



The Politics of Religion in Soviet-Occupied Germany: The Case of Berlin-Brandenburg 1945- 1949

Sean Brennan

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This book discusses the religious policies of the Soviet military authorities and their allies in the Socialist Unity Party in the Soviet zone, but more importantly, who devised them, how they did so, and how they attempted to implement them. In doing so, it illustrates how the Soviet authorities recreated the Soviet zone along Stalinist lines with regards to religious policy, a process which they implemented throughout all of Eastern Europe as well in East Germany. While I examine how these policies were devised, I place greater emphasis on their implementation in the Soviet zone, especially its most important province, Berlin-Brandenburg. Furthermore, this book demonstrates how the leadership of the Churches responded to the policies of the Soviet military authorities and their allies in the Socialist Unity Party, especially after they took an increasingly anti-religious tone during the late 1940s. The diverse responses of the Church leadership in the Evangelical Church during the Soviet occupation reveal the foundations of the eventual break within the leadership of the Evangelical church in the 1960s over the issue of how to deal with the atheist SED-regime. At the same time, the stances of Evangelical Bishop Otto Dibelius and the Catholic Bishop Konrad von Preysing as stalwart opponents of the creation of the "second German dictatorship" in the 1940s demonstrate how Churches would become central actors in the East German dissident movement in the 1970s and 1980s.

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