

BOOK REVIEWS

Čikeš, Radovan, *Vzťahy štátu a cirkvi na Slovensku. Súčasné usporiadanie a trendy vo vývoji vzťahu štátu a cirkvi*. [State-Church Relations in Slovakia. The Current Structure and Trends in the Development of State-Church Relations.] Bratislava: The Institute for State-Church Relations. 2010. 120 pp. ISBN: 978- 80-89096-43-5 Reviewed by Lucia Grešková.

A political scientist that has long been committed to the issue of state-church relations published a very interesting book in 2010, in which he analyzes state-church relations in Slovakia. In his book, Radovan Čikeš is attempting to expand the contemporary debate on the structure of the relations between state and churches and religious communities.

Despite the fact that religion is still a rather marginal issue in the field of comparative politics, interest has risen during the past two decades among small but growing number of scientists. The issues regarding the relation between religion and society are becoming more and more insistent and relevant. Čikeš strives to analyze this issue in the context of state-church relations, which have been in constant conflict since the age of enlightenment.

The book is divided into six main parts. The first part is dedicated to the explanation of the research context, the aim of the work, its subject and method, and specifically the theoretical status of state-church relations. The most extensive part of the book is a detailed analytical overview of state-church relations in Slovakia after 1989. It is connected to the previous chapter, which is devoted to the historical development of state-church relations since the end of the 18th century. In this, as well as the following part, the author analyzes and delineates the initial state-church relations after 1989 in Czechoslovakia and in Slovakia. In addition to an analysis of the political parties' intentions and program statements of the government coalitions after 1989 regarding state-church relations issues, the author offers a sketch of trends and visions of the development of these relations in Slovakia. Following that is a part called "Systems of state-church relations abroad", where he compares individual state-church relations systems and in which he refers to the historical context and specific social development in the compared countries. The most compelling part of the book is the last chapter, in which he projects trends and visions of the state-church relations development in Slovakia.

Radovan Čikeš's book is the most detailed analysis of this topic published in Slovak language so far. The author's research involves a large amount of relevant literature and other sources. Primarily, the book belongs to the field of political science, but the author uses also legal, historical, and sociological sources. He attempts to meet the goal of his book, which is enriching the contemporary debate on the issue and arrives at a conclusion that in order to comprehend state-church relations it is necessary to consider also the dynamics of the development and understand the individual actors in the process. The publication, however, raises some critical issues. The author avoided formulating his own opinions, which makes the last chapter, on the trends and visions, simply a summary of general trends and possibilities of further structure of state-church relations. His own contribution or deeper reflection on what has been happening in the society is missing in this piece of work. According to Roland Robertson,¹ the behavior of globalization is paradoxical – it brings absolutization and relativization simultaneously. It is a matter of universalization of the particular (global expansion of the western culture) and particularization

¹ Roland Robertson was the first to analyze the topic of „religion and globalization“ in *Globalization – Social Theory and Global Culture*, Sage Publications Ltd, 1992, p.224 .

of the universal (the western culture meets other cultures) at the same time. This paradox is then reflected in the fate of religion: its form and social roles change swiftly; some forms get weaker, while others grow more quickly. Globalization of religion seeks to achieve constructive dialogue, promotes ecumenism, and supports communication between religions on the one hand, while activating religious radicalism and extremism on the other. Čikeš completely avoided these topics, which have significant influence on the structure of state-church relations. State-church relations are defined not only by program statements of the government (in this part of the book it is necessary to appreciate the original contribution of the author) and legal documents, but also by the motion of the society and social pressures that influence those documents and statements.

The author uses a descriptive-analytic approach. When processing the individual thematic areas, he applies the interpretation of contemporary history, which is very flexible in literature. From the point of view of empirical-analytical approaches, the book is based predominantly on the results of sociological research, which give a certain current picture of the given situation, but also its successful incorporation into the course of development.

In general, Radovan Čikeš's book represents a major contribution to the comprehension of the current structure of state-church relations. The world news convinces us every day that religion (and religious extremism) is and will always be an important factor in politics. Crucial studies of the relationship between religion and politics are rather new. The dominant studies and thinking in sociology and politics have leaned towards the proposition that religion would gradually become irrelevant in social life. Because of the rise of new global trends (such as the economic globalization and democratization), the initial research on the role of religion in politics has to be based on unclear concepts and generalization. This is typical also for the literature related to state-church relations. Nevertheless, as the research agenda in this area progresses, the methodological norms are being established. Researchers today are building the basic foundation, which will allow them to test numerous hypotheses connected with the structure of state-church relations. The study of this field might bring significant advantages for political science. The book is suitable for political scientists, lawyers, sociologists, historians, as well as economists and politicians. It could also be used as a textbook for certain college courses. At the same time, it is written in a direct and straightforward language, which allows it to be an important source of information for not only the general public but also experts.

Reviewed by Lucia Grešková, deputy director at Institute for State- Church Relations, Bratislava, Slovakia

Petr Petrovich Vibe, et al eds. *Istoriia i etnografiia nemtsev v Sibiri*. [History and Ethnography of Germans in Siberia.] Omsk: Izd. Omskogo gosudarstvennogo istorio-kraevedchekogo muzeia, 2009. 752pp. ISBN 978-5-9901296-2-7. Reviewed by Walter Sawatsky.

Toward the end of the USSR the nationalities (or ethnicity) question was already coming to the fore. The break up of the Soviet Union resulted not only in the formation of 15 national entities, there was nationalist violence in places, and some autonomous republics within the Russian Federation, or as part of Georgia, are still struggling for self-determination. From Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in particular the Slavic and German population soon fled in the face of mounting violence. Given that as late as 1987 the labels German and Fascist were still used interchangeably in public discourse, it was no wonder that one early transnationally based new society to spring up was Wiedergeburt (*Bozrozhdienie*), Society for the Fostering of German Culture and Nationality.

Already underway since 1987 was what turned out to be the most massive out emigration of persons of German origin to Germany, well over two million by 1993. The challenge of receiving this sudden population inflow, and the negative impact of losing such a labor force caused the Russian Federation and the foreign office of the German government to establish two German national regions, one called Azovo (near Omsk) and another called Halbstadt (near Slavgorod). Funding by the Germans made possible the establishment of new local industries, as well as attempts to transform agriculture in the regions, both of which had large Russian German populations. This did not really halt the immigration fever, nor were the two projects success stories, but it did help mobilize a much more active scholarly effort at positive integration of those Germans still left.

The book reviewed here reveals the fruit of what can only be described as heroic efforts by a relatively small group of specialists. Historical studies and ethnographic studies that are the basis for this encyclopedic collection represent numerous dissertations, and reflect the fruit of sustained cooperation between German scholars of *Auslandsdeutschtum* (now no longer utilized by the Nazi's *Drang nach Osten*, but driven by genuine curiosity about the way Germanic traditions were adapted and changed in new contexts during tumultuous times), and several Russian universities and research institutes seeking to show the cultural and religious richness that was and is Siberia. General editor Vibe already shared such a vision for the German ethnic story together with another historian whose roots are in Omsk also, namely Irina Cherkazianova, now a specialist on the history of pedagogy at a university in St. Petersburg.¹ They carried the main weight of this project, along with ethnographers A. A. German and a somewhat younger scholar Tatiana Smirnova.²

Divided into 9 major sections, with usually from two to ten authors of sub-sections, one can use the volume like an encyclopedic history. Endnotes (over 50 pages) are filled with archival citations and general bibliography. The volume also includes indexes and photo credits. That points to another achievement of recent scholarship - not only did access to long closed archives allow for use of old photos and drawings, the contemporary ethnographers carried digital cameras conveying the contemporary scene in color. More is available, in a power point presentation at a book launching in Omsk in June 2010, Prof. Cherkazianova showed statistics, charts and photos, only a few of them included in the book.

The first section presents in 3 essays an overview of Germans in Siberia from the 18th-19th centuries - an historiographical assessment of the German scholarly contribution to "opening" or modernizing Siberia; the role of Germans in the expansion and organization of the Russian Empire across Siberia, and the role of German-Decembrists while in Siberian exile. More can be found in the Omsk regional museum that Dr. Vibe has long headed. It was Vibe that wrote most of the sub-sections in the second section on the role of German colonies in Siberia, a subject on which he has published extensively, including his *Habilitationschrift* of 2007.³

Sections 3-8 (420 pages) form the bulk of the book, with mostly a focus on the 20th century when the frontier process moved steadily from the Ural Mountains to the Far East.. This is essentially a historical survey, divided by major time periods. That time division is interesting for conveying central moments in the Russian German experience. It begins with the problem that

¹ I. V. Cherkazianova. *Shkol'noe obrazovanie possiiskikh nemtzev. (Problemy razvitiia i sokhraneniia nemetskoi shkoly v Sibiri v XVIII-XX vv.)* St. Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia akademiia nauk possiiskikh nemtzev, 2004. (A German translation was also published.) Pp366. ISBN 5-93227-001-2.

² T. B. Smirnova, *Nemtsy Sibiri: Etnicheskie protsessy*. Omsk: ITs RUSINKO, 2002. Pp210, 35 charts. ISBN 5-94225-004-9.

³ P. P. Vibe, *Nemetskie kolonii v Sibiri: sotsial'no-ekonomicheskii aspekt*. Omsk: Izd. OmGPU, 2007. Pp368 ISBN 978-5-8268-1004-0.

World War I signified for Germans, since the Russian Empire was at war with the German Empire. Secondly, along the advancing frontier of the expanding empire, with infrastructure lacking, the 4th section on “Spiritual” life of Germans in Siberia [using *dukhovnaia* as comprehensive word for the arts] Cherkazianova described the German penchant for establishing schools (elementary to teacher training), schools that for many settlers doubled as prayer buildings. The 5th section then focused on Siberian Germans during the 1917 revolution and the subsequent civil war (about 1917-24), followed by the longest of all (180 pages), section 6 on Germans in Siberia during the first ten years of Soviet power - the time when German roles and self-understandings were dramatically transformed, were “sovietized” to use a heading for an essay by A. N. Savin. The 7th section in another 100 pages (in 4 sub-sections) tells the story of the Soviet Germans in World War II, the 1941 forced deportation from western USSR to Siberia and Central Asia, and the post-war decade until the Special Command (*Spetskomandantura*) began to end. That left a shorter 8th section on Germans in Siberia in the 2nd half of the 20th century, where gradually Germans protested, sought regional self-determination, or began petitioning for exit permits to emigrate. It was the era (described in Cherkazianova’s sub-section) of the near death of education and culture, and of the rebirth of religious life.

The persistence of religion was always a factor in the *Schicksalswege* (fateful turn of events) of the Russian Germans in the 20th century. Early in the 20th century Lutherans attempted to organize not only a German speaking Lutherans in Russia church structure headed by a bishop, but held an organizing gathering for a western Siberian synod with seven elected members. With collectivization and the campaign to eliminate all vestiges of religion after 1929, the leaders of this effort disappeared into the Gulag. Local efforts, by laity, to resume worship after the end of the total isolation of the Germans in 1955 finally bore fruit in the late 1970s with state agreement to permit a traveling bishop to visit Siberian settlements from his residence in Latvia. Similarly there was a death of organized religious practice, at least by 1937, of German Catholics, Mennonites and Baptists.

The sub-sections give details on the difficulties of religious rebirth, because of the state restrictions on legal organization. The Mennonites were never granted the right to form a national conference (as had existed till 1924), and Catholics finally experienced the formation of dioceses after 1990 when the Russian Orthodox protested this was a violation of canonical territory. What was possible for some Mennonites and German Baptists was to obtain *de facto* legalization as filial sections of a registered Evangelical Christian Baptist Union which had been organized in 1944. For this reviewer it was a bit surreal to see a monograph published by me in English in 1981 (appeared in Russian in 1996) on the *Soviet Evangelicals* cited to convey some general patterns, then the writer added archival details from specific regions of western Siberia. This too is a growth area in Russian language studies, frequently the writer on these sections was Andrei Savin, researcher at the Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Two major collections of documentary summaries edited by him, contain long introductory essays that provide a bit more detail than was included in the book under review.⁴ What comes through by means of sober citations from those documents are the intensity of the war on religion under Stalin, and again under Khrushchev when the means were not as brutal, but the effort to break the back of the democratically organized free

⁴ They are: A. N. Savin, ed. *Etnokonfessiiia v sovetskom gosudarstve. Mennonity Sibiri v 1920-1980-e gody. Annotirovannyi perechen' arkhivnykh dokumentov i materialov. Izbrannye dokumenty*. Novosibirsk: POSOKH, 2006, pp. 487 plus 7 pages of photos.[also published in English translation by the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Fresno Pacific University, Fresno CA; A. N. Savin, ed. *Etnokonfessiiia v sovetskom gosudarstve. Mennonity Sibiri v 1920-1930-e gody: Emigratsiia i repressii. Dokumenty i materialy*. Novosibirsk: POSOKH, 2009, pp 751; see also A. N. Savin, ed. *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i evangel'skie tserkvi Sibiri v 1920-1941 gg. Dokumenty i materialy*. Novosibirsk: POSOKH, 2004, pp 427 plus 50 pages of photos.

churches in particular remained disproportionately intense. Savin, Vibe and others frequently drew attention to the German Mennonite group cohesion and high moral standards that were their strength and were deemed a problem by proponents of state atheism. In this book that may account in part for the heavy use of photos and documents from Russian-German Mennonites, taken either from state archives preserving what was confiscated, or now in a new climate of respect for such ethnic strength, artifacts that had been given to the historians and ethnographers seeking to tell a full story.

That leaves the final section (9th) under the heading "Ethnography of Germans in Siberia". Written by ethnographers, the section has much fascinating detail on traditional economic practices and material artifacts, on yearly rituals for celebrating things like harvest and spring, on the structure of family life, family traditions, and the contemporary ethnic processes. The latter drew attention to the mixing of certain traditions with the multicultural diversity most Germans still in Siberia now live in. For the discriminating reader two things need to be pointed out. The ethnographic perspective pervades the entire book, the final section represents more of a systematization. Religion similarly seldom has its own sub-section, but religious life, commitments, and practices were and remain a central element of their culture. Throughout the volume (and endnotes) one can find details on German Catholics, Reformed and Lutheran Protestants, Mennonites and Baptists, including noting how the less hierarchical traditions became increasingly associated with, even fused with, the Evangelical movement, where the Germanic element, even in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, was disproportionately prominent in leadership.

So this history and ethnography book offers a serious exposure to a much larger literature now emerging about the Russian Germans, and about their religious life.⁵ Readers in Germany know that the new emigrants have maintained extensive contacts with their former places of origin in Siberia and Central Asia, and now number many new scholars fluent in Russian and German. English language readers may notice that less of the English language literature on the subject was utilized by the scholars, since a study of the Germans pre-supposed some ability to read German, less so the English. Yet even those relying on English literature mainly for their grasp of the religious and cultural life of the Russian Germans, cannot bypass such a treasure trove of data and references, for the material necessarily forces a mentality shift on the reader.

Reviewed by Walter Sawatsky, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, IN, USA.

⁵ A recent handbook provides details on no less than 294 dissertations on Russian Germans produced since 1960: I. V. Cherkazianova, ed. *Letopis' dissertatsii po istorii i kulture rossiiskikh nemtsev (1960-2009 vv)*. St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2009. Pp284. Includes charts and indices.