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*Cold War Mary: Ideologies, Politics, Marian Devotional Culture*, edited by Peter Jan Margry (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020; pp. 400. Paperback €55, £49).

In Catholic culture, the Blessed Virgin Mary is normally associated with kindness. It is she, after all, who Catholics are urged to turn to in times of trouble, especially at the hour of their death. Not only the *Hail Mary*, but also the *Memorare* and other classic Catholic prayers, emphasise the certainty that the Blessed Virgin Mary and Mother of God will come to the aid of anyone who calls on her for help.

As historians of the French Revolution, *Kulturkampf* and other points of existential crisis for the Catholic Church already know, Mary could also be sternly reprimanding, even threatening. Lourdes is today best known for the ubiquitous image of the ‘beautiful lady’ who first appeared to Bernadette in 1858, and for the miraculous cures associated with its waters; its principal message, the urgent need for repentance, is less widely remembered. Similarly, Our Lady of Fátima, serenely praying the rosary, is better known today for the pretty image crowned and endorsed by a series of popes than for the frightening messages and ‘secrets’ associated with many of her twentieth-century appearances, including that which first occurred at Fátima, in Portugal, in 1917. These included apocalyptic visions of the Russian takeover of most of Europe, the horrors of a material hell, and the slaughter of pope, bishops and priests at the hands of unbelievers. Not for nothing is Mary identified in exegesis as the mother of God who protects her children by crushing the head of the serpent. (p. 13)

*Cold War Mary: Ideologies, Politics, Marian Devotional Culture*, a new collection of essays edited by Peter Jan Margry and brought out in the KADOC series of studies on religion, culture and society published by Leuven University Press,

focusses on modern apparitions and devotions in which the Virgin Mary took on the mantle of Cold War warrior. The cover of the book sports an image from 1947, the year from which the Cold War is conventionally dated. A sorrowful Virgin Mary, her head encircled in a halo of stars, hands joined in prayer and with a rosary dangling from her belt, blasts a hammer and sickle superimposed on a map of Europe with the precision of a Marvel superhero. As we know from recent work by Guiliana Chamedes, Paula Kane, Dianne Kirby, Peter Kent and others, the Vatican responded first to the Bolshevik revolution, and then to the Spanish Civil War, by prosecuting what amounted to a virtual crusade, or holy war, against ‘godless’ Communism. It was the Vatican, not the USA, which first sought to remake Europe in the aftermath of the First World War. It was again the Vatican which took the initiative at the end of the Second World War, helping to launch what came to be known as the ‘cold’ war against the Soviet Union and other Communist states, allying itself to the USA, despite reservations about American Protestantism and materialism, in order to combat what it increasingly perceived to be the greater evil: Communism.

As the thirteen separate case-studies in this absorbing collection show, the progress of Marian devotion in the twentieth century is largely the story of how apparitions of the Virgin Mary, first reported at Fátima in 1917, were altered, reappropriated and exported around the world. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the visions were at their earliest and most intense in the Iberian peninsula during the Spanish Civil War, the setting for Arthur Koestler’s nightmarish *Darkness at Noon*. They were to prove resonant in many other settings over the course of the century. The story which emerges in this volume takes us from Portugal, Spain and Italy through France, Belgium, Poland, the USA, Australia, the Philippines, West Germany, the Netherlands and Canada. Statues of Our Lady of Fátima had an even longer life: the

‘globe-trotting International Pilgrim Virgin statue’ went on a succession of trips abroad including, in 1978, ‘a round-the-world tour’ that began in the US, but went to Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, India, Egypt, Israel, Rome, Austria, Budapest, Hungary, several cities in Poland, Santiago, Spain, Berlin, and Lourdes in France’. (p. 129)

The messages which the Virgin Mary sent at times of high political tension could be difficult to decipher. As in the classic case of Lourdes, the insistence of original visionaries was often lost as claims were sifted by both clerical authorities and the court of popular devotional opinion. Sometimes, as at Beauraing and Banneux in Belgium, the original right-wing threat (in this case Nazism and Rexism) was replaced by the left-wing threat of Communism and the Soviet Union. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the widely claimed ‘end’ to the Cold War, one Fátima Center (in Ontario), while retaining its apocalyptic tone, redirected its wrath from the defunct Soviet Union to the triumphalist United States. Elsewhere, some conservative groups reformulated formerly anti-Communist campaigns as anti-liberal campaigns against abortion or gay rights. (p. 367).

In seeking to organize and make sense of disparate case studies by scholars with different research interests and disciplinary backgrounds, editor Peter Jan Margry has sensibly divided the volume into three sections. The first section looks at broad surveys of the Vatican and Our Lady of Fátima. The second section focusses in more detail on the specific devotional practices and expressions of anti-Communism in a sample of different countries at different points in the twentieth century. The last section concentrates on how Catholicism could mobilize masses of people to protest, pray or ‘wage spiritual war’ against Communism (up to 1991) and, in the aftermath of the Soviet Union, against Western liberalism. (p. 18).

This densely packed scholarly compendium brings out an aspect of modern Marian piety, the Virgin Mary's place in the Cold War, which was hiding in plain sight. *Cold War Mary* will be welcomed by specialists in both Catholic and Cold War studies and adds considerably to our understanding of the phenomenon of the modern Marian apparition from Fátima to Medjugorje and beyond.

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(989 words)