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### Round table: Orthodoxy and politics: VIIIth International Congress of South East European Studies

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*ΠΑΡΕΜΒΑΣΕΙΣ*



## ROUND TABLE

### ORTHODOXY AND POLITICS

VIIIth International Congress  
of South East European Studies

The Round Table on “Orthodoxy and Politics” was held in Bucharest on 27 August, 1999 as the final working session of the Eighth International Congress of South East European Studies. The idea of this Round Table originated with the late Professor Alexandru Duțu, who in the autumn of 1998 had written to me suggesting that we jointly propose this project to the organizers of the Congress. Our proposal was accepted and we began working toward the Round Table on a subject that has been both topical and controversial and furthermore has been central to the interests of both of us. Professor Duțu had spent most of his scholarly life working on the intellectual and cultural history of the Romanian lands and of South Eastern and East Central Europe more generally, but in the final years of his life he was developing a special interest in religion as a form of culture and collective life, thus returning in a way to his early theological studies. One of his suggestions for the Round Table was to invite Professor Stevan Pavlowitch of the University of Southampton to write a central discussion paper and to use this as the focus of the Round Table. Professor Pavlowitch accepted our invitation and we were discussing other possible participants and respondents to his paper, when Professor Duțu passed away in January 1999. This great loss left me alone in charge of the organization of the Round Table but I did all I could to be faithful to Professor Duțu’s spirit in conceiving and bringing about the Round Table.

The Round Table took place as planned and was dedicated to Professor Dupu's memory as a mark of our respect and debt of all of us in the field of South East European studies to his scholarship. The meeting was attended by a large audience and the discussion ranged widely from the point of view of chronology and subject matter. What came across quite clearly was the complexity of the subject. Concomitantly it was pointed out that simplistic and Manichean views of Orthodoxy and of the interaction of politics and religion in the Orthodox regions of Europe –views which are often voiced by West European and North American observers– derive from inadequate knowledge and understanding of the historical trajectories and cultural traditions of Southeastern Europe. At the same time it was underlined that a great deal of responsibility lies with the academic and research community of the Orthodox societies themselves, who have failed to produce scholarship of the required standard on the historical nature of the broad phenomenon of the interplay between Orthodoxy and politics.

In order to make available to a broader readership some of the more substantial contributions to the Round Table we publish here the main discussion paper by Professor Stevan Pavlowitch and the comments by two other leading authorities on the subject, Professors Asterios Argyriou of the University of Strassbourg and Andrei Pippidi of the University of Bucharest.

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