

**Hartmut Lehmann, Jens Holger SchjÖrring, eds.** *Im RÖaderwerk des "real existierenden Sozialismus": Kirchen in Ostmittel- und Osteuropa von Stalin bis Gorbatschow.* ttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003. 164 pp. EUR 20.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-89244-667-5.



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**Published on** H-German (May, 2005)

## The Churches in Central and Eastern Europe Caught Between Communism and Nationalism

This book provides a useful starting point for anyone interested in a comparative approach to the role of the churches in Central and Eastern Europe between 1945 and 1989. The pieces contained in the book were originally presented at a workshop on contemporary Church history held at the Max-Planck-Institut in GÄÄttingen in December 2001, and represent the second part of a four-stage examination of the role of the churches in this area up to the end of the twentieth Century. The contributions cover the following areas: an examination of relations between state policy and the Russian Orthodox Church (1953-1988); the impact of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 on the Protestant Church; the situation of the Catholic Church up to the trial of Cardinal Mindszenty; relations between the Estonian Protestant Church and the Soviet state; the Catholic Churches in Lithuania and Slovenia; Church state relations in Yugoslavia; the Protestant Church in Czechoslovakia; and finally the role of the minority Churches in Poland in the celebrations concerning the thousand-year existence of the Polish state in 1966.

Each piece provides an introduction to each topic

with particular emphasis on a review of the existing literature and an evaluation of the archival position. As a result, each one serves as an extremely useful starting point for post-graduate students/researchers who might be setting out to research a specific area. Because of the limited length of each piece it is not possible to provide a detailed analysis of each topic, but the juxtaposition of a series of expositions concerning state-church relations in different countries does provide interesting insights into how particular churches pursued their own national, sometimes ethnic, interests—this was particularly clear in the case of Yugoslavia. Also, the book demonstrates that the state of relations between the majority Church in a particular country could have a decisive effect on the situation of the minority churches. The hostility between the Catholic Church and the Communist government in Poland meant that the Protestant Churches had greater leeway, while the eventual accommodation between the Soviet authorities and the Russian Orthodox Church made life more difficult for the other Churches. Overall, the power struggle and eventual arrangement between the Vatican, the Orthodox Churches, and the Communist authorities in different countries dominate

this volume.

The picture is more varied in relation to the Protestant churches, which in most cases were minority churches. In this respect it was a pity that there was no discussion of the Protestant Church in the German Democratic Republic, since it did provide an example of a majority Protestant Church which did in the end come to a rather uneasy accommodation with the Communist authorities. In other respects it replicated the range of positions taken by church representatives in other countries, from outright opposition, reluctant acceptance of Communist rule to opportunistic forms of collaboration with the state, including numerous examples of pastors agreeing to be-

come unofficial informers for the secret police.

Overall, this is a very useful volume, particularly because it opens up lines of enquiry of a comparative nature. There are, however, a few unfortunate lapses in accuracy. For example, in the piece on the Catholic Church in Hungary, in footnote 40 on the career of László Rajk, it is stated that he was released from prison in September, 1945, and then re-arrested in December, 1945. This was surely 1944, since Rajk was imprisoned again after the fascist Arrow Cross government came to power in October, 1944. But, in general, this is a worthwhile addition to the literature on church-state relations in Communist Europe.

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**Citation:** Peter Barker. Review of Lehmann, Hartmut; Schjöring, Jens Holger, eds., *Im Röderwerk des "real existierenden Sozialismus": Kirchen in Ostmittel- und Osteuropa von Stalin bis Gorbatschow*. H-German, H-Net Reviews. May, 2005.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=10526>

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