



Philosophische Fakultät · Lehrstuhl für Europastudien



Sigmund-Neumann-Institut
für Freiheits- und
Demokratieforschung e.V.
Dresden

International conference **"On religious liberty in a democratic society: Aspects of law, religion and philosophy in constitutional theory and reality."**

Meeting place: Rivne (Ukraine)
Date: 14 – 16 May, 2009

National and religious minorities were discriminated against in the East European block until its breakdown in 1989/90. People were not allowed to practice their conviction of belief under the communistic dictatorships. Analogous to the national domain, where a homogeneous state was ought to be generated in which national minorities were not free to live of their own also in confessional aspects no pluralistic society was tolerated.

This centralistic and dictatorial system leads to diverse religious persecutions. After the Soviet Union had collapsed and the post-Soviet republics had been erected this situation didn't change at first. Numerous religious groups still remained illegal. The taboos continued, or yet got worse under new conditions. In that phase, the old mainline religions got back their old privileged status in the society and they fought, in most cases with the aid of the governments, against the small and national unspecific denominations. "National religion" and nation should become an indissoluble unity, in which both support each other. The Russian Orthodox Church for example, supported by the Putin regime, experienced a sort of renaissance and is now one of the strongest opponents of Religious groups from the "foreign" west.

The cultural difference between west and east, which is reflected in the political systems on one side the pluralistic and open societies and on the other the "controlled democracy" with her national and nationalistic attitudes – finds a demonstrative platform in the religious cultural struggle. During the conference we are going to discuss these problems and try to find solutions taking the example of the religious denomination "Jehovah's Witnesses" in the Ukraine, in Russia, in Belarus and in the Baltics as an example.

Contributors:

West and Central European models referring the relationship between state, religion and society.

Prof. Dr. Dr. Gerhard Besier, Dresden (Germany): How to Understand Religious Freedom in Germany?

Dr. Reinhard Kohlhofer, Vienna (Austria): Das österreichische Religionsgemeinschaftsrecht und sein Einfluss auf osteuropäische staatskirchenrechtliche Modelle

Max Wörnhard, Berne (Switzerland): Legal Challenges for Jehovah's Witnesses as a Religious Minority in a Well Established Democracy like Switzerland and Italy

Wolfram Slupina, Selters (Germany): Problems Associated with Religious Freedom in the Commonwealth of Independent States – As Shown by the Example of Jehovah's Witnesses

Dr. Katarzyna Stokłosa, Dresden (Germany): Franco's Dictatorship and Jehovah's Witnesses

History and situation of Jehovah`s Witnesses in East, East Central and Northeast Europe

Dr. Zoe Knox, Leicester (United Kingdom): On the continuity in religious discrimination and persecution from the Soviet to the post-Soviet periods, using the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses as an example.

Prof. Yevgeniya Dodina, Odessa (Ukraine): Legal aspects of the religious minorities in the Ukraine. The example of Jehovah`s Witnesses

Konstantin Berezhko, Feodosija (Ukraine): Jehovah`s Witnesses and the mass-media in the Ukraine in the communistic and post-Soviet period.

Ringo Ringvee, Tallinn (Estonia): Legal aspects of the religious minorities in the Baltic States. The example of Jehovah`s Witnesses

Dr. Hans-Hermann Dirksen, Bad Camberg (Germany): Moldova and Transnistria – Legal Aspects of a Changing Tolerance

Annegret Dirksen, Bad Camberg (Germany): The Hungarian Experience – The varying Development of a Constitutional Guarantee for Religious Freedom

Legal aspects of freedom of religion and the future of the religious culture in Europe

Prof. Dr. Derek Davis, Belton (USA): Criteria and Standards of Religious Freedom in an "ideal" Democratic Society

Willy Fautré, Brussels (Belgium): Religious Freedom Advocacy in Europe