

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND RELIGION

by Tamás Földesi

Dr. Tamás Földesi (Marxist) is the dean and professor of the philosophy of law of the Law School, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary. This paper was delivered as the main Marxist paper at the Second International Conference on Ways to Promote the 1981 U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, "Building Understanding and Respect between People of Diverse Religions or Beliefs," Warsaw, Poland, May 15, 1989. This edited version of that speech is printed with Prof. Földesi's permission. A previous article of his was published in OPREE, Vol. 9, No. 1. He has written many books and articles and may be regarded as one of the most prominent humanist Marxist thinkers in the area of human rights.

I.

The Limitation of the Freedom of Religion and Its Ideology

I published a book on human rights in Hungary in January 1989. The basic conclusion of the book was that the implementation of human rights in Eastern Europe has been characterized by fundamental contradictions and discrepancies during the long historic period dominated by a one-party system, especially in the sphere of the so-called "rights to political freedom." The main contradiction is this: On the one hand, human rights in these countries have been declared basic values which form an integral part of the constitution and the actual exercise of human rights is officially evaluated as being basically (and increasingly) in harmony with the declared principles. On the other hand, as a necessary consequence of the single-party system, the political part of human rights--the rights of association, assembly, speech, press, and others--are strictly limited, and, in fact, are not being implemented.

In this paper I wish to explore whether the large-scale limitation of human rights had affected the freedom of conscience and religion, and if so, to what extent. In addition, I will also review the ideological justifications of the limitation of the rights of conscience and religion and which are its debatable, and for me, unacceptable propositions. The analysis is primarily done on the basis of the Hungarian experiences with an occasional look at the developments in other East European countries.

In relation to the rights of conscience and religion can one trace the duality that characterized the general situation of human rights in Eastern Europe? One side of the above contradiction evidently exists: similarly to all other human rights, the rights of conscience and religion are among the declared basic values listed in constitutions (although not all of the human rights listed in the 1948 and 1966 U.N. Human Rights Declarations are included in the East European constitutions). In regard to their implementation the answer given was definitely positive. This attitude was typically characterized by the positions adopted by the congresses of the Hungarian Socialist

Worker's Party [the Communist Party of Hungary] which were repeated almost as stereotypes after 1956, declaring that in Hungary the right to religion was fully implemented, that relations between the state and the churches were reliably settled, and that the churches operated in an autonomous manner.

With regard to the other side of the contradiction, at first glance it seems the question has to be answered negatively. Since no other real political parties could exist under the conditions of the one-party system, they, as a consequence, could not have their own press, and so forth. In Eastern Europe (except in Albania) different churches did exist legally, and they did have the right to hold religious festivities and to publish books and newspapers within certain limits. In contrast to the 1950s--at least in Hungary--the citizens could freely attend religious ceremonies without suffering disadvantages; for instance, their children could attend religious educational courses.

However, the situation is different when the realization of the freedom of conscience and religion is evaluated within the framework of human rights as a whole. It is a part, an integral part of human rights--as the essence of the right of equality and freedom--that the system of political institutions should provide an opportunity for different social movements to form organizations, to express their ideas, ideologies, and should not hinder the creation of realistic competition among them. Only so can citizens be ensured that by studying different ideas, views, and trends, they can decide for themselves which political concepts and organizations they may want to support, what ideologies, philosophical and ethical concepts they want to accept or reject. In other words, human rights definitely include a relative equality of chances, for only then can human rights fulfil their basic function that individuals within a society may extend their personality. Only when they know the alternatives can they select from among the different political, ideological, and other values. However, this equality of chances did not really exist in countries of Eastern Europe. Although the churches could operate and religion could exist in a legal manner their opportunities were severely limited.

An overall characteristics of the limitations of the freedom of conscience and religion was that from the second half of the 1940s, in the majority of the East European countries, a system of conditions was established where the activity of the churches was actually forced into a narrowly set framework very different from the opportunities available for the spread of the Marxist ideology. The opportunities were first limited when the East European political systems were turned from a pluralistic to a monolithic form where the vast majority of the organizations that did not form the so-called "transmission belts" of the ruling communist parties were eliminated or else their operation was reduced to a formality. Religious clubs and associations, including their youth sections, were eliminated during that period and they could not be reorganized for decades. This included, in Hungary, the abolishment of the monastic orders (Law No. 34/1950), and only a few of the schools owned and operated by the churches were allowed to carry on their activities.

On the level of education the most characteristic example of the inequality of chances was in schools. Especially in secondary schools and institutions of higher education (with

the exception of church-run secondary schools and theological schools), education is carried out strictly in the atheist spirit; the curricular materials in the social sciences are based on Marxism, and classes in Marxism are obligatory at colleges and universities.

The limitation of the right to religion is also expressed in Hungary and the majority of the East European countries by the fact that up to very recently the means of mass communications were available to the Churches only to an extremely limited extent. This practice evidently expressed the concept that the spread of religious ideas through such channels was not desired.

The significant limitation of religious activities was also expressed by the fact that the autonomy of the churches was far more relative than what could be considered compatible with the freedom of religion. However, the majority of the East European countries have implemented legal regulations that considerably obscure autonomy, expressing a monolithic attitude that all organizations that do not serve the expression of the policy pursued by the Communist Parties--except for sports organizations--should not be trusted. The churches are obligated to inform the State Office for Church Affairs of all their more significant actions, plans, and ideas. In its own right the State Office for Church Affairs has a say in the appointment of Church dignitaries, and it often makes its own suggestions. Far from being complete, this list clearly shows that this is not a case of occasional, incidental limitation of the right of religion but a phenomenon that can be observed on a wide scale.

The basic reason for the different implementation of the rights of conscience and religion is that a monolithic political structure only considers its own ideology--the spread of Marxism-Leninism--to be an indispensable means of social development, presuming that this was identical to the objective interests of the people, especially of the future generations. In this respect, in principle, the churches and religions are in the same category as the organizations and their ideologies which maintain platforms different from those of the ruling party. They are both unwanted competitors. Their activities should be limited or banned in the interest of maintaining power, since their ideas objectively--and occasionally subjectively, too--represent (or may represent) trends which differ from socialism. However, the significant difference is that while a monolithic structure--despite several, already explained negative consequences even during a longer historic period--may allow itself to govern without competitors, it cannot take the same route toward the churches and denominations. Due to historic reasons and traditions the social requirements and needs of people expressed in their religions must be tolerated to a certain extent.

Therefore, the churches and religions appear as a "necessary evil" in the monolithic East European systems. However, "necessary evil" is a deeply and basically contradictory category. Simultaneously it recognizes the necessity of a group of phenomena which "unfortunately" cannot be eliminated or eradicated from amongst general social phenomena, but at the same time their social role should be completely or partly obstructed.

The objective contradiction has a two-way effect. On the one hand if something is evil, its activities or opportunities should be limited. One must change the necessary into unnecessary. "Necessary evil" is not very different from "unnecessary evil." The idea of "unnecessary evil" affects not only all the churches and religions as complex phenomena (as in the case of Albania) but "only" some of its organs, (e.g. the abolishment of the monastic orders, and associations). On the other hand, if the churches and religions are necessary--taking social-historic realities into consideration--endeavors are made to use, as much as possible, the churches and religions in the interest of the system. This is the root of the endeavors to establish certain forms of political cooperation, which in some countries may even reach a stage of alliance and may be extended to cooperation to handle certain negative phenomena of society (such as the struggle against social maladjustment) or to the support of dialogues (although dialogues reflect a somewhat different mentality on behalf of Marxism).

All this is historically further complicated by the fact that the churches and religions--although their social-historic role was very diverse and contradictory--were closely related both financially and intellectually to the bourgeois societies, and therefore, during the social changes that took place in Eastern Europe following the Second World War, there was a significant conflict of interests between the new social order and at least a part of the churches and religions in connection with their earlier status and position (for example, the problems of the land distribution). Similarly, in the majority of the East European countries, with the exception of Czechoslovakia, bourgeois democracy only had a minor influence. Several feudal remnants still existed (despite the bourgeois requirements) and, as a result, the state and the churches were not separated consistently. Consequently, the freedom of religion and conscience was implemented to a limited degree. (Merely two examples: Before World War II, only in Czechoslovakia was it possible for someone to declare himself/herself not belonging to any Church or religion without most serious social consequences. Another characteristic example was in Hungary, for instance, where prior to World War II church taxes were collected as public taxes and one had to belong to a church or denomination.)

To consider religions and Churches as a "necessary evil" brings about a similar collision of values as in the case of "rights to political freedom." In my book, I endeavored to document that classic political human rights--within the framework of a dogmatic concept--conflicts with the maintenance of power and the building of monolithically conceived socialism. The "solution" of the presumed collision is that the maintenance of power, the "building of socialism" is a more important interest than are the classic political human rights. This legitimated their long- lasting limitation well beyond the periods of the cult of personality.

In the case of the freedom of conscience and religion the contradiction is between this groups of human rights and the general Marxist-Leninist ideology which would have to be accepted by practically all. The latter is considered politically to be a basic ideological condition for the completion of socialist construction. There is no doubt that within the framework of a monolithic concept the freedom of religion and conscience must, relatively, succumb in a conflict of values. If the limitation of the freedom of religion and

conscience is the price to be paid for the increasingly successful and wide-ranging spread of the Marxist ideology, this sacrifice is worth the effort even if, in a similar manner to the limitation of the "political human rights," it provides a platform for criticisms of various types and motivations, since it results in a contradiction between the declared principles and the actual practice.

So far we have studied the political motivations of the partial limitation of the freedom of religion and conscience. However, limitations have not only political sources but ideological roots as well. In Eastern Europe the Marxist ideology dealing with the criticism of religion provided a theoretical basis for the foundation of such limitation. However, in this respect, at least in Hungary, there was a significant difference between the views of two groups of critics. The first groups of the Marxist critics of religion continued, in somewhat refined form, the simplistic concepts about church and religion which were formulated in the 1950s. The members of this group agreed with such limitations and aimed at the conscious ideological foundation for the continued necessity of religion. Nevertheless, there was also a more progressive trend whose members endeavored to elaborate a more nuanced picture in order to create a theoretical basis for practical cooperation that, based on agreements between the state and the churches, were gradually implemented in policy and several areas of everyday life. The activity of the second trend created the preconditions for the organization of dialogues. As of the 1980s some significant dialogues took place. At the same time one must add that the representatives of this group also considered the limitation of the freedom of religion and the struggle against religion to be necessary, but they placed a far greater emphasis on political cooperation and dialogue with the churches.

The representatives of the more conservative criticism of religion in essence based their concept concerning the justification of the limitation of religious freedom on three arguments. However, one must note that the actual fact of limitation has never been acknowledged by either group of the Marxist critics of religion, but the logical consequence of their reasoning reflected a trend leading towards limitation.

The first basis is the evaluation of the truth content of religious teachings saying that in a peculiar way they considerably deter people from reality. The result was that religion is considered a false consciousness strongly contradicting sciences which reflect reality in a true manner. But they meant not only the sciences. Marxism, as the "sole scientific ideology," was declared to be a specific branch of science. The conclusion of the two combined was that in education, science must be given a "green light," and Marxism, as a scientific ideology, should be given priority, so much so, that, as far as possible, it must be ensured a monopoly situation. Religious views, however, should be excluded from the classrooms and education. At best religion is to be the subject of criticism in classroom. (Its fate should be analogous to those pseudo-sciences that should be eliminated from the curricula as much as possible.)

The "objective" contradiction between the "falseness" of religion and the "truth" of Marxism is the basis of the so-called ideological class struggle, which--despite their similar features--significantly differs from the economic and political forms of class

struggle. In the case of the latter two there may also be an identity of interests in addition to the conflict of interests, which enables economic and political coexistence. But truth and fallacy rule out one another. Therefore, both coexistence and convergence are impossible on the "ideological front." According to Pál Földi "the relationship between science and religion is irreconcilable," and in essence the same holds true for Marxism-Leninism. "The party is a vanguard; its ideology is Marxist-Leninism which contradicts all sorts of bourgeois, petit-bourgeois, religious ideologies."

The second basis for the limitation of the rights of conscience and religion was the unilateral evaluation of the social-historic role played by religion which is closely related to the first root. If religious views were the specific appearance of false consciousness and at the same time the most significant obstacles to the spread of Marxism-Leninism as the real ideology, their social role must necessarily be reactionary, conservative. In the case of the dogmatic evaluation of religion the reactionary nature of religion is based historically. The theoretical starting point is the role played by religion in class society, which is unambiguously negative, according to this evaluation.

A basic feature of the dogmatic concept is that this simplified historical evaluation is transferred, almost as is, to the present-day conditions. The class content of religion generally does not change under the conditions of "socialism," under the presumptions that Marxism-Leninism remains the ideology of the most progressive social class, the working class (it may be extended to that of "the people"), necessarily opposing religion which reflects petit-bourgeois attitudes. "The religious ideology is incompatible with the socialist ideology; they stem from different roots. So much so that the gap even widens(!)"

Similarly "in socialism religious morals are just as unacceptable as the bourgeois, petit-bourgeois morals." From all of this the conclusion is evident: "The interest and task of man building socialist, communist society is to get rid of the shackles of religion."

The third reasoning is based on the alleged practice of "socialism" which, according to this supposition, fully proves the validity of policy of the restriction of the freedom of religion. According to the representatives of the dogmatic criticism of religion "socialist consciousness" and the "trend of influence" of the individual religions reflect a contrasting change. While the first gradually strengthens, the second permanently fades in a proportional manner. The reasons for the contrasting phenomenon--since this is a special reflection--are considered to be that "socialism" provides an ever increasing opportunity for human self-attainment. They believe that it is increasingly proven that the "liberated human being" is capable of directing his or her society and himself or herself, and therefore, will decreasingly rely on the "crutches of religion." Again, according to Pál Földi, "with the leadership of the working class and our society's political unity, concord is constantly strengthened" and simultaneously with it "socialist consciousness" is implemented on an increasingly wide scale. As a counterpoint "religion becomes gradually groundless and will fade away in the socialist society."

The more progressive Hungarian critics of religion represent a far more varied stand on these issues. This concept may generally be characterized by the inclusion of both of the previous elements in a partial form as well as realistic features that stand far closer to the truth. By way of illustration let us quote a few thoughts by Jozsef Lukacs, who was a leading proponent of the progressive criticism of religion.

In the works of Jozsef Lukacs one can find the idea that "religions may be differentiated from plain mistakes by the role they play in promoting the development of historic necessity and social development". At the same time, elsewhere he refines this concept by stating that in certain respects religion also includes correct views. In another work he already differentiates between religious views and religious ideology. While on the level of views he considers religions and Marxism incompatible, with regard to ideologies he states that they do not rule out one another in all aspects and even lists those very important features, from the preservation of peace to honesty and loyalty, which converge.

The difference between the progressive and regressive criticisms of religion is further emphasized in the evaluation of the social role played by religions. This is primarily expressed in that, according to J. Lukács, the progressive and revolutionary endeavors may also appear in religions; they may inspire cultural development. In harmony with this he emphasized the alliance of the churches and the state, especially in regard to political and cultural issues.

However, the remnants of the dogmatic concept also appear here. In this spirit J. Lukács writes that the religions in the countries of Eastern Europe have a bourgeois, petit-bourgeois content, and the "class struggle presumes a break with religion" although the extent of that breakaway varied historically. In addition, "socialism did not require religious supplementation."

With regard to the situation and future of religion in the countries of Eastern Europe, according to the more progressive criticisms of religion, as a result of the alienation experienced in "socialism," religion will continue to play an important role and maintain its influence for a longer period of time. The representatives of this view also agree that with the progress of the "construction of socialism" the social bases of religion decrease. According to J. Lukács "the conclusive evidence against religion is provided by history."

However, more important is that in conclusion even the more progressive criticisms of religion evaluate the relations between the state and the churches, and Marxism and religion, from a position of power. In this spirit there is a basic agreement among its proponents that the freedom of religion is sufficiently implemented and that the relations between the state and the Churches are satisfactorily settled.

II

The Concept Requiring the Elimination of the Freedom of Conscience and Religion

I think it has been already made clear that my standpoint differs on a number of issues, not only from the dogmatic concept of the criticism of religion, but even from the more progressive Marxist theories on religion. Primarily, I maintain that similarly to all other human rights, in all of their complexity, the consistent implementation of the rights of freedom of conscience and religion is one of the basic tasks of the near future. I do not agree that the situation in regard to the freedom of conscience and religion was satisfactory in Hungary although I do not reject the partial results and relative successes, especially when compared to certain other countries of Eastern Europe. The relatively good relationship between the state and the churches, the "settled" nature of the situation cannot hide that this is not a relationship of equal parties who mutually promote their interests, but one reflecting an unequal power relationship and a monolithic attitude that require correction in the spirit of the consistent implementation of human rights.

Furthermore, while I primarily disagree with the reasoning of the dogmatic criticism of religion, I also disagree with the similar views of the more progressive concept of the criticism of religion. My counter-argument is as follows:

I think that the coupling of religions with false consciousness and contrasting it with Marxism as the scientific truth is basically questionable. The comparison of the values of the religious ideologies and those of the Marxist ideology presumes the reliable disclosure of the truth values of these concepts.

But can one unequivocally determine the truth value of the contrasting ideological statements and concepts? Has it really been unequivocally decided and proven that God does not exist, that the world is eternal and endless? I think that so far we have not been able to find an answer to this cardinal problem of the contradictory ideologies that would have been logically proven in an exact scientific manner or whose antithesis had been rejected.

The more progressive critics of religion within Marxism endeavored to overcome this whole complex of problems by a specific shifting of the emphasis, justly emphasizing that the essence of Marxism was not atheism, but the human being and social philosophy, and that the seed of atheism was not negation but a benevolent humanistic ideology.

In my view this is the only possible route for Marxism. At the same time this evaluation of atheism is a special retreat in this sphere. The collision of the religious concept and the Marxist ideas does not primarily concern the belief in God and atheism but has transferred to the sphere of ideology, to the fields of society, human concerns, and ethics.

However, if atheism, even in a reduced way, remains a part of Marxism it must be acknowledged that the Marxist concepts concerning atheism do not oppose the partially or completely unscientific nature of religious belief because they are scientific, but, in the

best case, as a probable (perhaps of a greater level of probability) hypothesis opposed to another assumption. In this sense the real gap or cleavage is not between "science and atheism" and "unscientific religious belief," but between the sciences (especially natural sciences) and the philosophical approaches, the latter of which include both the materialist and idealist (theological) approaches.

As a result, the justification or legitimation of either the religious or the Marxist ideologies are not decided by their seemingly undeterminable truth content, but that they fulfil determined social needs and that they are a source of motivation for actions and for taking a stand. It is a self-conceit by Marxism to state that the relationship between the two ideologies is basically characterized by the dichotomy of true and false.

The concept of the limitation of religious freedom is even more questionable if one adds to the study the ideological sphere mentioned by Jozsef Lukács. According to Lukacs's terminology, ideologies, in contrast to world outlook, "do not rule out one another in all respects."

But if one takes a look at the issues where similarities in essential points of contact are found it turns out that these are not only quantitatively numerous but are also qualitatively basic issues. Peace, truth, equality, love, consistent humanitarianism, respect for the community, honesty, loyalty, the enrichment of the personality, and so forth form value complexes that raise basic doubts concerning the notion of complete or essential ideological opposition. Especially when one takes into consideration that the social attitudes of a significant portion of the churches in Eastern Europe gradually changed since the 1950s, the elements (the questioning of revolution, the protection of private ownership) which significantly differentiated religious ideologies from Marxism were forced in the background. All this does not mean that as a result of the opposing ideological foundations significant differences do not continue to exist. However, it may confidently be stated that if ideological discrepancies do not provide a sufficient justification for limiting the freedom of religion, other ideological differences, which contain a number of significant similarities and points of contact, should also not be used as a basis to justify such restrictions.

In the light of all this, the justification which utilizes the notion of the ideological class struggle proves to be untenable. If the ideological class struggle's lack of compromise and rejection of coexistence were based on the presumed incompatibility of "Weltanschauung" (world outlook) and ideology and on an almost absolute opposition, another understanding of the world outlook and ideologies must lead to a different conclusion when the premises are changed.

If the ideological poles only embody different scales of probability, if a wide scale of ideologies are provided for diverging and converging elements, one is justified to ask why should the at least partial cooperation and coexistence based on a dialogue be rejected in this field when it has already been accepted in the economic and political fields.

As I have pointed out in another paper, the sharp differentiation between the norms of the ideological class struggle and the rules of economic and political class struggle is unfounded because coexistence acknowledged in the field of politics is based on values (such as, for instance, the positive valuation of peace and truth) which have roots in ideology. Thus, if the premise were true that ideologies are merely characterized by opposition, there would be a lack of intellectual ammunition required by political cooperation. The French Marxist, M. Werret, is profoundly correct in writing that a Marxist would make himself or herself poor if he or she were to isolate himself or herself from other cultural trends. "The Marxist who thinks he has nothing to learn from Mauriac, Chagall, Fellini with regard to man understands nothing of man, Christianity or Marxism." In addition, one is justified to raise the question whether under the social conditions in the countries of Eastern Europe it is realistic at all to presume the existence of a class struggle when the contradicting classes had been eliminated decades ago and that sociological researchers have even questioned the notion of the existence of classes that do not oppose one another.

Even the views concerning the social function of religions and the churches failed to provide a sufficient basis for restricting the freedom of religion. In my view the concept expressed by the followers of the dogmatic criticism of religion about the historic role played by the churches and religions are tendentious and one-sided. I do not wish to deal here with the notions concerning the past of religions and the churches since those cannot in fact influence the judgments concerning the present. The only real reason for the restriction of the freedom of religion could only be the current role played by religions and the churches and not their presumed reactionary activities in the past. As far as the present is concerned, I basically doubt the statement that the churches and religions are at best tolerated companions whose social views and ethics are of a petit-bourgeois and/or bourgeois class content and thus, in essence, retrogressive.

However, it is indispensable for the support of the foregoing statement to include the third element which serves as the theoretical basis of the restrictions of religion, namely, the criticism of its unrealistic evaluation of society. The criticism of the picture of the illusory nature of religion which was drawn by the dogmatic critics of religion may provide a real basis for an endeavor to more realistically evaluate the social function of churches and religions.

The repeated social crises in the East European countries which reflect the basically unsolved theoretical and practical problems of the economy, politics and public and private morals, clearly prove that the presumption concerning the constant strengthening of the so-called "socialist consciousness" and the chronic weakening of religious influence (including the moral spheres of this same issue) is in itself illusory and false. Recently it has become increasingly clear that despite certain partial successes, the ruling ideas in Eastern Europe (partly differing from one another) concerning socialism, such as the work of socialist construction and even the stages, criteria, and tasks of the transition to communism, have become problematic and questionable. They require a basic re-evaluation.

In connection with this, the consciousness of most people is far from being socialist. One should add here that the very criteria of the so-called "socialist consciousness" also requires re-examination as to whether there was a need for such a category at all. In contrast to this, according to the results of polls conducted in Hungary, despite the many restrictions the churches and religions have not only maintained their influence but even increased it. This is true although contradictory processes are going on in this sphere. As a result of secularization and for other reasons as well the number of deeply religious people have been decreasing. (This is an international phenomenon, at least in Europe.)

However, the above does mean that the questionable basis of the restrictions of the freedom of religion has been lost as a justification for these limitation which gave priority to the development of socialism and the spread of "socialist consciousness."

If the further development of the East European societies were to continue in the spirit of setting considerably new aims which include the basic role of democratic socialism or democracy, humanism, justice, community spirit, and other traditional humanistic values, as well as the aim of overcoming negative social phenomena, including those of the disturbances resulting from social adaptation, then a significant role in their implementation is to be played by the different religions and Churches, especially the larger ones. Not primarily because of the principle, "if they could not be eliminated they should cooperate with us" which was proclaimed as the official policy thus far, but decidedly because these tasks, which can be realized only with great difficulty, require a wide-ranging social cooperation which cannot be implemented without the assistance of the churches and religions. All this is basically underscored by the fact that, on the one hand, these aims coincide, approach or touch upon the modern church and religious concepts on several points, while, on the other hand, in a consistently democratic society it is an indispensable part of human rights that the churches and religions should also have an unlimited opportunity to implement their social and moral ideas.

In the light of all this, the statement seems untenable that (socialist) social progress is diagonally contradictory to the growth of the church or religious influence since in their content the two are contrary and, therefore, they may only develop to the detriment of one another. Placing the contradiction between a religious world outlook or ideology and Marxism on a class basis is also unacceptable and anachronistic to a great extent.

If, however, the arguments of the dogmatic criticism of religion fail, there is even less reason for the limitation of religious freedom based upon the far more realistic views represented by the more progressive Marxist criticism of religion.

However, this must lead to an unlimited implementation of human rights. In my paper on human rights I reached the conclusion that a consistently democratic, humanistic society based on social equality and freedom (or at least leading in that direction) indispensably requires--depending on the social conditions--the widest possible implementation of human rights as its political, legal and moral basis. Human rights, such as life worthy of the human being, basic values required for the unfolding of the human personality, and the maintenance of human dignity form an integral whole. The conscious violation of

limitation of any one will have serious consequences on the others and especially on the related groups. The basic renewal of the East European societies, the democratic transformation of their political system of institutions may only become a reality through the consistent implementation of the political rights of freedom. And an integral part of that is the right of conscience and religion.

An indispensable element of the political rights of freedom is pluralism which is expressed in the manifold level and character of the different institutions and systems of ideas. The implementation of pluralism requires not only its formal declaration, but also the equality of chances. The same must hold true for the right of conscience and religion: the creation of equal opportunity and the elimination of the monopoly situation is indispensable.

The implementation of all this in Eastern Europe is a separate problem which is not easily solved, since the effects of the restrictions which were introduced during the past decades cannot be eliminated from one day to the next. However, the clarification and further discussion of these questions of principle are mandatory for the success of their implementation.