking full advantage of the collapse of communism.

Norris has travelled widely in the Balkans and loves his subject. His book *Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society between Europe and the Arab World* includes an impressive bibliography, an invaluable glossary, and evocative drawings, manuscripts and photographs of a heritage much of which has been destroyed. He inserts long, often moving, quotations, including visitors' impressions of services and holy men in cities like Sarajevo. He sets Balkan Islam in the wider context with its links, past and present, with North Africa, Turkey, Syria and Egypt. Islamicisation began earlier than is sometimes supposed, centuries before the Ottoman conquest, and not only eroded Christianity but also aggravated the estrangement of Eastern and Western Europe. At the same time it provided a channel for the westward diffusion of Oriental culture, literature and commerce. Norris reminds us of vital medieval Muslim communities in Spain, Italy, Crete, Cyprus, and even in Hungary, through its Dalmatian seaports and through nomadic Asiatic tribes who settled as traders and frontier guards and rapidly became Magyar speakers. Some kept their faith; others converted to Christianity or became crypto-Christians. Croatian conversions to Islam, even before the fall of Hum (Bosnia), far exceeded conversions of Muslims by Croat missionaries. We are given an Arab's view of the Slavs who stood in their way, including their accounts of the fateful battle of Kosovo.

Norris stresses several basic features of the conversion process in the Balkans. For most converts dogma played hardly any part; what was of most concern to peasants was the health and welfare of family, crops and animals. Mixed marriages were common; conversion was usually superficial among women, who often continued to use Christian prayers and venerate Christian saints. There was no follow-up or instruction in proper Muslim doctrine or rules of regular prayer among the converted. There was unspoken agreement, dictated by common interest among priests, rabbis,

educated imams and others, to seek for some common religious ground.

He stresses that orders regarded as heterodox saw themselves as no less orthodox than the mainstream. Persecution of leaders of some of the main orders, especially in Bosnia, led to intellectual impoverishment as members of orders were reduced to the simple observance of practices of the faith and prevented from entering theological or philosophical debates with other orders. Ottoman suppression of key Bektashi lodges in Albania during the nineteenth century, basically intended to stamp out centres of opposition, led to the destruction of invaluable books of mysticism in Arabic and Persian but only strengthened determination to throw off Ottoman rule.

He questions, rightly, whether westerners have ever really understood Balkan Islam – or, as the book makes clear, Balkan Christianity. He heads his very comprehensive chapter on orders with Alija Izetbegović's lament in the fateful 1970 *Islamic Declaration* over 'the diffusion of pure monotheism by alien elements, superstitions, compromise and repulsive commercialisation'. Norris disagrees that this is what happened. He explains how as shamanistic Turkish tribes moved westwards from Central Asia into the heartland of Islam they spread customs and an indifference to dogma and religious practices regarded as scandalous by orthodox theologians, who often 'excommunicated' them. But they went down well particularly with ordinary people and played a key role in the islamicisation of the Balkans during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. So there evolved a variety of eclectic, syncretic, heterogenous and sometimes incoherent systems, a kind of conglomerate of Muslim esotericism and indigenous Iranian and Anatolian beliefs, infiltrated by diverse schismatic forms of Christianity and philosophical and Sufi ideas.

Slav pagan beliefs underlay and permeated Christianity and popular Islam into modern times; Norris instances the Serb '*slavas*' in honour of their dead, poles carved as human figures in Kosovo and the cult of the sun surviving in Albanian folklore. He discusses fifteenth-century Glagolitic and seventeenth-century Bosnian Orthodox condemnation of sun and moon worship and pagan dances. He also quotes Paul Rycaut discovering Poturs (turkicised Bosnians) in the 1660s. These read Slavonic gospels but were interested in learning the Quran; they drank wine in Ramadan but abstained from spices, protected Christians, believed Muhammed to be the Paraclete, abhorred images and the sign of the cross and practised circumcision. Double-faith was almost the norm in places, and especially in Albania under the Ottoman tax system. Quoting John Fine's *The Bosnian Church: a New Interpretation* Norris argues that there is no convincing evidence that Bogomilism, moderate in its dualism, as in Bosnia, or in its 'absolute' form, as typified by some churches in Bulgaria, made a crucial contribution to islamicisation. The crucial factor was that the feudal landowners took advantage of the administrative and military opportunities provided by the Ottomans. Norris has much to say about the entirely new planned towns which arose as centres of islamicisation, with mosques, *madrassahs*, dervish order lodges, charities, schools of poetry. Albanian scholars would disagree with his acceptance of the view that Albanian Muslims colonised Kosovo rather late.

Norris shows how legend, myth and fact became intermingled, as in the Dobruja – a fascinating region where Islam certainly predated the Ottomans – where dervish hero Sari Saltik was regarded as hero and saint, even sometimes as a Christian. His information on education is particularly instructive: in the gymnasium in Ioannina in Epirus in the nineteenth century the Albanian Bektashi champion of freedom Naim Frashëri learnt French, Greek, Latin, Arabic, Persian and Turkish. The family virtually created an Albanian literary language, for which his brother Sami completed an Albanian alphabet, opting for the Latin script. They propagated a broad non-

sectarian ethical idealism, stressing the traditional unbreakability of the oath, the '*besa*'. However, this literary renaissance did not reach Kosovo where well into this century most literature was memorised by a largely illiterate population.

Norris brings his book up to date in his final chapter, 'Bridges and barriers of Islamic faith and culture within Balkan Muslim and non-Muslim societies', with a terrifying quotation from a poem by Montenegrin prince Petrović-Njegoš: 'so tear down the minarets and mosques and kindle the Serbian yule logs. ... I swear ... our faiths will be submerged in blood'. Examining the central role played by Bosnia in Balkan Islam, he again quotes the *Islamic Declaration*, in which Izetbegović distinguishes between Christ's teaching (which, though he finds it distorted, he believes still represents an announcement from God), and the Church, which he sees as a flawed institution which became not only antiislamic but also antichristian:

> The more it is the expression and interpreter of the ethical teachings of the Gospel, the farther it is from the Inquisition and consequently the nearer to Islam. We welcome the new tendencies in the Church, manifested at the last Vatican Council, because we regard them as moving closer to the original Christian fundamentals. If Christians should want it, the future may offer an example of the understanding and cooperation of two great religions for the well-being of all people and mankind, just as the past was the scene of their senseless intolerance and friction.

But Norris adds as a footnote a quotation from the Serbian historian Dimitrije Bogdanović's article on the Serbian Church during the Kosovo hardships: 'the Serbian Church will have to keep preaching love, not hatred and pardon, not vengeance'.

Norris tries to discern the future of the small and predominantly minority communities. He foresees some overlap between Islam and Christianity in Albania 'where religious friction is rarely found in popular practice or Albanian thought'. Whether Sufism will be revived is harder to predict. He stresses the need for Turkish Qurans for Muslims in Bulgaria where Arabic is hardly known. He refuses to speculate on the future size, territory and character of Bosnian Islam but envisages the establishment and growth of small or even sizeable communities in Croatia, Slovenia and, once again, in Hungary.

Overall, it is the tolerance and rich variety of Balkan Islam which Norris stresses and which he hopes – against hope – will prevail for the future.

JANICE BROUN

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Yugoslavian Inferno: Ethnoreligious Warfare in the Balkans, by Paul Mojzes. New York: Continuum, 1995. xxi + 248 pp., $24.95.

Thirty-five members of Mojzes' family, including his father, died in the carnage of the Second World War in Yugoslavia. Born in Slavonia, brought up in Vojvodina, Mojzes, now professor of Religious Studies at Rosemont College, Pennsylvania, was

an enthusiastic member of the first generation to be imbued with the ideal of a new Yugoslavia. Thus unlike most authors of books on the topic, he can write from the perspective of a helpless witness of its collapse. Revisiting his native land, he had the advantage of reading and understanding Serbo-Croat, hearing opinions voiced by people who mistook him for a monoglot American. This is a very bitter, hard-hitting, frank, ruthlessly honest book, aimed at the concerned general reader rather than the academic, though it would certainly provide an invaluable introduction for students, particularly those studying religion. Because he aims to be concise there are some generalisations and oversimplifications, though occasionally material is duplicated. The Serbs were not converted by SS Cyril and Methodius, and Professor John Fine has by now exploded the dualist myth of Bosnian Bogomilism.

As Mojzes systematically tries to get to the bottom of the causes of the conflict he pays particular attention to the extent to which religion contributed to it. His anguish, as a minister himself, is increased by the realisation of how thoroughly the Churches were implicated. He found the clergy a privileged class – in contrast to their situation in communist days – with access to petrol, for instance, because of their present ritual roles in society, including the blessing of weapons. 'Paradoxically', he writes, however, 'the present Balkan wars are religious wars fought by irreligious people.'

As a Methodist he has been able to stand outside the main religious conflicts. Nevertheless, the first version of his chapter 'The Religious component in the wars', published in the journal *Religion in Eastern Europe* as 'The role of the religious communities in the war in former Yugoslavia' in June 1993, aroused an acrid controversy in the October issue that year. He was particularly attacked for finding Croat Catholics as much at fault as Serbian Orthodox. He claimed that they were utterly blind in their insensitivity to justifiable Serb fears of a resurgent Ustaša; that they had reduced Catholicism to a tribal faith and refused to admit or apologise for historically verified Croat crimes of the past. Geert von Dartel accused him of exaggerating the Churches' culpability and of not giving enough coverage to ecumenical efforts to resolve the situation. Jure Krišto accused him of bias towards the Serbian Orthodox and of taking a negative position towards the Catholics, completely misinterpreting their aims. In reply, Mojzes grieved that there were 'too many priests and too few prophets'; and in his book he laments the absence of major religious leaders to speak out unreservedly for peace and on behalf of communities other than their own. Even the more moderate Slovene Catholics and Macedonian Orthodox get short shrift. Reliable, wise, impartial churchmen were hard to come by and he dares not identify some Serbian Orthodox priests. He commends the views of some from outside the main conflict, including the Slovene Archbishop Alojzije Šuštar and the Macedonian Joakim Herbut – a Ruthene. Significantly, he finds that coreligionists of different ethnic groups – Croat and Slovene Catholics, or Slav and Albanian Muslims – have little knowledge of or interest in one another.

His assessment of the character of the Balkan peoples, based on his own personal background, experience and contacts, is extremely negative. He lists rage, obstinacy, spitefulness, defiance, inflexibility, lying, fuelled by the copious consumption of strong spirits by Orthodox, Catholics and Muslims alike. A different perception of time on their part and folk memories, added to an inability to recognise reality, lead to reversion to a primitive traditional collectivism accompanied by acts of lunatic bestiality. Mojzes rightly emphasises the discontinuity resulting from the fact that different regions have been parts of different, shifting and often antagonistic larger

power blocks, which has prevented the development of a proper national history or civil society; and he argues that low self-esteem has been bolstered by recourse to national myths. People lack the political maturity to enable them to cope with inflammatory signals.

Tito's regime prevented the process of catharsis after the carnage of civil war. Mojzes quotes the Croat historian Andrija Krešić on the antiurban chauvinism which in Bosnia accentuated the deep social divisions between Muslim city dwellers and the mainly Christian peasants – hence the readiness of the mountaineers to use modern armaments to blast out their own folk, fellow Slavs, whom they thought had betrayed them by moving to the cities.

Mojzes' interpretation of the religious element, then, is bound to provoke disagreement among many, particularly Yugoslav religious leaders. Some of the conclusions in this powerful and clearly-argued book still send out a chill. Mojzes states confidently that thousands if not millions of Serbs believe implicitly that Kosovo is theirs and are capable of exterminating its entire Albanian population. Events seem to have provided him right: it would be worth while for Mojzes to rewrite and update several of his chapters.

JANICE BROUN

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Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to Ethnic War, by Sabrina Petra Ramet. Boulder, Colorado and Oxford: Westview Press, 2nd edn, 1996. Paperback, xxvi + 354 pp., £13.50.

Part One covers politics between 1980 and 1991. Readers should not be put off by Ramet's rather dry opening chapter on the political manoeuvring in the 1980s. Thereafter interest hots up in what turns out to be a superb analysis of the collapse of Yugoslavia and a most damning indictment of the West's complicity in the prolonging of ethnic conflict. Ramet's observation that 'at the most fundamental level the peoples of Yugoslavia lost the ability to understand one another' provides the key as in the first section she lucidly traces the country's progressive fragmentation and alienation. Her concerns for culture, religion and women's interests provide added dimensions.

In Part Two she deals with culture and society. In the chapter on the press she includes some of her exhaustive research on the religious press under communism. Yugoslavia's religious press was unequalled in the communist world, with 200 publications: the Catholics produced three of the top ten publications. She throws light on Yugoslavia's peculiar censorship system, which was largely dependent on the attitude of local authorities. Early on, they often checked on subscribers on the odd occasion when a single issue was banned – with the result that many older readers of, for instance, the Orthodox *Pravoslavlje* asked to have it discontinued (p. 65). She indicts in particular the Serbian Orthodox Church, successfully wooed by Slobodan Milošević to become a mouthpiece for his government, as witness its endorsement of the abrogation of the republic's constitution in 1989. It would be instructive to have a

survey on the contribution – positive or negative – of religious publications to the conflict since 1991.

In throwing a baleful light on relations between the sexes in the Balkans and on the practice of rape as a manifestation of 'phallocracy' during the conflict, Ramet provides a signal service. In the Serb Parliament elected in 1990 only 1.6 per cent of its members were women, the lowest proportion in any assembly in Europe. Ramet concludes that while women are less oppressed in the Catholic republics where society is basically agricultural than in the patriarchal pastoral republics where Orthodox and Muslims predominate, the Catholic Church in Franjo Tudjman's Croatia has taken advantage of the new political situation to try to push women back into more traditional roles. Significantly a Croatian law was drafted in 1992 that exempted violence within the family from prosecution.

Part Three covers religion up to 1991, and is a very useful survey of the Churches under communism. Ramet points out that the real reason for the trial of Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac was not his alleged collaboration with Ante Pavelić, but that in refusing to countenance a national Church he was as much a thorn in the side of the communists as he had been in Pavelić's. Here she perhaps devotes too much space to divisions involving clergy associations within the three major religious communities which had little impact on the religious life of the lay majority and are not very relevant to the present situation.

On p. 149 she might have mentioned that the Catholic Church's complaint that military personnel were forbidden to attend Mass or receive religious books was particularly concerned about the removal of teenage conscripts from their families and from religious influences at a particularly vulnerable stage in their development. Her attribution of the miracle of Medjugorje solely to Franciscan machinations in their quarrel with their bishop hardly does justice to what has happened there, not least to the prophecies of dire catastrophe which would befall the land if its inhabitants did not forgive each other's past atrocities.

Ramet provides a superb analysis of the background to the Serbian Orthodox Church's victim complex. The Catholic Church had much to answer for in the proposed Concordat with the Vatican of 1935 in which it showed no regard for the status or feelings of the Church of the majority, to the extent even of claiming legal privileges denied to the Orthodox or Muslims, and proscribing the involvement of any Church in politics. Its misconduct here was compounded by its part in the near annihilation of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the wartime fascist state of Croatia.

The section on Muslims is useful though stronger on the Muslim establishment than on the complex, diverse and significant 'dervish' orders.

Another vital contribution is a perceptive section in Chapter 10 – 'Serbia and Croatia at war again' – showing how writers from the 1960s onwards presaged, warned about and then mirrored the increasingly inflammatory nationalist atmosphere. These include the unbalanced Orthodox politician Vuk Drašković who in his novel *Nož* (*The Knife*) challenged the thesis of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia that Bosnia's Muslims were a discrete ethnic group, arguing that they were merely descendants of Serbs who had converted out of opportunism.

In her final chapter, Ramet returns to the repercussions of the war on religion, gender relations and culture, and concludes that religious organisations contributed to preparing the ground for the war, while Pope John Paul emerges as the true hero of this period.

A third edition would be welcome, pruning the material of Part One and some of Part Two, and updating and extending the later sections to include more material on

the distressing upsurge of (imported) Islamic fundamentalism and its effect on a traditionally tolerant Muslim society.

JANICE BROUN

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The Church for Others: Protestant Theology in Communist East Germany, by Gregory Baum. Grand Rapids and Cambridge (UK): Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996. xvii + 156 pp., £9.99.

This is a carefully written and most valuable book, the work of a Canadian Roman Catholic scholar, who apparently had no personal experience of the GDR until he was able to spend the autumn of 1992 in the already reunited Berlin. Here he gained a very good understanding of the ethos and outlook of the GDR Protestant Church. Our author sets out to give a clear account of that Church's *distinctive* theology – a theology which is 'contextual'; that is to say it springs from the situation and problems of the Protestant Church at the time. Baum has gone far to achieve the aim he has set himself. The Church's pastoral ministry; the spirit of Stuttgart and Darmstadt; the humanistic ideals of Socialism; Barmen, and Bonhoeffer's radical theology; the doctrines of the Two Kingdoms and Christ's Kingship – such are the themes with which Baum wrestles, and they are all skilfully and sensitively handled.

Baum fears that many of his readers may be unfamiliar with GDR history, so he includes introductory comments about religion in East Germany since the Second World War, and a first chapter which gives an account of church–state relations. To write this chapter in a mere 17 pages is quite a triumph. He does make a number of reckless statements, however. We are told that 'between 1945 and 1949 the eastern part of Germany, then directly under Soviet control, enjoyed democratic freedoms and political pluralism'; 'for four years the East Germans enjoyed a climate of dialogue and cooperation'. The reality is that the Soviet Union had trained its agents, convinced Stalinists like Ulbricht and Mielke, and in the spring of 1945 moved quickly to install them in Berlin – well before the arrival of the Western Allies. In this way the grip of the German Communist Party (soon camouflaged as the 'Party of Socialist Unity' after its union with the Social Democratic Party) on East German affairs was guaranteed. There was no need at all for a change of heart (as Baum claims) after 1949. It may well be that the Soviet authorities made no direct attempt to smash the churches during the occupation period, but there is very strong evidence that Christians had a very hard time. Bishop Otto Dibelius of Berlin, for example, tells us how he had a number of bitter clashes with Soviet officers; once, for example, when clumsy efforts were made to recruit church people as informers.

One day in 1989 I thought of Dibelius when asking Bishop Demke about 'critical solidarity' and 'the Church within Socialism'. Had these slogans any meaning still? The Protestant Church, he said, was now a Church *against* Socialism, having been forced into this position. It struck me that the Protestant Church, having started its days in the GDR as a 'Church against Socialism', had returned in what proved to be the dying months of the East German state to a position of opposition. As the bold-

ness of Otto Dibelius often made one gasp, so did many actions of the Protestant Church during the last couple of years before the collapse of the GDR. An outstanding example was the work of the Church Environmental Institute at Wittenberg (where Luther nailed his theses to the church door). It was unthinkable to make any public mention in the GDR of the country's uranium mines, unless one fancied a long gaol sentence for betraying vital defence secrets. The Institute, however, made light of all this. It published a detailed report on this very topic. True, the report was duplicated, not printed: it was headed with the standard formula 'FOR INTERNAL CHURCH USE ONLY' (such documents were not liable to state censorship). The report described the life, family situation and daily work of a uranium miner, and details of the illness caused by his work. Reading this report in 1988, I was astounded by the courage of the Institute's staff. (So, it would seem, was the GDR government. There is no record of any action taken against the author.) It can hardly be denied, then, that the Protestant Church began and ended its years in the GDR as the Church *against* Socialism. The period of 'Critical Solidarity' or 'the Church *within* Socialism', which Baum discusses so skilfully, fell between the early 1950s and the mid 1960s. This was the time when leading Protestant theologians wrestled with the problems of living honestly and creatively in the GDR. We sometimes hear of a 'middle way', a rocky path threading its way between total rejection of 'Socialism' and total collaboration. This path is sometimes pictured as the consequence of a flabby spirit of compromise – something that the GDR Protestant Church was never guilty of (however much a few churchmen might have preferred it). It could be argued that Bishop Dibelius came near the attitude of total rejection (the conviction that it was impossible for a Christian to live righteously in the GDR) though even he did not follow this principle rigorously. On the other hand, there was indeed a Christian community in the GDR which came horribly close to total collaboration.

This body (the New Apostolic Church) Baum does not mention, as he is concerned only with the eight provincial Protestant Churches. However, the New Apostolic Church, the third largest religious community in the GDR, should not be totally forgotten.

The life of this sect exemplifies the term 'the Church *for* Socialism'. The New Apostolic Church flourished like a green bay tree in the Wilhelmine era, during the Weimar Republic, under the Nazis, and throughout the lifetime of the GDR. There is no space here to summarise its principles. It will suffice to point out that this disciplined group was ruled with a rod of iron by its corps of twentieth-century 'Apostles'; its Creed, which called for submission to the state, was followed rigorously. Hence there was no cause for conflict with the Marxist authorities. It was said (though clear evidence is lacking) that church members were very active in party organisations like the Free German Youth. Undoubtedly, the New Apostolic Church was commended in the GDR press as a shining example of how religious believers should behave in a 'socialist' society. It might have been helpful for our author to mention this Church, side by side with Bishop Dibelius and those who thought like him, as patterns of 'total collaboration' and 'total opposition'.

It is not amazing that Baum is concerned almost entirely with the middle years of the GDR. Nor can we be surprised that he devotes a great deal of space to the writings of those able theologians Albrecht Schönherr and Heino Falcke. Indeed, perhaps he gives them too much prominence; but they are undoubtedly two of the most powerful and creative theologians whom the GDR produced. As for Bonhoeffer, Baum greatly helps the reader to understand his startling and often para-

doxical utterances. Carved out in dreadful days of the Third Reich, his work did so much to guide and stimulate Protestant church leaders in the GDR.

Many would be tempted to say: 'in the *less terrible* days of the GDR'. Perhaps it would be apposite to quote a conversation which I had at Erfurt in 1982, out of earshot of the secret police. A Roman Catholic candidate for ordination, believing that he faced an honest Christian from the West, decided to give me a clear warning about the dangers which Christians faced in the GDR. Nazism, he said, in spite of its prisons and concentration camps and its hideous brutality, was less of a threat to the Church than Marxism. GDR policy was just as ruthless as Hitler's, he said, but at the same time much more consistent and subtle. A whole generation of East German citizens had been educated in a godless way, so that religion meant practically nothing to them. The slogans of Marxism might seem ludicrous, he agreed, but people who repeated them a thousand times a year would inevitably come to accept them as true.

Now these words have a hollow ring. During the lifetime of the GDR, though, it would have seemed foolhardy to ridicule the seminarist's warning. There were precious few prophets around in 1982 who predicted the astounding collapse of 'Socialist' society, even if today various distinguished scholars claim to have known all along that the GDR's disappearance was as inevitable as night following day. We can say, with Shakespeare's Prospero, that the baseless fabric of this vision has faded, leaving not a rack behind.... Not a rack? Well, we need only go to East Berlin to see cloud-capped towers, to Wandlitz to tour gorgeous palaces, to Dresden (or 50 other places) to bow down to Marxist temples; however, the vision itself has proved to be no more than an insubstantial pageant.

It was after the collapse of the GDR that Baum set out to analyse East German Protestant theology. Details of life in that state are quickly forgotten, and may be unknown to many of his readers. As has been pointed out, Baum devotes a whole chapter to a description of the Protestant Churches' relations with the state. However, those of us who knew the GDR well are bound to find these pages lacking in vividness and flesh-and-blood immediacy. Scores of everyday experiences spring to mind, which might fill the gap. I mention a few of my own.

Firstly, a scene in a Leipzig Protestant church one summer evening in 1985. My hosts and I entered, trying to make light of the sullen stares of half a dozen tall young men standing in the vestibule. We assumed them to be members of the secret state police – the so-called 'Stasi'. The occasion was a recital by the singer Gerhard Schöne, who sang a number of ditties satirising GDR 'Socialism'. This music was enormously appreciated by the hundreds of (mostly young) people who crowded the building; applause was veritably deafening. I could feel the tension through the wood of the pews. It was the general policy of the Church of Saxony, in the cause of truth and honesty, to allow dissidents – who were not permitted to speak in public or state-owned premises – to voice their opinions in church buildings. We all knew how this practice caused great friction between church and state.

Secondly, another confrontation between church and state which took place in 1986. It was Sunday 8 June, the day of the general election. My friend, a country minister, had no intention of going to the poll, which he regarded as a farce. About 5pm we sighted a group of rather awkward-looking 'persuaders' approaching the front door. They remained for an hour, but left with their mission unaccomplished. (It should be pointed out that only a tiny minority of GDR citizens abstained from voting: in 1986, 33,000, compared to the twelve and a half million who voted. Rumour had it that any citizen who had not voted by 1.30 pm earned an automatic

'black mark' in his or her personal file, and an official visit by way of a reminder – as happened to my friend.)

Thirdly, another experience from 1986. A Halle minister, knowing me to be from the West, drove me to Halle's industrial zone. For several miles around the Buna works trees, plants and buildings were covered with a thick layer of grey dust. Nothing was being done, my informant declared, to put things right; the government cared nothing about the health of citizens. He described the GDR in bitter tones as the 'pollution capital of Europe'. It did not surprise me at all that the churches were giving more and more shelter to ecological groups, despite the furious opposition of the state authorities.

Fourthly, an incident which took place at the Nazi concentration camp of Buchenwald, just outside Weimar. Members of the local church were assembled to do honour to the memory of the Protestant martyr Paul Schneider, who was killed at Buchenwald in July 1939. The state could hardly refuse to send a representative, as Schneider ranked officially as a 'noteworthy antifascist'; thus Dr Löffler, the secretary of state for church affairs, was present. (I was there as an unofficial representative of the Anglican Church.) Dr Leich, the Protestant bishop of Thuringia, preached. Avoiding the temptation to make a gratuitous attack on the government, he spoke with complete freedom of the need for honesty and truthfulness – qualities which Schneider so nobly showed. He pointed out that the seeds of Nazism, being in the souls of men, cannot be eradicated by laws and decrees. Dr Löffler remained immobile in his seat, his face betraying nothing. In the background was the Buchenwald parade ground, where in Nazi times the SS had marshalled their prisoners and where (between 1945 and 1948) the Russian victors had in turn herded their internees. For me it was indeed a telling couple of hours.

Fifthly... and sixthly.... All kinds of memories come flooding back. It is the power and vividness of such occasions that are lacking in Baum's book. Baum's analysis is clear and helpful; his book repays very careful study. It needs to be supplemented, however, with the evidence of those who had personal experience of life in the GDR.

ARVAN GORDON

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Religija in politika: Spremembe v deželah prehoda (*Religion and Politics: Changes in the Countries in Transition*), by Marjan Smrke. Ljubljana: ZPS, 1996. 211 pp.

Cerkev, politika, Slovenci po letu 1990 (*Church, Politics, Slovenians after 1990*), by Marko Kerševan. Ljubljana: ČZP Enotnost, 1996. 202 pp.

Religija in (sodobna) družba: Uvod v sociologijo religije (*Religion and* (*Modern*) *Society: Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*), by Sergej Flere and Marko Kerševan. Ljubljana: ZPS, 1995. 205 pp.

Oblike religiozne imaginacije (*Forms of Religious Imagination*), by Aleš Debeljak. Ljubljana: ZPS, 1995. 177 pp.

The increasing number of books on religious subjects in the Slovenian language in recent years is the result of two facts: first, the long tradition of empirical socio-

logical research in this specific field, which started in Slovenia in the late 1960s, and its comparative orientation; and second, the existence of some open questions between the Slovenian state and society on the one hand and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), the largest religious institution in Slovenia, on the other. The authors of the books under review are Slovenian sociologists of religion; all of them are professors or associate professors at one of the two universities in Slovenia (Ljubljana and Maribor).

Marjan Smrke's book *Religija in Politika* concerns religious structures, dynamics and changes in Eastern and Central Europe before, during and after the socialist regimes. The majority of these countries fit either the Latin or Orthodox religio-cultural pattern (Smrke bases his analysis on David Martin's classification of the main religio-cultural patterns in western civilisation), but their religious history and present-day situations differ a great deal. In recent decades two collapses have imbued these societies with unrealisable expectations and in some cases have led to painful and one-sided solutions or even violence: the collapse of autocratic prewar political regimes, which as a rule promoted one dominant Church which in turn supported the regime; and the collapse of socialism, which discriminated against religion in various degrees, but achieved for the first time in the history of this part of the world the separation of the predominant Church and the state.

The major contribution of Smrke's lucid book is the relativisation of some simplifications and stereotypical statements about the history of the relations between Eastern and Central European societies and the dominant religious organisations within them. The author highlights the 'two problematic pasts' of these societies: religious monopoly by the dominant Church followed by decades of domination by communist ideology. Antithetical in most aspects, these regimes nevertheless both showed themselves exclusive and repressive against nonconformist beliefs. In the 1990s there exists for the first time in the history of these societies the possibility of mutual tolerance and respect between state and society on the one hand and the Churches on the other. Some discouraging processes have however begun, contributing to increasing tensions between Church and state (or society), between different Churches and between different ethnoreligious groups. Examples of these tensions would include the growth of religious nationalism, attempts at politicisation of the Church, the clear wish of some Churches to regain their dominant ('Constantinian') position in society, and growing aspirations on the part of the RCC, in those countries where it is the dominant Church, to return to the situation before the Second Vatican Council.

Kerševan's book *Cerkev, politika, Slovenci po letu 1990* is a collection of articles previously published in Slovenian and foreign newspapers and in sociological journals during the 1990s. The author analyses religious changes in Slovenia in recent years and compares them with those in other countries. Religious dynamics in Slovenia have shown important differences from those in other societies within the former Yugoslavia; they also contrast with those in Central and Eastern Europe. In socialist times, for example, after a few years of conflict immediately after the Second World War, the RCC existed as an independent, autonomous institution. Its position in society changed: it lost its political role, which had been particularly strong in the last century and in the first four decades of this century (in the form of political Catholicism, intolerance towards modernistic ideas and so on); but its structure nevertheless remained relatively intact and strong. The increase in the percentage of new believers after the change of political system in 1990 was not therefore as sharp as it was in some other Central and Eastern European societies.

The RCC became influential in some areas of social life and there are also some signs of efforts to turn the RCC into a political factor in contemporary Slovenian society.

Kerševan's findings are clear: Christianity and the RCC have played an ambiguous role in Slovenian history. On the one hand they were important in strengthening Slovenian national awareness in the face of strong germanising and italianising tendencies; but on the other hand their role in some periods was rather problematic. The initial conversion to Christianity under Bavarian political supervision, for example, provoked a fratricidal war in the late eighth century. During the Counter-Reformation Slovenian Protestants (who wrote and translated the first books in Slovenian, including the Bible) were forced to leave the country and all books written in Slovenian were burned. The RCC strongly influenced Slovenian political life in Habsburg times and in the interwar period. Finally, during the Second World War a large part of the Roman Catholic clergy (including Archbishop Rožman) openly collaborated with fascist and Nazi military forces against the liberation movement (partisans). With all these facts in mind, Kerševan argues that the RCC must now accept its autonomous position in contemporary Slovenian society; it must resist any temptation to become more directly involved in politics and refrain from trying to be the predominant or even unique spiritual force within an already well-differentiated society.

Religija in (sodobna) družba by Flere and Kerševan is the first textbook of sociology of religion in the Slovenian language. Its structure is clear and systematic: the authors present the sociology of religion as an independent academic discipline, related to other social sciences and open to their findings. Some basic concepts and theories by classical sociologists of religion (Durkheim, Marx, Weber, the phenomenologists, psychologists, symbolic interactionists) are introduced, as well as various different definitions of religion and religiosity, typologies of religion, types of religious community and relations between religion and other sets of social phenomena. The last part of the book deals with two contrasting processes in all contemporary societies: secularisation and desecularisation. In postsocialist societies they acquire specific dimensions and forms: more systematic analyses of the differences and similarities of these processes can also be found in Smrke's book. Finally, statistical data from empirical studies of religiosity in Slovenia are presented with comparative data from other Central European and South Slav societies as well as from Europe as a whole.

Oblike religiozne imaginacije differs in its orientation and style of writing from the books so far discussed. Aleš Debeljak is a sociologist of religion and a poet. His book represents a complementary, but equally important aspect of Slovenian sociology of religion: it discusses the philosophical, historical and comparative dimensions of religion, which cannot be ignored in any serious sociological research or debate. The author is widely known for his recent book *Somrak idolov* (*Twilight of the Idols*), in which he condemns the ruthless destruction of multicultural and multi-religious Bosnia and Hercegovina. Translations of the book have been published in 11 languages.

In *Oblike religiozne imaginacije* Debeljak presents some of his theoretical insights from the field of the sociology and philosophy of religion. He looks at case studies of some religious phenomena in contemporary societies: religious traditionalism, conservatism and fundamentalism (especially Islamic), cargo cults; he considers various aspects of the sacred, prayer and religious ethics, and various dimensions of Platonism; and he offers reflections on authors who have formed his theoretical back-

ground (Weber, Eliade and others). Although the book deals with the more abstract aspects of the sociology of religion there are many findings which are indispensable for more specific empirical analyses, contributing to the balanced development of sociological research on religion.

These four books by Slovenian sociologists of religion stand comparison with studies produced by their colleagues in other countries. Their main deficiency is that (except for Smrke's book) they do not have summaries in English or in some other world language. Sections of them have been published in social science journals in English or French translation; nevertheless a non-Slovenian reader will be unable to appreciate their full value. These books contain profound analyses of the past and present religious situation in Slovenia, and they make important contributions to the study of religious process and dynamics in postsocialist societies and in the contemporary world as a whole.

MITJA VELIKONJA

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Fire Under the Snow, by Palden Gyatso, translated from the Tibetan by Tsering Shakya, with a foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. London: The Harvill Press, 1997. 232 pp. £17.00.

With the words of a Tibetan hymn 'Present Our *Khatas* to Chairman Mao' still ringing in my ears I remember how, when I lived in China, I was often told how the Tibetan people loved Chairman Mao, their 'golden sun', who had liberated them from serfdom and slavery. A few years ago, in 1992, a Chinese government 'white paper' on human rights in Tibet claimed that there were 'no political prisoners' in Tibet, that in Drapchi prison 'the prisoners are regarded as human beings ... and receive fully humane treatment', and that no prisoners had ever been tortured. A more recent government 'white paper' on human rights in Tibet (dated 24 February 1998) claims that in the political sphere 'following the Democratic Reform [carried out in 1959] Tibet entered a new era of ... progress in human rights' and that 'the legal rights of criminals are protected by law'; that in the cultural sphere 'the government has *always* [emphasis mine – XX] attached great importance to protecting and developing traditional Tibetan culture and helping it flourish'; and that in the religious sphere 'since the peaceful liberation of Tibet the Chinese government has accorded *consistent* [emphasis mine – XX] respect and protection to the Tibetan people's right to freedom of religious belief'. However, all these assertions are rendered incredible by the vivid testimony of Palden Gyatso, a former prisoner of conscience in Tibet.

Palden Gyatso, who spent three decades in various prisons in Tibet, tells the story of 62 years of his life (1930–1992). He spent his childhood in a small village called Panam and later cloistered himself in Gadong monastery which belongs to the Yellow Hat Order. He pens a beautiful picture of the mysterious and unspoiled Land of Snows, serene and tranquil. This peaceful life came abruptly to an end with the sudden Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950 (chapters 1–3). Some years later he was

arrested for his alleged involvement in the 1958 revolt, and was then taken to Drapchi prison (chapter 4). Seeing many other inmates die of starvation, he made an attempt to escape, only to be recaptured and put into Gyantse prison, where he began to work as a weaver and realised that there would be no prospect of escape 'under the blue sky' of the people's democratic dictatorship. He was later sent back to Drapchi prison, where he became a master weaver. This period seems to have been relatively lenient; it was the lull before the storm (chapters 5–7). As one of the most telling witnesses of the Cultural Revolution that followed, Palden now describes how he stood up to all kinds of ordeals, both physical and mental, in a brick factory in Sangyip prison and then in a quarry in the notorious gulag at Nyethang during the appalling 'black decade' (chapters 8–9). During the so-called 'new era' that followed he was released in 1983, but was soon arrested again on a charge of participation in the separationist movement. This time he received an eight-year sentence. In the 'new era' of Deng, he says, he and other political prisoners in Orithridu and Drapchi fared no better than before. Torture remained commonplace: what was new was that the torturers used electric batons rather than sticks. Despite the torture Palten joined the young prisoners arrested in 1987 for separationist activities in their struggle for the freedom of Tibet, a struggle which came to an end in 1990 (chapters 10–12). His story concludes with his release followed by his successful escape from Tibet in 1992, which gave him a chance to tell the world in 1995 how the Tibetans had suffered under communist rule (chapter 13).

Palden provides us with inside information about the appalling mechanism of prison life in communist China: endless study sessions devoted to 'thought reform'; confession and accusation meetings; reward and punishment meetings; all aimed at producing the 'new man' of socialism. He witnessed or experienced all kinds of horrors: tortures carried out in prison; starvation suffered by thousands; suicide committed by the desperate; mass executions of inmates due to their failure to reform; the brutality and cruelty of prison guards and officials.

This patriotic author calls our attention to the ruthless oppression of his people by the Chinese colonialists: his evidence discredits the communists' claim that Tibet was 'liberated'. It is ironic that in Tibet those who once lived under the yoke of feudalism are now living under the heavier yoke of communism, and most of those escaping from oppression are not former rich landlords but the poor people whom the communists claim to have liberated from serfdom (see p. 59 and the Prologue). The 'proletariat' in Tibet has not as yet shed its shackles, let alone won the whole world, as the communists have beautifully promised. The Chinese rulers today are still afraid of the Tibetan people's dreams of liberation (pp. 186–213).

Palden is indignant at religious oppression in Tibet. Tibet used to be a country in which religion was the very soul of the nation (pp. 1–33). For the Communist Party religion was a 'backward' phenomenon which had no place in the new messianic society. They vandalised monasteries and temples (p. 173). There are illustrations in the book which appal the reader. For all its claims that 'there are 1,787 sites for Tibetan Buddhist activities and there are 46,380 Buddhist monks and nuns living in monasteries', which 'will be properly protected' (see 'white paper' of 1998), the present regime has never relaxed its vigilance against religion. It has placed serious restrictions on those religious institutions that have been rebuilt and keeps a tight rein on the Buddhist clergy in Tibet (see the Foreword by the Dalai Lama). In 1995, for instance, the Communist Party selected the reincarnation of the deceased tenth Panchen Lama and thereby humiliated the Dalai Lama. More recently, the authorities have emphasised that religion must be supervised 'according to the law', but it is

likely that the law will be glibly interpreted by officials in a repressive direction.

The value of this book lies in its authenticity and historical accuracy. It provides not only first-hand information about what was happening behind the Bamboo Curtain of Red China but also, to quote the Dalai Lama, 'a vivid insight into Tibet's recent history following the invasion of 1949' (see Foreword). Little has ever been written about suffering Tibet; this book is a moving record. Reading it, one can hardly help comparing Maoist China with Hitlerite Germany and Stalinist Russia. What particularly interests me as a mainland Chinese is that the book is full of the Maoist jargon characteristic of the communist 'culture' of China – all far too familiar to us Chinese readers. I am also tremendously impressed by the translator's excellent English, which reads so well. Although the book makes no mention of the Tiananmen massacre of 4 June 1989, which is a pity, I have no hesitation in recommending it as invaluable to those who are interested in the 'Tibet Question' as well as the human rights situation in China.

XUCHU XU