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The Tasks of the Eastern European Churches After the 1989 Revolution
- ***Quand l'esprit impur s'en va***
- ***Wenn der Dämon weicht***

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SUMMARY

In the Gospels, Jesus tells a puzzling story about the unclean spirit who leaves a person only to return with seven other spirits of even more wicked character. The new state of the person is even worse than the old (see Matt. 12:45ff). This article applies the story to the situation in Eastern Europe after the 1989 revolution. The demon of totalitarian communism has just been or is being exorcized, but worse demons seem to be rushing in to fill the empty house. This new attack of the unclean spirits explains why the celebration of the 1989 revolution was so surprisingly short lived – anxiety about the future dampened the joy of liberation.

The article first deals with the demon that has been or is being cast out. It discusses the crumbling of the three pillars of communist totalitarianism: collectivistic understanding of human rights, 'command economy', the constitutionally sanctioned permanent and unconditional monopoly on power of the Communist Party and its government. These crumbled pillars are being replaced by an understanding of human rights as 'prior rights', by market economy and political democracy. Second, the paper reflects on the nature of the economic and political exorcism itself by pointing out that the Eastern European revolution lacked innovative intention and is best described as a 'revolution of return': the communist prodigal son has returned to his more prudent capitalist older

brother (but both have yet to find way to the father's house).

The main body of the paper names the demons who are now rushing in – the demon of cold blooded economism, of nationalistic totalitarianism, and of political clericalism. The first has to be countered by the recognition and implementation of sustenance rights and the respect for natural environment, second by the affirmation of the authentic Christian internationalism, and third by the affirmation of the lay character of the state. The outcome of the fight against these demons depends on whether the Eastern European peoples will rise to the challenge to preserve their newly won freedom and use it for common good.

The article ends by suggesting that the Eastern European revolution will be successful only if the genuine democratic institutions are established and totalitarian culture (in which a nation or group towers on the value-scale over the individual person, solutions for problems are expected from strong leaders, personal opinion is identified with absolute truth, and compromise deemed a loss of honour) is replaced by a democratic, dialogical culture (characterized by acceptance of a culturally, ethnically, and religiously pluralistic society, trust in and respect for democratic procedures, and fallibilistic – though not relativistic – perspectives on social visions).

RÉSUMÉ

Dans les Évangiles, Jésus raconte l'histoire fort curieuse de l'esprit impur qui quitte une personne, pour revenir avec sept autres esprits plus méchants que lui, encore. La condition nouvelle de la personne est pire que la précédente (cf. Mt 12.45ss). Cet article applique cette histoire à l'Europe de l'Est après la révolution de 1989. Le démon du communisme totalitaire vient d'être, ou est en train d'être, exorcisé, mais il semble que des démons pires se précipitent dans la maison vide pour la remplir. Ce nouvel assaut des esprits impurs explique pourquoi l'allégresse de la révolution de 1989 a si

peu duré — l'angoisse quant à l'avenir a vite douché la joie de la libération.

L'article traite d'abord du démon qui a disparu, ou qui est en train de disparaître. Il débat de la chute des trois piliers du communisme totalitaire: interprétation collectiviste des droits de l'homme, dirigisme économique (planification), monopole inconditionnel et permanent du pouvoir, inscrit dans la Constitution, au profit du Parti communiste et de son gouvernement. Ces piliers écroulés sont en train d'être remplacés par les droits de l'homme comme droits fondamentaux, par l'économie de marché, et la démocratie. En second lieu, l'article réfléchit à

la nature de l'exorcisme économique et politique lui-même, en soulignant que la révolution en Europe de l'Est a manqué d'intentions innovatives et peut se décrire comme «révolution du retour»: le fils prodigue communiste est retourné vers son frère aîné capitaliste, plus prudent, mais tous les deux doivent encore trouver le chemin de la maison du père.

Le cœur de l'article désigne les démons qui se précipitent, maintenant, dans l'ouverture: ceux de l'économisme froid ou cynique, du nationalisme totalitaire, et du cléricanisme politique. Il faut contrecarrer le premier par la reconnaissance et la mise en oeuvre du droit à la subsistance et par le respect de l'environnement naturel; le second, par la confirmation de l'internationalisme chrétien authentique; et le troisième, par l'affirmation du caractère laïque de l'Etat. L'issue du combat contre ces démons dépend de l'attitude des peuples

d'Europe de l'Est: relèveront-ils le défi, sauront-ils préserver leur liberté récemment conquise et en user pour le bien commun?

La fin de l'article suggère que la révolution des Européens de l'Est ne réussira qu'à deux conditions: si les institutions se démocratisent vraiment, et si une culture démocratique et de dialogue remplace la culture totalitaire. Dans cette dernière, la nation ou le groupe l'emporte sur les individus, dans l'échelle des valeurs; on attend d'«hommes forts» qu'ils apportent toutes les solutions; on tient à son opinion personnelle comme à la vérité absolue, et on estime déshonorants les compromis. Une culture démocratique, au contraire, accepte une société pluraliste au point de vue culturel, ethnique et religieux; elle implique la confiance et le respect des procédures démocratiques; on y considère, sans tomber dans le relativisme, les opinions sur le bien de la société comme faillibles et révisables.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In den Evangelien wird von Jesus eine verwirrende Geschichte über einen unsauberen Geist erzählt, der einen Menschen nur verläßt, um mit sieben anderen, noch boshafteren Geistern zurückzukehren. Der neue Zustand jenes Menschen ist schlimmer als sein alter (cf. Mt. 12:45ff.) Der Artikel wendet diese Geschichte auf die Situation Osteuropas nach dem Revolutionsjahr 1989 an. Der Dämon des totalitären Kommunismus wurde und wird gerade ausgetrieben, aber noch bössere Dämonen scheinen das leere Haus in Besitz nehmen zu wollen. Dieser erneute Angriff erklärt, warum die Feiern des Revolutionsjahres 1989 so überraschend kurzlebig waren — Angst vor der Zukunft dämpft die Freude an der Freiheit.

Zunächst wird nach dem Dämon gefragt, der ausgetrieben wurde oder noch wird. So wird der Fall der drei Säulen des Kommunismus diskutiert: das kollektive Verständnis der Menschenrechte, die 'Kommandowirtschaft' und das verfassungsmäßig garantierte dauernde und bedingungslose Machtmonopol der Kommunistischen Partei und ihrer Regierung. Diese gefallenen Säulen wurden ersetzt durch das Verständnis der Menschenrechte als vorrangige Rechte, durch Marktwirtschaft und durch die Demokratie. Weiter wird über das Wesen der Wirtschaft und über politischen 'Exorzismus' als solchen reflektiert, indem hervorgehoben wird, daß der osteuropäischen Revolution ein Erneuerungsplan fehlt und sie daher am treffendsten als eine 'Revolution der Rückkehr' beschrieben werden kann: der kommunistische Verlorene Sohn ist zu seinem umsichtigeren kapitalistischen älteren Bruder zurück-

gekehrt; beide aber haben den Weg in das Haus des Vaters noch nicht gefunden.

Im Hauptteil des Aufsatzes werden die Dämonen benannt, die jetzt am Werke sind — der Dämon eines kaltblütigen Marktverständnisses, der des nationalen Totalitarismus und der des politischen Klerikalismus. Dem ersten muß mit der Erkenntnis und Durchführung des Lebensrechtes sowie mit Respekt vor der Umwelt begegnet werden, dem zweiten mit einem nachdrücklich vertretenen und authentischen christlichen Internationalismus und dem dritten mit der Bekräftigung des weltlichen Wesens des Staates. Des Ausgang des Kampfes gegen diese Dämonen wird abhängen von der Bereitschaft der osteuropäischen Völker, sich dieser Herausforderung zu stellen, um die neu gewonnene Freiheit zu bewahren und sie zu gemeinsamem Wohl zu nutzen.

Der Artikel schließt mit der Aussicht, daß die osteuropäische Revolution nur dann erfolgreich sein wird, wenn die genuin demokratischen Institutionen etabliert und die totalitäre Kultur (in welcher die Nation oder Gruppe in der Werteskala über dem Individuum steht, Problemlösungen von starken Führern erwartet werden, persönliche Meinung mit absoluter Wahrheit gleichgesetzt wird und Kompromißfähigkeit einem Ehrverlust gleichkommt), durch eine demokratische, dialogische Kultur ersetzt wird, die sich durch die Akzeptanz einer kulturell, ethnisch und religiös pluralistischen Gesellschaft, Vertrauen in und Respekt vor demokratischen Vorgängen und vor fehlbaren, wenngleich nicht relativistischen, Perspektiven sozialer Visionen auszeichnet.

I

In the Gospels, Jesus tells a puzzling story about the unclean spirit who leaves a person only to return with seven other spirits of even more wicked character. The new state of the person is worse than the old (see Matt. 12:45ff). I am sometimes tempted to apply this story to the situation in Eastern Europe after the 1989 revolution. The demon of totalitarian communism has just been or is being exorcized, but worse demons seem to be rushing in to fill the empty house. This new attack of the unclean spirits explains why the celebration of the 1989 revolution was so surprisingly short-lived – anxiety about the future dampened the joy of liberation.

In this paper I will first speak of the demon that has been or is being cast out (II). After a brief reflection on the nature of the economic and political exorcism itself (III), I will discuss the demons who are now rushing in (IV), and what is at stake in the fight against them (V). Finally, I will make some suggestions for what Christians should do in order to prevent the demons from taking over the Eastern European house (VI). But first a few remarks to explain the context, the nature, and the content of my reflection.

My diagnosis and suggested remedy can only be tentative. The events in Eastern Europe are happening very quickly and taking surprising turns. What one says about the situation one day might be outdated the next¹. I am neither a prophet nor a social analyst trained to predict future developments. I offer here personal theological perspectives on the tasks facing Christians in Eastern Europe. These perspectives will constantly need to be adjusted according to the changing situation.

I should say at the outset that I am writing about Eastern Europe from a Yugoslavian perspective. Communist rule has pressed Eastern European countries and peoples into an uniform 'Eastern Block.' It has both masked and suppressed their rich cultural diversity. Since the revolution, these differences have begun to resurface, and it is clear that each country will have unique struggles as it faces the

future. Yet with more than 40 years of common history, these countries also have common problems which require similar solutions. I hope that what I have to say from a Yugoslavian perspective will reflect at least partly both the situation and the tasks of Christians in other Eastern European countries (with the exception of the former German Democratic Republic).

There is much talk these days about the wall that has crumbled between the so-called First and the Second Worlds. But another and less visible wall has fallen together with the wall between West and East. It is the wall between the Second and the Third Worlds (or Two-Thirds-World). The fear that Two-Thirds-World countries are losing their allies with the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe is at least partly misplaced. Eastern European countries are more and more facing problems similar to those that plague the countries of the Two-Thirds-World. It will take some time before Eastern European countries integrate with the Western world. Before that happens, their people will be fellow-sufferers with the people of the Two-Thirds-World.

The time seems therefore ripe for much closer ties between Eastern European and Two-Thirds-World theologians to produce a global theology that will address the crisis they face together. With a few notable exceptions, Christians in Eastern Europe have not reflected extensively on socio-economic issues. They have been prevented from doing so by the policies of the communist governments that prohibited any appearance of religion on the public scene. Christians from Eastern Europe need to do a lot of catching up and can be enriched by a sustained Two-Thirds-World theological reflection on socio-ethical issues.² But they also have an important contribution to make to the search for a theology relevant to the great issues of the day, for their societies have been made the objects of the biggest social experiment in world history. The experiment has failed bitterly. Two-Thirds-World theologians, especially those who took Eastern European societies as models for social transformation, need to learn from this colossal failure.

I hope that my reflection from a Yugoslavian perspective will not only facilitate reflection on socio-economic issues in Eastern Europe, but also make a small contribution to the ongoing dialogue of Two-Thirds-World theologians about the problems plaguing our world. All of us together need to look for ways for making our world reflect something of the new creation that God has promised to God's people. It will be a world in which demons will no longer 'deceive the nations,' a world in which God will 'wipe away every tear' from the eyes of the saints, a world in which peace will reign between human beings and nature, and a world in which the Triune God will dwell with the people (see Rev. 20-22).

II

Massive communist propaganda could not deceive the peoples of Eastern Europe for long. The social oppression caused by the camouflaged demon of totalitarian communism was not to be missed by those who were close. While it took them some time to free themselves from the yoke of oppression, they knew all along that they did not want totalitarian communism and they also knew why. The three pillars of that inhumane system had become the three-fold chain of their oppression.

First, Eastern European people said 'no' to communism because of its conception of *human rights*. Socialist societies have a typical collectivistic understanding of human rights. Rights are granted to individuals by the state in exchange for loyal social behavior. Such an understanding of human rights was meant to justify the socialist state's cruel management of the destinies of the people in the name of revolutionary ideals. The state stripped people of their inalienable rights and in the same breath portrayed itself as their grand benefactor by handing rights out as rewards. Much like the god described in Feuerbach's and Marx's critique of religion, the communist government 'graciously' granted to people what it had first ruthlessly deprived them of.³ The cynical communist political discourse, in which the government's 'benevolent giving' figures prominently,

only underscored the powerlessness of the people and omnipotence of the government.

The peoples of Eastern Europe rejected the politics of perverted governmental grace in favour of the politics of their own personal rights. Human rights are 'prior rights': they belong to every person by virtue of being a person. A human being possesses these rights over against anybody, especially over against the state. 'Formal freedoms' are not a 'bourgeois invention,' as the old Marxist claim would have it, but are a necessary precondition of respect for human dignity. By rejecting the conception that rights are gifts of the state, Eastern Europeans have pulled down the first pillar of totalitarianism. By embracing the notion of rights as inalienable characteristics of a person, they have erected the first pillar of democracy.

Second, the Eastern European revolution was directed against the communist 'command economy.' Concentration of the means of production in the hands of the state and government central planning are not only oppressive, but have completely failed economically. Seventy years after the revolution 48 million Soviet citizens live below the poverty level as measured by Soviet standards. Even bread is in short supply! The economies of other socialist countries have not performed much better. The problem is not merely a moral one – rampant corruption at all levels. The problem is structural. Even the best of bureaucracies cannot gather all the information necessary to make correct economic decisions; and even when a bureaucracy makes the correct decision, it has no means to ensure that it is executed responsibly and efficiently – no means, that is, that respect human dignity.⁴

Eastern Europeans have decided that the inefficient and oppressive 'command economy' has to go, and that a 'market economy' has to come. The market economy allows more freedom in production and consumption (producer's manipulative power over consumers notwithstanding), it is economically more efficient and hence more capable of satisfying the basic needs of the population (granting its limitations in distribution), and it is more responsible in the

use of existing limited natural resources (in spite of being blind to the future of ecological systems).⁵

Finally, the 1989 revolution pulled down the central pillar in the political structure of socialist societies: the constitutionally sanctioned permanent and unconditional monopoly on power of the Communist Party and its government. This position of the Communist Party was legitimated either by recourse to its historic merits or by the ideological belief that the Communist Party is the authentic interpreter and implementer of the monolithic will of the people, since Marxism-Leninism gives it privileged insight into the true interests of the workers. Such an understanding of the role of the Party was not only the central pillar of communist totalitarianism, but was at the same time both one of the main (though not the only) causes of the crisis of socialist societies and the central obstacle in overcoming that crisis.

In the past, all socialist reforms (which regularly consisted in attempts to incorporate elements of the capitalistic economic system into socialism) were initiated and controlled by an uncontested communist government. Under pressure of economic crisis, government would initiate a liberalization intended to increase the efficiency of the socialist system. Liberalization would, however, regularly be followed by repression, which was required to preserve the government's existence. In the 1989 revolution, the cycle of liberation and repression was broken because the most important pillar of the socialist political structure – the self-proclaimed avant-garde role of the Communist Party – crumbled. People opted for limited government, with its temporary character and division of powers; they demonstrated their preference for the distinction between state and society, for pluralism instead of monism.

III

The recent Eastern European revolution is best characterized as a 'revolution of return.' It differs from virtually all modern revolutions by its lack of an innovative intention. It was not inspired by visionary

solutions to the pressing problems of today and tomorrow; it came about through the belated recognition that Western liberal democracy was politically and economically more successful,⁶ and indeed that the socialist people's democracy and command economy was a dead-end street. The only option was to shift into reverse. So the revolution acquired the character of a restoration. Smith, the realist, was proven right; Marx, the adventurist, had failed. The socialist prodigal son returned in rags, as his older capitalist brother had predicted all along.

The prodigal son has come back! But where is the feasting over the fatted calf? Why is the reunited family not making merry? Why does the victory of the older brother lack the flavour of triumph? And why was the joy of the younger brother so short-lived? In Jesus' story the prodigal son returns to the father. In the 1989 revolution the prodigal son has returned to his older brother. Both brothers are in the strange land, far away from Father's household. True, the older brother has been more prudent, more efficient, and yes, more humane than the younger, but neither seems to be willing to return home and it is not certain that either of them knows the way home. Indeed, they often seem to think that they are home: both brothers give in too easily to the temptation to believe that the liberal-capitalist *status quo* is the political and economic *non plus ultra*.

The sin of which the younger brother is now repenting is not the sin of leaving the Father's home, but the sin of parting ways with his older brother. And sin it was! Economic inefficiency was the smallest of the trespasses of Marxist socialism. It was oppressive to people – so much so that it produced 'mountains of corpses and rivers of blood' – and it was destructive to nature. The return of the younger brother to the older did not only end the feud that threatened assured mutual destruction. It also gave the younger brother political liberty and was a first step towards replacing his half-torn rags with some decent clothes.

The happy embrace of the two brothers should not deceive us; both brothers are

still in a strange land. No doubt the house of the older brother shines on the outside and is nicely decorated inside. But what is going on in its secret chambers? How are his close or his distant neighbours living (say in Mexico City or Calcutta)? And what is happening to the land around the glitzy house? When the wall between East and West came down none of the problems specific to the functioning of modern, economically developed societies was solved. Within these societies the external costs of the operation of the market continue to weigh on people and nature. Outside these societies there is abject poverty and oppression, the threat of ecological disaster and the quarreling of states whom they have furnished with deadly weapons.

The problems of the older brother are grave. But the problems of the younger brother are much worse, even after his return. He will use his older brother's plan to rebuild his house. But this is no mean task. He has to continue living in it while rebuilding it. There will not only be a threat of collapse, but even if things go in the best order, it will take a long time before his house starts looking better. And there are voices reminding him that the older brother's architectural solution might not be as solid as it seems. Will the house he is building now last? Will he be happy in it?

What are some of the threats to the successful rebuilding of Eastern European societies? What demons threaten to destroy the work? How should Christians respond?

IV

In the hubbub of the dismantling of communist totalitarianism, three other demons threaten to enter Eastern European countries: the demons of cold-blooded economism, of nationalistic totalitarianism, and of political clericalism. One of these demons – nationalist totalitarianism – is by itself worse than the first demon, and if all three entered Eastern European countries together the last state of these countries would, no doubt, be worse than the first.

First, *cold-blooded economism*. After the

disaster of the 'command economy', people in Eastern Europe have directed their hopes to the market economy. The choice is right. But the market economy is not only a solution. The motors that keep it running also generate serious problems which every humane society has to overcome. I will not analyze here the operation of a market economy, but only indicate two of the gravest problems it produces. The first is the marginalization and degradation of people. Placed by the market mechanism before the alternatives of 'compete or perish', many people simply have no other choice than to perish. The merciless machinery of the market system crushes them to the ground. The second problem is the destruction of nature. For the market system, nature is only a resource to be worked with, a consumer good to be sold or to be bought. And hence individual or corporate desire for profit leads to indiscriminate exploitation of nature.

The richer a society is, the more effectively it can deal with what are often called the 'negative side-effects' of the market. Eastern European societies are not the poorest of the poor, but they are poor and burdened by international debt. Furthermore, there is a growing army of marginalized people (especially among the young and the retired), and the extent of environmental pollution and destruction is staggering as well. The pressure to succeed economically will make effective care for marginalized people and the despoiled environment extremely difficult. Once Eastern European countries start on the road of market economy, we have grounds to fear that they will succumb to the temptation of cold-blooded economism.

Against the cold-blooded economism which oppresses people, Christians need to demand the recognition and implementation of sustenance rights. Respect for freedom as a basic rule of the economic game needs to be supplemented by respect for the right to sustenance. This right is even more basic than the respect for individual economic liberty. The responsibility people have for the material well-being of their neighbours is not just a matter of charity. It is a matter of justice. As N. Wolterstorff

argued persuasively, this means that we 'have a claim on our fellow human beings to social arrangements that ensure that we will be adequately sustained in existence'.⁷ In the struggle against the demon of economism, Christians will, however, go a step beyond the way of justice and general rights. Inspired by Christ's example on the cross, they will strive to 'love kindness' in relation to their neighbours (see Micah 6:8).

Against the tendency to ravage nature, Christians need to stress the necessity of respect toward nature. Nature is not simply a raw material for human work. It has a value independent of its service to human beings.⁸ Human beings therefore need to respect nature in its specific creatureliness. All work must have not only a productive but also a protective aspect.⁹ Economic systems must be integrated into the given biological systems of ecological interdependence.

Second, *nationalistic totalitarianism*. In socialist societies the noble goal of proletarian internationalism was pursued on mistaken presuppositions and with the wrong means. Communist ideology did not recognize loyalty to one's ethnic group as an independent sentiment shaping social life. It mistakenly translated all ethnic problems into class problems. Loyalty to nation had the same status as loyalty to God: both were illusory attempts to escape from economic oppression. After the independence of ethnic feelings was denied, the way was free for totalitarian suppression of the language, cultural values and customs of diverse peoples living in the communist imperium.

When the lid was lifted from the communist melting pot, nationalistic feelings rose high, as it would have been easy to predict, for the injured collective feeling of a society is the main cause of the narcissistic preoccupation with its own ethnicity (which generally surfaces at the time of a social or economic crisis). It was also to be expected that the resurgence of nationalism would result in a demand for separate nation states. And it is here that the crux of the growing problems lies. We do not need to look far back into history to realize that

the ethnocentrism of nation states is one of the most dangerous political phenomena. It breeds a totalitarianism in which the priests of nationalistic idolatry are ready to lay everything on the altar of national interests. In relation to other states, nationalist totalitarianism 'acts solely in its own self-interest, breaking treaties when it sees fit, waging wars when it finds the advantage, thumbing its nose at international conventions and organizations. National self-assertion is its only goal. All that restrains it is a balance of terror.'¹⁰ Within its own state, nationalist totalitarianism knows only of the rights of a particular nation, not of the rights of individuals – not of the rights of individuals that belong to the dominant ethnic group and even less of the rights of those who belong to ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities, which live mixed with the dominant population in all nation states, are left with 'only two choices: either to emigrate, under varying degrees of duress, or to accept the status of second-class citizens, with varying degrees of deprivation of rights and repression. *There is never any other choice.*'¹¹

Against nationalistic totalitarianism Christians have to affirm that every human being, whatever his or her national identity, is made in the image of God and therefore possesses an inalienable dignity and must be treated with equal respect. The dignity of each person – the respect for his right to participate in all decisions that significantly influence his life and his right to be adequately sustained in life – must be the basis of the political order, and not the well-being of some collective ethnic entity. The bearer of political sovereignty is not a particular ethnos, but the whole demos – the people made up of the persons from various ethnic groups living in a state as a territorial entity. In states that want to respect human rights, particular ethnicity can have only cultural, and not political relevance. As J. Habermas pointed out, all political appeals to a sense of pre-political belonging together testifies 'that the universality of equal rights for all and of equal respect for everyone is still a bloodless abstraction.'¹²

Against totalitarian nationalism we need to affirm authentic Christian internationalism. Christian faith is international because Christian salvation is universal. 'To belong to Jesus Christ, to live life in the Spirit', wrote R.J. Mouw, 'is to be joined to a community in which the old barriers of race and gender and ethnicity and nationality are no longer effective as barriers. This community is one [in] which no other identifying "blood" counts, save for the blood of the lamb, which made that new community of royal priests and priestesses possible' (Rev. 5:9f).¹³ For all its internationalism, the Christian faith does not obliterate people's national identities. The eschatological hope of Christians is not a dissolution of ethnic specificity in some heavenly universal melting-pot of blessed souls. Everything that is good and beautiful from various cultures will be purified from all evil and preserved in the New Jerusalem (see Rev. 21:26). A Christian's attitude toward his own nation will, therefore, be twofold; he will want to work against every egoistic and aggressive national self-aggrandizement, and at the same time contribute to the 'blossoming of his own nation in solidarity with all other nations' (Sagi-Bunic).

One of the most important tasks of the churches in Eastern Europe in the face of resurgent nationalisms might be to nurture the virtue of healthy (self-respectful) national humility. If national humiliation is the cause of the nationalist illness, national humility is its cure. The best road to humility is to stop gazing narcissistically at one's own image and attempt to perceive oneself through others' eyes. Adenauer is reported to have said, 'Germans are a strange people; I would not want to have them as my neighbours'. Post-World War Two Germans had every reason to make such a self-critical statement. Most Eastern European nations have more reason than they would like to think to say the same thing about themselves. If nations do not attune their own perspective about themselves to the perspectives other nations have about them, there will be no reconciliation between nations.

Third, *political clericalism*. In Eastern European countries the legislation on the separation between church and state and on the privacy of religion was interpreted not only to bar religious communities from political activity, but also to prohibit any religious influence on the public scene. 'Religious liberty' had the narrow meaning of freedom to believe or not to believe and the freedom to participate or not to participate in the liturgical life of the church. Christian faith had to remain locked in the private, spiritual chambers of people's lives. Worse than the children in bourgeois families, Christians in socialist states were neither to be seen nor to be heard.

During and after the 1989 revolution (in Poland much earlier), the Christian faith walked boldly out to the streets and public squares. As the new governments are reclaiming the national heritage, they are seeking partnership with the leaders of the national churches, who understood themselves all along as the guardians of national heritage. And these churches themselves seem to be jumping at the opportunity to reassert Christian values in public life. With the capital gained by having been seen as a symbol of resistance to the all-powerful state, the churches have acquired a good share of the new market of social power. The more or less open merger between church and state seems to have been decided. As a result, many smaller – mainly Protestant – churches (and atheists) have an uncomfortable sense that they might be swallowed by the new giants. If the forced Christian political abstinence of the national churches is replaced by politically active clericalism, then a cultural and political oppression, or at least marginalization, of the smaller churches will result.

Against political clericalism Christians have to affirm the lay-character of that state. The first task of the church in relation to the state is to remain the church. Only if it keeps its distance from the state will it be able to be true to its prophetic calling in a given society. The editorial of the Croatian Catholic weekly, *Glas koncila*, rightly cautions: 'It is timely to warn that a clear distinction between

Church and the state is to be maintained. As they were distinct in the period of conflict, so they have to be distinct in the period of desired open cooperation. In a democracy there is neither a state religion nor state Church... The Church needs to remain free and independent, and in the new circumstances it has to fulfill its duty as the critical conscience of the society in which it lives.⁷¹⁴

The temptation of political clericalism underscores the importance of Christian ecumenism. The closer a dominant national religious group comes to the (nationalist) government, the more it will be prone to marginalize its smaller sister churches in a given state and to be antagonistic toward the churches in the neighbouring states. Even the little ecumenical life that survived communist 'divide and rule' strategy is in some Eastern European countries all but snuffed out. As individual Christians in Eastern Europe today are challenged to show that their loyalty to the church of Jesus Christ is greater than their loyalty to their nation, so the Christian churches are challenged to show that their loyalty to one another and to their common Lord is greater than their loyalty to the projects of their national governments. If it is true that there can be no peace between the nations without peace between religions (as H. Küng has emphasized tirelessly in recent years¹⁵), then the churches will be able to foster peace, rather than cause strife, only if they take their ecumenical task with utmost seriousness.

V

Genuine revolutions are acts of liberation. The destiny of a revolution depends on the fate of freedom. Hence the main challenge for every successful revolution is to protect the freedom newly acquired. No matter how the liberation took place, whether as a gift to the people by the enlightened government or as an act of the people themselves, preserving freedom will have to be the task of the whole people.

One of the most insightful statements on the risks and opportunities of freedom comes from the Apostle Paul. He writes, 'For freedom Christ has set us free; stand

fast, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.... For you are called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another' (Gal. 5:1, 13). I do not want to suggest that we identify the freedom of which Paul speaks with political and economic freedom. But I do believe that the dangers and the challenges of the freedom gained through God's act of grace and that gained through revolutionary action are analogous. Whether Eastern European countries will fall prey to the unclean spirits I have described or not will depend on how they master the danger of losing or misusing their freedom and whether they rise to the challenge to preserve their freedom and use it for the common good.

The first danger is of falling back into the old forms of slavery. Where nationalist rule replaces communist rule, one form of slavery is succeeded by another. Bureaucratic socialism understands freedom as assimilation of the individual into the socialist state; nationalistic totalitarianism understands it as incorporation of the individual into the national organism. Both give the name 'freedom' to what is in fact slavery. In the name of freedom Eastern European people need to resist the manipulation of their feelings of national loyalty by the leaders who idolatrously exalt national virtues, fabricate national enemies, and exaggerate wounds their nation has suffered from others – all in order to justify their totalitarian rule. People will remain free only if they refuse to allow nationhood to dominate their sense of identity and if they reject the notion that their highest purpose is to contribute to the functioning of the national organism. Free people are not the willing slaves of their 'paternal' nation-states.

In the name of their freedom, Eastern European people need to resist any attempts of the church leadership to treat them as minors and assert itself in the political arena in their place. The people of God need to make a stand against their pastors if these want to portray themselves as the exclusive authentic interpreters of what one might call the economic and

political *sensus fidelium*. It belongs to the ecclesial freedom of Christians to have the right to express their own intelligent opinions about political life from the Christian perspective. Responsible church leadership will respect this right (as was emphasized by Vatican II). Free people are not minors of their 'maternal' churches.¹⁶

The second danger is the misuse of freedom as 'an opportunity for the flesh'. According to the popular liberal philosophy that is making inroads into Eastern Europe along with the market economy, to be free means to be one's own master and pursue one's own interests unhindered by others, as long as one respects that same freedom in others. Freedom thus means: I am free from others and they are free from me. No doubt, this *is* freedom, and such freedom is better than the communist or nationalist form of slavery. But is this true freedom? Can I be truly free in isolation from others (when I am free *from* others)? Am I truly free when I pursue my own interests and leave my neighbour alone in his joys and sufferings? Has not the very notion of liberty here been invaded by a slavery to selfish, 'fleshly' desires? *Any freedom in which the chains of slavery to my own egoism remain intact is a deficient freedom.* Human freedom comes to its fulfilment only in community, in the mutual service of love. As J. Moltmann writes, 'I am free and feel free where I am appreciated and accepted and where I appreciate and accept others. I become truly free when I open my life for others and share it with them, and when others open their life to me and share it with me. Then the other person is no longer a limitation on my freedom, but enlarges my freedom.... This is the social side of freedom. We call it love, or solidarity.'¹⁷

The unclean spirits threatening Eastern Europe after the collapse of bureaucratic socialism are the spirits of a slavery to powers of totalitarian nationalism and to inhuman egoism. They can be countered only through the implementation of equal freedoms for all citizens, irrespective of their ethnic or religious affiliation, and by the affirmation of solidarity, especially with the growing army of oppressed and

marginalized people and the endangered environment.

VI

Together with peoples of other religions and with atheists, Christians in Eastern Europe have a responsibility to prevent the sweet fruit of the 1989 revolution from turning bitter. The unclean spirits of slavery must be resisted by establishing appropriate social institutions and nurturing a dialogical culture of solidarity. Institutions and cultural sentiments are inseparable: both are necessary and both reinforce each other. Without institutional backing, cultural sentiments are impotent; without appropriate cultural sentiments, institutions are ineffective. (Correspondingly, there is also reinforcement between irrational institutions and totalitarian culture. Bureaucratic socialism provides a case study in how an irrational and oppressive system makes corruption and oppression in the exchange between people rational.)

A revolution will be short-lived if it rests only on the sentiments and efforts of individual persons. Its achievements need to be institutionalized. It is not enough, for instance, to recognize the right to participate in political life. This right has to be enshrined in constitutional provisions for popular elections, which seem the best way of securing political participation in modern societies. 'Elections must be regular, at specified times. They must be contested, as open as possible to every viewpoint and all interested parties. They must be decisive, effectively bestowing governing authority upon the elected party or persons.'¹⁸ Similarly, institutional provision must be made to secure other rights, including the right of sustenance.

In Eastern European countries, institutional changes are the first order of the day. In the last days of communist regimes, totalitarian demagogues were trying to persuade people that they were not ready for democracy. Yet totalitarian schools are not the place to learn democracy. Like walking, democracy is best learned by trying, by taking the first, maybe still insecure, *democratic* steps.

Important as institutional changes are,

they cannot stand on their own feet. Without corresponding sentiments and behavioural habits, they are little more than empty shells. In many Eastern European countries 'totalitarian culture' is dominant; a nation or group towers on the value-scale over the individual person, solutions for problems are expected from strong leaders, personal opinion is identified with absolute truth, and compromise deemed a loss of honour. These cultural traits were exploited and reinforced by Marxist-Leninist ideology with its holistic view of society, its stress on the avant-garde role of the communist party with the great leader at its head, and its pretension to infallible knowledge. In the face of this 'totalitarian culture' Christians in Eastern European countries should foster acceptance of a culturally, ethnically, and religiously pluralistic society, bolster trust in and respect for democratic procedures, and inspire courage for fallibilistic (though not relativistic) perspectives on social visions. These features of democratic culture are the condition of solving the normative problems of common life through responsible and respectful mutual persuasion, rather than through the open or hidden use of brute force.

Democratic culture by itself, however, will not suffice. Democratic procedures are only the *form* in which the problems of market economy, such as marginalization of social groups, destruction of nature, or monetarization of relations, should be solved. These procedures do not provide the content of the solutions. Along with other social groups, Christians need to assert their own vision of the good life in *public moral discourse*, based on the revelation of God in Christ and expressed in their hope for the new creation. They should participate in the social interchange in which particular social players mutually enrich their own perspectives on common life and in this way contribute to the formation of mature democratic opinion and the animation of responsible democratic will.

Christian testimony about the good life in society will be credible and effective only if Christians can live it out before the

world in their ecclesial communities. The structures of the church and the ways of relating to one another in the church should reflect the reality of the new creation which its members are attempting to bring to bear on the great issues of the day. Christians, furthermore, should strive to anticipate the new creation in a small and broken way through their transformative actions in the world, at the same time protesting against the destruction of life and the perversion of justice through their prophetic withdrawals from the world.

Through the double testimony of life and of public moral discourse, Eastern European churches should keep the demons of cold-blooded economism, nationalistic totalitarianism, and political clericalism at a distance and direct the united capitalist and socialist brothers toward what should be their common home in the household of the Father.¹⁹

- 1 My comments here are based upon the course of events up to October 1990.
- 2 See on that problem M.Volf, "Democracy and the Crisis of the Socialist Project. Toward a Post-Revolutionary Theology of Liberation," in *Transformation*, 7, no.4 (1990).
- 3 See M.Volf, *Zukunft der Arbeit—Arbeit der Zukunft: Der Arbeitsbegriff bei Karl Marx und seine theologische Wertung* (München: Kaiser, 1988), 39ff; M.Volf, "God, Freedom, and Grace: Reflections on the Essentiality of Atheism for Marx and Marxism," in *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, 31 (1989): 213-229.
- 4 See D.Hay, *Economics Today. A Christian Critique* (Leicester: Apollos, 1989), 204.
- 5 For a short evaluation of market economy and the need for its (preferably indirect) steering see M.Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
- 6 See J.Habermas, "Nachholende Revolution und linker Revisionsbedarf: Was heisst Sozialismus heute?" in *Die nachholende Revolution. Kleine Politische Schriften VII* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 179-204, 179ff.
- 7 N.Wolterstorff, *Until Justice & Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 81.
- 8 See on that M.Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, Chap.V.
- 9 Cf. "The Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics," no.7, in *Transformation* 7, no.2 (1990), 2.
- 10 Wolterstorff, *Justice*, 109.
- 11 Wolterstorff, *Justice*, 114.
- 12 J.Habermas, "Die Stunde der nationalen Empfindung. Republikanische Gesinnung oder Nationalbewusstsein?" in *Die nachholende Revolution. Kleine Politische Schriften VII* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 157-166, 159.
- 13 R.J.Mouw, "Life in the Spirit in an Unjust World," in *The Holy Spirit. Renewing and Empowering Presence*, ed. G.Vandervelde (Winfield: Wood Lake Books, 1988), 119-140, 134.
- 14 *Glas koncila*, 29, no.26 (1990) 2.
- 15 Most recently in H.Küng, *Projekt Weltethos* (München: Piper, 1990).
- 16 For "Father State" and "Mother Church" terminology in a

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somewhat different context see J.Moltmann, "Is Protestantism the 'Religion of Freedom'?" in *On Freedom*, ed. L.S.Rouner (Boston: University Studies in Philosophy and Religion, 10; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 30–45, 30.

17 J.Moltmann, "Die Befreiung des Lebens: der Herr ist der Geist" (unpublished manuscript), 15.

18 R.J.Neuhaus, "Democracy—A Christian Imperative," in *Transformation* 7, no.4 (1990).

19 This article was delivered as a lecture at the conference of Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe at Stony Point, October 5–6, 1990 at the celebration of the Day of Reformation at Evangelical Theological Faculty, Osijek, and as one of my Chavasse Lectures at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, November 12, 1990. It was written during my time as Humboldt fellow in Tübingen, Germany. I am grateful to Mark Gundry for his comments on style.