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Religious Policy in the Soviet Union by Sabrina Petra Ramet

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devoted crew of friends, including her favourite actors—Zsuzsa Czinkóczi, Lili Monori and Mészáros' husband, Jan Nowicki—she confronts issues largely ignored in overtly political East-Central Europe; her personalized treatments of history, gender relations and family structures have attracted world-wide attention.

In spite of Mészáros' importance, her name is largely unknown in the West. Portuges' book, a part of Indiana's "Women Artists in Film" series, tries to fill a gap in film scholarship by illuminating Mészáros' *œuvre* in light of feminist and psychoanalytic concepts. This is, however, not only the first journey into the realm of Mészáros' films, but also a venture into Hungarian and East-Central European history and present-day politics. Portuges does not focus narrowly on films, nor, as one might anticipate, on feminist/gender issues, but portrays "the Other Europe" with its complexities and political/cultural atmosphere.

The book is a sympathetic portrait of the Hungarian filmmaker, offering details from her life which are interwoven with close readings of individual films. Given Mészáros' manifest interest in the plight of women, she is frequently claimed by Western feminist film critics as a director of "women's films." Mészáros, however, like most of East-Central European female filmmakers, objects to this narrow interpretation. Portuges rightly acknowledges the danger of "cultural colonization" by a dominant Western discourse, and in her study proves that an understanding of Mészáros and her works is possible only through a political/historical/cultural context.

I have only two minor reservations. The first one is Portuges' somewhat artificial attempt to "read" Mészáros through the lens of psychoanalysis (in particular through its Winnicottian rendition). Though academically sound, it does not further her study and looks as though taken from a different domain. The second observation is editorial: specific captions under photographs are not given; they read instead "scenes from..."

The integration of interviews, biographical facts, political context and close readings of films makes this book a valuable contribution to film studies.

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Sabrina Petra Ramet, ed. *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. xix, 361 pp. \$69.95, cloth.

This book was intended as a contribution to political science, but its publication in 1993 has made it into a work of history. By that year the USSR was no more, gone also was the policy of perestroika. Ramet explains the book's gestation as follows: it was begun at the end of 1986, was essentially ready three years later, and was revised and updated in late 1990 and early 1991. The editor's epilogue was added in January 1992.

This book was meant to provide answers to a range of questions related to Gorbachev's policy towards religion. Those questions, according to Ramet, include the goals and consequences of Gorbachev's religious policy, the structure and procedures of the Council for Religious Affairs, and the correlation of changes in Soviet sociological assessment with Soviet religious policy. In fact, only some of the chapters in this book actually help to provide answers to the questions posed by Ramet. These are chapters grouped in the first three parts of the book: "Introduction," "Policy Apparatus," and "Education, Socialisation and Values." The last two parts—"Cults and Sects" and "The World of Christianity"—contain chapters on modern cults in the USSR and the Yakut-Sakha republic of the Russian Federation (M. Mandelstam Balzer), the Renovationist movement in the Russian Orthodox Church (A. Levitin-Krasnov), the re-emergence of the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine (M. Tataryn), and Protestantism in the USSR (W. Sawatsky). It is not clear why the section on cults, whose activity the authors recognize as

marginal, is placed before the section on Christianity. There are other questions to be raised about the book's composition: why, for example, does the chapter on the Russian Orthodox church deal only with the problem of the Renovationist movement, and why is there a chapter on Protestantism but none on the Roman Catholic church, not to mention Islam? These and other questions can, of course, be considered irrelevant if one treats the chapters as discrete articles and the book itself as a collection of papers. Such an approach allows one to identify the truly interesting and innovative studies.

The book opens with articles by Philip Walters and Sabrina Ramet which present an overview of Soviet religious policy from Lenin to Gorbachev. Philip Walters, who bases his approach to the history of Soviet religious policy on the works of Bohdan Bociurkiw, presents a chronological survey from 1917 to 1985. He divides this period into eight phases. The main characteristic of the last phase (from 1979 to 1985) is defined as an intensification of governmental repression of religious dissent. Although this is certainly true, it could be added that the period also witnessed major changes in the party's policy toward religion. The same Iurii Andropov who directed the persecution of church activists—first as chief of the secret police and then as General Secretary of the CPSU—helped introduce these changes. During his time in office as leader of the CPSU, the decision was made to return the St. Daniel monastery in Moscow to the Russian Orthodox church. It seems that Brezhnev's death and Andropov's rise to power in 1982 marked the beginning of a new period in Soviet religious policy, one that eventually brought about Gorbachev's reforms in this field.

In her survey of Gorbachev's religious policy, Ramet identifies four phases in government policy toward religion. The first lasted from Gorbachev's rise to power in March 1985 until the end of 1986. There were few signs of change and liberalization at that time. The second lasted from December 1986 until the summer of 1988 when, with the celebration of the Millennium of Christianity, the policy of liberalization began. The Russian Orthodox church appeared to be the main beneficiary of the new policy. The third phase began in the late spring and summer of 1988, when concessions were made to other denominations, and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic church, once brutally persecuted by Stalin, was granted legal status. The fourth phase began with the publication and passage of the new law on religious organizations in September 1990. This phase, according to Ramet, "... constituted the realisation of Gorbachev's ultimate goal. The emphasis in this phase was on legality, procedural predictability, and an end to arbitrary decisions by local officials, the normalisation of religious life ..." (p. 36). In her article, Ramet pays special attention to the legalization of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic church and the re-emergence of other previously banned national churches. It is hard to disagree with her ultimate conclusion that the links between religion and nationalism are so deep that liberalization of government policy toward religion was unable to diminish them. The most recent developments in the former Soviet republics, as well as in the rump Yugoslavia, have proved the truth of this suggestion.

Part Two of the book includes three articles. The first, written by Otto Luchterhandt, presents a survey of the history of the Council for Religious Affairs, its organizational structure, tasks and methods. It is an excellent study of the institution that represented the Soviet state over the years in its relations with the country's religious organizations. The article by Jane Ellis examines interviews and speeches of Konstantin Kharchev, Chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs, under whom the reform of church-state relations began in the USSR, and who was removed from that position by his opponents in the summer of 1989. Ellis accepts the periodization of Gorbachev's religious policy proposed by Ramet and tries to explain how religious policy was decided and what stood behind the transitions from one phase to another. In his article, "The State, the Church and the Oikumene: The Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches, 1948–1985," J.A. Hebly traces the first contacts of the ROC with the World Council of

Churches, examines official Soviet attitudes toward the council, and studies the impact of the ROC on the council's activities. His conclusions support the view that the ecumenical work of the Russian Orthodox church was conducted by a limited number of church hierarchs and functionaries under the strict control of the government and was closely associated with the latter's "struggle for peace."

Part Three of the book, "Education, Socialisation and Values," includes four articles, two of which, by Larry E. Holmes and John Dunstan, discuss the involvement of schools in Soviet religious policy. Holmes's stimulating article shows that schoolteachers of the 1920s and 1930s in the USSR were far from being "yes men" in the implementation of Soviet anti-religious and atheistic policy in the classrooms. Their passive and sometimes active resistance forced officials to surrender on a number of occasions. Dunstan's article, "Soviet Schools, Atheism and Religion," examines how the concept of atheistic education influenced curricular and extracurricular activity in Soviet schools. The article also discusses the beginnings of religious education in the last years of the USSR's existence. John Anderson discusses the issue of women's participation in religious activities in the USSR. He stresses that women constituted a majority of active believers in the Soviet Union and tries to explain this phenomenon, as well as the efforts of Soviet officials to deal with the problem.

The article by Samuel Kliger and Paul De Vries is based on numerous interviews conducted primarily with youth respondents in Russia. It studies the dramatic shift in the system of values that began in the USSR with perestroika. An analysis of the interviews helps one understand the popularity of cults in the USSR during the last two decades of its existence—the subject of Oxana Antic's article.

The concluding section of the book, "The World of Christianity," includes Myroslaw Tataryn's article, "The Re-emergence of the Ukrainian (Greek) Catholic Church in the USSR." The essay reconstructs the legalization of the church in 1988–90 and helps explain the changes that occurred in the realm of church-state relations during Gorbachev's tenure. Tataryn also examines the link between the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic church and the re-emergence of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church. Another article in this part of the volume, an excellent study by Walter Sawatsky on Protestantism in the USSR, presents a slightly reworked version of his article published under the same title in another volume edited by Ramet (*Protestantism and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia. The Communist and Postcommunist Eras*, 1992).

Ramet's epilogue to the volume, "Religion after Collapse," attempts to provide a link between the articles in this volume and subsequent developments in the region. Although the epilogue is not free of minor factual errors (for example, Ukraine is said to have granted its support to the idea of the Commonwealth of Independent States only after another ten Soviet republics did so [p. 357], when in fact Ukraine was a founding member of the CIS together with Russia and Belarus), it presents a carefully considered account of the problems faced by churches after the collapse of the USSR. Lacking is an explanation of the role of the religious factor in the disintegration of the USSR and an attempt to determine whether Gorbachev's new policy in the field of church-state relations intensified the process. The epilogue and, even more so, the volume as a whole open a new stage in the study of religion in the USSR, no longer as a subject of political science but of historical research.

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