



BOOK REVIEWS

Legacies of Violence. Eastern Europe's First World War. Edited by Jochen Böhrer–Włodzimierz Borodziej–Joachim von Puttkamer. Munich: Oldenbourg, 2014. 334 pp.

This collection of studies, which analyze the phenomenon of violence as a consequence of World War I from various perspectives, is a welcome addition to the current efforts to broaden geographically the scope of the research on the first global conflict of the twentieth century. Whereas in the past the field has been dominated by studies focusing on Western Europe and the German empire, in recent years there has been a strong tendency to broaden the scholarship and include other geographical areas as well.¹ Similarly, the study of physical violence as one of the determining phenomena of twentieth-century history, which has its roots in the catastrophic experiences of World War I, has drawn more attention in recent decades in connection with renewed interest in Central Europe and battlefields in eastern and southeastern Europe.²

The editors of the collection have divided the studies into four main groups that reflect the main trends in the current research on the connection between World War I and physical violence. The first group tackles the longer view on the war, focusing on trends and phenomena in the late nineteenth century that already foreshadowed the conflict and also on some of its lasting repercussions. Joachim von Puttkamer recapitulates the political and cultural development of Eastern

1 The literature on World War I is overwhelming. The most recent titles include: Jörn Leonhard, *Die Büchse der Pandora. Geschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2014); Jay Winter, ed., *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Herfried Münkler, *Der Große Krieg. Die Welt 1914–1918* (Berlin: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2013); Alan Kramer, *The Dynamics of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

2 On warfare and occupation on the Eastern front, see most recently: Bernhard Bachinger and Wolfram Dornik, ed., *Jenseits des Schützengrabens. Der Erste Weltkrieg im Osten. Erfahrung – Wahrnehmung – Kontext* (Innsbruck–Vienna–Bozen: Studien Verlag, 2013); Alfred Eisfeld and Dietmar Neutatz, eds., *Besetzt, interniert, deportiert. Der Erste Weltkrieg und die deutsche, jüdische, polnische und ukrainische Zivilbevölkerung im östlichen Europa* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2013); Stephen Velychenko, *State Building in Revolutionary Ukraine. A Comparative Study of Governments and Bureaucrats, 1917–1922* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Michael Neiberg–David Jordan, *The Eastern Front 1914–1920* (London: Amber Books, 2011); Alexander V. Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland. War, Ethnicity, and Anti-Jewish Violence in East Galicia, 1914–1920* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005); Vejas G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front. Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Europe just before World War I, which he defines as those parts of Europe that were governed by the Habsburg, Hohenzollern and Romanov Empires. He concludes that the wartime conflict in this part of the world signaled the total erosion and collapse of the prevailing order and the subsequent establishment of a new order. Thus, according to him, the global conflict was a clear break with the prewar era, and revolutionary Russia in his view should be understood as a case that calls for further comparisons, rather than as a unique event heralding the beginning of a new era.

Mark Biondich examines the problematic “shatter zones” of the European continent, in other words the areas that were on the borders of the old European empires. Drawing on the example of the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, he shows how these border zones became the first experimental area on which some European powers tested new concepts of ethnic cleansing, forced mass migration or, in some cases, even ethnic extermination. Biondich thus interprets the Balkan conflicts of 1912–13 as a prelude to the so-called Great War, a prelude which foreshadowed the radical transformation of warfare in the twentieth century, targeting large ethnic or religious groups and often blurring the lines between combatants and non-combatants.

In the last contribution of the first group of essays, Jochen Böhler summarizes the existing literature on wartime and immediate post-war military and paramilitary violence in Poland, Ukraine and revolutionary Russia. Essentially, he contends that already before the war the Russian empire added state administered collective violence against an entire ethnic group within its territory to the repertoire of wartime practices, and World War I was thus only a continuation of pre-war developments. This argument corresponds with the conclusion of the previous study and prompts historians to consider the extent to which one should think of World War I as a series of conflicts that began in the Balkans in 1912 and ended around 1922 with the treaty of Lausanne and the settling of another conflicts all over Europe (Ireland, Silesia etc.).

The second section is devoted to the politics of long-term military occupation as a phenomenon during World War I that became part of the standard set of modern warfare practices. In his excellent study, Jonathan Gumz tracks the development of international law and the proper definition of military occupation. Using this as his point of departure, he examines Austria-Hungary's politics of occupation in Serbia and Germany's and Russia's in Poland and the Ukraine. He concludes that during the war the occupation regimes of Germany and Russia violated international norms regarding occupation with

increasing frequency, indeed to such an extent that these norms eventually ceased to function as a reference for justification of the measures they adopted with regards to the occupied population. As an occupying power, the Habsburg Empire, on the other hand, attempted to adhere to valid international norms most of the time. Stephan Lehnstaedt also arrives at the same conclusion in his analysis of the economic policies of occupation practiced by Austria–Hungary and Germany. While Germany, he argues, used the politics of coercion and mass forced labor as a standard tool of occupation, Austria–Hungary adhered to old-fashioned market incentives, which indeed proved much more effective. The section devoted to occupation is concluded by Robert L. Nelson’s study, which tackles the German plans to displace the populations in the eastern territories massively. Nelson reveals the extent to which these German fantasies were influenced by the American colonization of the West and again indicates the contrast between German plans for occupation and the much more modest Austro-Hungarian plans, which were far more rooted in the old world of the nineteenth century.

The third part of the collection covers the radicalization of the warring societies not only on the fronts and in the occupied territories, but also in the hinterland. Maciej Górny vividly depicts how scientific anthropology aided the war effort of states fighting on the eastern front. The Austro-Hungarian army’s anthropological findings on the eve of war served as the basis for interpretations that saw the war as a clash of diametrically different European races. According to Górny, World War II thus was merely the culmination of the biopolitics that took root in Europe during World War I. Piotr M. Wróbel shares this argument in his analysis of violence against Jews in Central and Eastern Europe perpetrated by state as well as non-state actors between 1914 and 1921. He concludes that the radical increase in violence occurred during the immediate post-war era and was the first symptom of the mass hatred that led to massacres twenty years later. Wróbel in particular seems to dwell on earlier literature and the idea of closed, homogenous ethno-religious groupings in East Central Europe. His focus on a mere enumeration of cases of anti-Semitic repressions and violence serves as an informed introduction to the literature on the topic. However, his approach makes it rather difficult to explain some trends that contradict the thesis of a general anti-Semitic setback in the postwar years, such as the official recognition of Jewish nationality in Czechoslovakia or the Jewish emancipation in Romania, and also to understand anti-Semitic violence as a distinct form of aggression,

with its own inner logic.³ Robert Gerwarth, in his contribution (which had already been published in another forum), also concentrates on the post-war years and the experience of defeat, which greatly influenced the militarization of the vanquished central European states, primarily Germany, Austria and Hungary.⁴ For Gerwarth, the specific paramilitary subculture of these states was not the result of general wartime brutalization, but rather a specific, regional reaction to imagined or real threats that arose at the end of the war and materialized as anti-Bolshevik, anti-Slavic and anti-Semitic waves of paramilitary violence.

The last group of contributions deals with the marks that the wartime experience left in some of the newly created Central and Eastern European states. Julia Eichenberg writes about the various successful or failed social and military demobilizations after 1918. In her assessment, the fluid transition from classical war to civil war, which occurred in many parts of Eastern and Central Europe, makes the year 1918 relevant as a turning point. Philipp Ther also argues for a new periodization. Using the example of ethnic cleansing, he points out that this concept of collective violence began to appear in Europe before 1914 and persisted in many regions until the mid 1920s.⁵ From his perspective, the traditional periodization of the war should be extended beyond the traditional years 1914–18. The section is concluded by Dietrich Beyrau's study on violence in Soviet Russia. According to Beyrau, physical violence represented a permanent phenomenon which did not decline after World War I, but in fact became one of the main tools in the maintenance of the new order. Beyrau elaborates on the common historiographic perception that the revolutionary party's rhetoric was couched in war terminology and the party elite often understood itself as a prominent army unit on the frontline of a worldwide revolution.⁶ The ever-

3 William Hagen, "The Moral Economy of Popular Violence: The Pogrom in Lwów November 1918," in *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland*, ed. Robert Blobaum (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 124–47.

4 Robert Gerwarth, "Fighting the Reed Beast: Counter-Revolutionary Violence in the Defeated States of Central Europe," in *War in Peace. Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, ed. Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 52–71.

5 See, for example: Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire. The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Nick Baron–Peter Gatrell, eds., *Homelands. War, Population and Statehood in Eastern Europe and Russia 1918–1924* (London: Anthem Press, 2004); Onur Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement. Reconsidering the Turco-Greek Exchange of Populations, 1922–1934* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

6 See, for example: Peter Holquist, "State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism," in *Stalinism*, ed. David L. Hoffmann (Malden–Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 129–56.

present symbolism of war and violence then spread from party self-identification to the whole society and influenced early twentieth-century Russian history. The book concludes with Jörn Leonhard's short essay, which situates the topics in a wider comparative framework with the western part of Europe.

This collection of essays is a welcome addition to the current debates about new ways of conceptualizing World War I. Some of the essays review existing secondary literature and will serve as an introduction to the vast panorama of East Central European history immediately after the war. Other texts are based on original research and will enrich our understanding of state and non-state violent practices in the multiethnic, religiously diverse regions. The structure of the book and the historiographical overviews that accompany many of the chapters will make it useful not only for researchers, but also for university teachers. Many studies implicitly share the same arguments and persuasively show how the war in the East often meant something different than the war in the West. Individual arguments for a new periodization and the inclusion of transnational spaces as a basic analytical framework are convincing and will certainly enrich the current scholarship on the course and consequences of World War I, beyond the traditional narratives about the West, which tend to stress a distinct beginning and end of the war in 1914 and 1918 respectively, trench warfare, and allegedly more or less successful post-war reconstruction.

Rudolf Kučera

Nép, nemzet, zsidó [Folk, Nation, Jew]. By Gábor Gyáni.
Pozsony: Kalligram, 2013. 280 pp.

In tandem with the changing thematic priorities of international historiography, the interests of Hungarian historian Gábor Gyáni have gradually shifted from social historical topics to explorations in cultural and intellectual history.¹ In the 1980s and 1990s, Gyáni established his reputation with the publication of seminal social and urban historical monographs.² He proved instrumental in making social history arguably *the* key field of innovative historical work in early post-communist Hungary,³ for instance as one of the co-authors of what is probably the most important overview of the modern social history of the country to have been published after 1989.⁴

Since around the turn of the millennium, however, Gyáni's main scholarly preoccupations seem to have changed. As five of his collected volumes released over the course of the past decade and a half demonstrate,⁵ Gyáni has devoted sustained attention to the history of historiography, questions of history and memory, nationalism and the so-called “Jewish question,” as well as key issues in contemporary historical theory, above all, those related to the postmodernist challenge. His prolific output on these topics has established him as an important

1 For more details on the unfolding of this process in Hungary, see Ferenc Laczó and Máté Zombory, “Between Transnational Embeddedness and Relative Isolation. The Moderate Rise of Memory Studies in Hungary,” in *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 106 (2012): 99–125.

2 Gábor Gyáni, *Család, háztartás és a városi cselédség* (Budapest: Magvető, 1983); Idem, *Bérkaszárnya és nyomortelep. A budapesti munkáslakás múltja* (Budapest: Magvető, 1992); Idem, *Hétköznap Budapest. Nagyvárosi élet a századfordulón* (Budapest: Városháza, 1995); Idem, *Az utca és a szalon. A társadalmi tér használata Budapesten 1870–1940* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 1998).

3 On this, see Balázs Trencsényi and Péter Apor, “Fine-tuning the Polyphonic Past: Hungarian Historical Writing in the 1990s,” in *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in post-Communist Eastern Europe*, ed. Sorin Antohi, Balázs Trencsényi, and Péter Apor (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007). It ought to be noted that *társadalomtörténet* (social history) has a peculiar and peculiarly inclusive meaning in Hungarian. Around 1989, many Hungarian social historians understood their scholarship as an alternative to political history writing in particular, and their scholarly practices were at times also linked to various forms of social activism.

4 Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig* (Budapest: Osiris, 1998); Gábor Gyáni, György Kövér, and Tibor Valuch, *Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the End of the Twentieth Century* (Boulder, Col.: Social Science Monographs, 2004).

5 Gábor Gyáni, *Emlékezés, emlékezet és a történelem elbeszélése* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2000); Idem, *Történelemszűzdiskurzusok* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2002); Idem, *Posztmodern kánon* (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 2003); Idem, *Relatív történelem* (Budapest: Typotex, 2007); Idem, *Az elvesztett múlt. A tapasztalat mint emlékezet és történelem* (Budapest: Nyitott Könyvműhely, 2010).

mediator of recent international scholarly trends to the scholarly community in Hungary and also as someone who has repeatedly articulated explicit criticisms of professional shortcomings in his native land.⁶

The newest collection of his writings, *Nép, nemzet, zsidó* (Folk, Nation, Jew), offers samples of Gyáni's recent publications. With a single exception, the twelve studies assembled here have already been published in Hungarian-language journals or edited volumes, with two-thirds of them originally released between 2010 and 2012.⁷ The introduction promises metahistorical explorations and, more concretely, conceptual and discursive analyses (p.9). One of Gyáni's declared aims, by focusing on the concepts in the volume's title (which also serve as the main subjects of the volume's three sections), is to show how widely pluralistic and historically unstable the semantics of key concepts can be.

Nép, nemzet, zsidó begins with "A nép a maga valójában" [The Folk as It Truly Is], a critical examination of a foundational concept in ethnography. Gyáni is interested here, above all, in how the concept of *nép* (folk) has been used in the social historical parts of a recent Hungarian-language ethnography handbook and, more generally, what the recurrent tendency to identify the *nép* with the peasantry has implied for the discipline.⁸ Beyond questioning some of the social historical narratives offered by Hungarian ethnographers, the study articulates a critique of the homogenous and essentialized image painted of the peasantry as representative of the folk in particular. Gyáni concludes that this manner of categorization may be crucial to the professional legitimation of the discipline of ethnography, but it is in fact closely intertwined with the history of nationalism and political myth-making (p.27).

In addition to offering such polemical interventions, Gyáni provides differentiated and balanced treatments of various subjects. The nuanced approach characterizing much of the volume is perhaps best illustrated by the studies on Ferenc Erdei and István Bibó. Whereas Gyáni, the social historian, has striven to falsify Erdei's influential image—colloquially known as the theory of the dual

6 See, among others, Gábor Gyáni, "Helyünk a holokauszt történetírásában," in *Kommentár* 3, no 3 (2008): 13–23. See also Idem, "A hazai történetírás nemzetközi beágyazottsága. Egykor és most," *Aetas* 25, no. 4 (2010): 15–27.

7 However, Gyáni occasionally provides explicit links between his studies here, treating them as interlinked chapters (see 27, 41).

8 Attila Paládi-Kovács, ed., *Magyar néprajz VIII. Társadalom* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2000).

structure—of interwar Hungarian society,⁹ here he opposes attempts to discredit Erdei's scholarly contributions by noting the—supposedly non-scholarly—confessional tone of his writings and their explicit political-ideological aims. In response to such critiques, Gyáni argues that Erdei approached and mediated his experiences as a Hungarian peasant by employing various viewpoints, including conceptual ones foreign to the peasantry, and asserts that the partly analytical, partly personal articulation of his experiences may in fact be qualified as the most intriguing and valuable elements of Erdei's writings on the peasantry (pp.56–57). Thus in the chapter entitled “A paraszti individualizáció Erdei Ferenc felfogásában” [Ferenc Erdei's Conception of Peasant Individualization], Gyáni ultimately maintains that, unlike many of his *népi* (populist) contemporaries, Erdei largely succeeded at conveying his intimate knowledge of peasant agency and its social contexts without painting an essentialized image of peasants (pp.58–59).¹⁰

If the analysis of Erdei offered a generous defense of an author towards whose image of society Gyáni is otherwise critically disposed, his essay on István Bibó's reflections on Jewish identities and assimilation in Hungary, entitled “Az asszimilációkritika Bibó István gondolkodásában” [The Critique of Assimilation in the Thought of István Bibó], does exactly the reverse. Here Gyáni explores the controversial aspects of a contribution to Hungarian historiography that he explicitly recognizes as seminal, even uniquely important. More particularly, the article aims to show that the manner in which Bibó depicted Hungarian Jewry and the history of assimilation in his 1948 essay “The Jewish Question in Hungary after 1944” in several respects reproduced his views from the late 1930s, the years of anti-Semitic legal discrimination, which Bibó, like Erdei, was unprepared to condemn. Examining Bibó's personal and intellectual milieu in some detail, Gyáni asserts that his conception was markedly influenced by László Németh's controversial views expressed in *Kisebbségben* (In the Minority) in particular (p.254).¹¹

Gyáni concludes that in the late 1940s Bibó still believed that Hungarians and Jews, two supposedly utterly separate “communities of fate” (to attempt to

9 On Erdei's theory as interpreted by Gyáni in English, see Gábor Gyáni, “Image and Reality of a Splitting Country: The Case of Hungary,” in *Mastery and Lost Illusions. Space and Time in the Modernization of Eastern and Central Europe*, ed. Włodzimierz Borodziej, Stanislav Holubec, and Joachim von Puttkamer (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014).

10 On a rather similar assessment of Ferenc Erdei, see István Papp, *A magyar népi mozgalom története, 1920–1990* (Budapest: Jaffa, 2012).

11 For Gyáni's elaborate argument to the same effect, see his “Bibó István kiegyezés-kritikája” [István Bibó's Critique of the Compromise] in the volume, esp. 126–30.

render in English the term *sorsközösség*), displayed similarly strong opposition to their social integration, and this made Jewish assimilation in Hungary an entirely hopeless undertaking. Such an assessment indeed seems to resemble closely that of László Németh, but—as Gyáni is quick to add—Bibó partly reinterpreted Németh in order to avoid putting the chief part of the blame on the Jews. Gyáni reasons that Bibó thereby articulated a narrative of Hungarian social development that largely coincided with that of Ferenc Erdei on the dual structure of society. In Gyáni's assessment, Bibó's "The Jewish Question in Hungary after 1944" thus amounted to a rather curious amalgam that courageously explored the causes of the moral bankruptcy of non-Jewish Hungarian society, but which at the very same time aimed to discuss Jewish and non-Jewish shortcomings and failures in a symmetrical fashion, even after the annihilation of the majority of Hungary's Jews.

The chapter entitled "Identitás versus imázs: asszimiláció és diszkrimináció a magyar zsidóság életében" ("Identity versus Image: Assimilation and Discrimination in the Life of Hungarian Jewry") presents Gyáni's broader and more theoretical reflections on closely related questions. This important contribution argues that the two most powerful Hungarian discourses—the assimilationist one and the one focused on the history of anti-Semitism—both fail to offer an adequate representation of the actual historical experiences of assimilated Jews (pp.217–18). Gyáni maintains that both of these discourses are based on an untenable premise according to which images create social realities, and they both fail to study the complex interaction between such dominant images and personal identities over time (p.219). Gyáni argues that processes of social integration deepened over time and produced what he calls a "co-constituted nation." However, the gap between the image of Hungarian Jews and their identity only widened (p.225). By pointing to such a dual process, the study offers an explanation of how "the relative alterity" of the Jews kept on being reproduced in modern Hungary, in spite of the fact that—according to Gyáni—Jews no longer constituted a separate ethnic group.

Similarly to these more theoretical reflections, Gyáni's review of Katalin Fenyves' recent monograph on generational patterns and inter-generational change of intellectuals born Jewish in Hungary leads him to highlight the hybridization of identity.¹² This elaborate review also provides him with an opportunity to critique a historiographical perspective, articulated notably by

12 Katalin Fenyves, *Képzelt asszimiláció? Négy zsidó értelmiségi nemzedék önképe* (Budapest: Corvina, 2010).

the late Péter Hanák, which affirmed the success of Jewish acculturation by presenting the major roles played by Jewish intellectuals in modern Hungary. According to Gyáni's assessment, the binary of Hungarian *versus* Jewish proves inadequate when attempting to characterize intellectuals who were neither religiously Jewish nor Magyars in the way in which ethnic nationalists understood the notion (p.251).

The section on nation begins with a somewhat sketchy essay on "Nemzetelméletek és a történetírás" (Theories of the Nation and History Writing). Reproduced from a volume originally published by the Hungarian National Gallery, the chapter contains Gyáni's discussion of classics of nationalism studies. It covers several key debates, such as the one on the modernity of nations and the usefulness and limits of distinguishing between political (or civic) and cultural (or ethnic) nationalisms. However, it adds little in the way of original insights. Gyáni's introduction to the field of nationalism studies nonetheless finishes on a rather polemical note with the author elaborating on what he sees as strong parallels between mythical and historical ways of thinking. Pointing to what he perceives as the "fatal" connection between history writing and nationalism in particular, Gyáni ultimately suggests that more profound reflections on collective memories combined with more thorough intertextual and interdisciplinary examinations may help us overcome the dangers of mythicization.

The chapter entitled "A nacionalizmus és az Európa-kép változásai Magyarországon a 19–20. században" (Nationalism and the Changing Image of Europe in Hungary of the 19th and 20th Centuries), a key contribution on the theme of the nation, draws an insightful sketch of major developments in the relationship between the two subjects referenced in its title to show that the local contest over Europe tended to acquire considerable additional importance in moments of crisis (p.131). Gyáni explains that in the Hungary of the early decades of nineteenth-century, Europe still served as a model to be emulated, whereas subsequently Europeanness was incorporated into the official state ideology and was increasingly connected to exclusivist forms of Hungarian nationalism. As Gyáni emphasizes, the strength of anti-European ideas was greatly enhanced by the Trianon Peace Treaty and its local interpretations. He also discusses how leading communist-era historians maintained that the country diverged from Western European patterns in order to highlight what was supposedly a deep historical tradition of Eastern Europeanness. As Gyáni notes, confederative and Pan-European proposals may have played a notable role

in public discussions and may even have provided certain groups of intellectuals with a sense of mission, but they remained rather marginal in the overall scheme of things (p.145).

The study on the changing image of Europe in Hungary reveals with special force what I see as a shortcoming of this otherwise excellent volume: the relative marginality of the ambition to situate Hungary in its broader regional and continental contexts.¹³ The volume undoubtedly draws on a wide international variety of methodological examples, and the debates on the peculiar features of Hungarian modernization and the special social and cultural roles of Jewish Hungarians in it also have strong parallels in numerous other countries, including—probably most famously—Germany. However, the central ambition of Gábor Gyáni seems to be to reshape local debates by bringing in new international perspectives: his agenda concerns the rethinking—and certainly not the “unthinking”—of the national canon. The extent to which such attempts to convert local idioms of research and debate into the language of contemporary international academia can succeed remains to be seen, as does the extent to which their eminent national stakes will be recognized amidst the contemporary vogue for transnational and global history.

In sum, Gábor Gyáni’s essays in *Nép, nemzet, zsidó* mediate a rich variety of scholarly literature and occasionally draw on in-depth philological investigations to discuss a host of significant themes in social and cultural history, particularly in the study of the nation and nationalism and the related discourses concerning Jewish themes. Although Gyáni’s collection does not offer a systematic analysis of the connection between the latter two subjects and refrains from theorizing the place and role of “Jewish questions” in Hungarian discussions of modern social development and cultural peculiarities, in addition to offering nuanced polemics with previous interpretations, the volume also makes numerous valuable suggestions as to how this immensely complicated and no less controversial subject could be approached in the future.

Ferenc Laczó

13 On the intellectual discourses of Europe in a great number of national contexts, though without the case of Hungary, see Justine Lacroix and Kalypso Nicolaïdis, eds., *European Stories. Intellectual Debates on Europe in National Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Propaganda State in Crisis: Soviet Ideology, Indoctrination, and Terror under Stalin, 1927–1941. By David Brandenberger. New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2011. 357 pp.

Paradoxically enough, the study of Soviet propaganda almost fell victim to historiographical debates during the Cold War. This partly had to do with the importance the totalitarian paradigm ascribed to political indoctrination and mobilizational campaigns in the sustenance of communist rule. Marxist ideology was considered the source of terror, and the practice of disseminating its tenets—i.e. propaganda—was generally interpreted as an attempt to cover up the “true” nature of the Soviet regime and create a society of subservient citizens and atomized individuals. The revisionist response to the claims of scholars advocating the idea of an all-powerful state left the essentialist image of Soviet propaganda largely intact. The focus of revisionist historians was on society and social responses to Stalinist policies, and not so much on the state’s techniques of mass mobilization. In other words, the totalitarian emphasis on the role of propaganda in ensuring loyalty to the state triggered the marginalization of the topic of mass persuasion in revisionist historiography.

David Brandenberger’s book, *Propaganda State in Crisis*, is the first attempt since the Cold War to bring the subject of Stalinist propaganda back into the limelight. While aspects of political indoctrination—political discourse, newspapers, visual propaganda, and so on—have been addressed by historians before, Brandenberger is the first scholar to offer a comprehensive overview of mass persuasion in the Stalinist 1930s. To an extent, the book is a sequel to Peter Kenez’s classical analysis of the emergence of what the Hungarian–American historian famously called “the propaganda state” during the first decade of Bolshevik rule in Soviet Russia.¹ Although published in 1985, Kenez’s book is still remarkably accurate, and many of its claims remain valid despite the fact that the author had no access to archival sources at the time. Brandenberger continues the story from where Kenez left off: *Propaganda State in Crisis* starts in the late 1920s and provides a vivid description of Stalinist propaganda up until the outbreak of World War II. Brandenberger’s narrative is supported by a

1 Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

plethora of diverse primary material, ranging from archival sources to products of Soviet mass culture.

The originality of the book, however, does not lie merely in the fact that it is based on new archival findings. The volume, in general, offers a fresh perspective on the functioning and the efficacy of propaganda in totalitarian regimes. Brandenberger understands propaganda as a complex process, and he analyses political indoctrination at three different levels. First, he looks at how propaganda was constructed by the ideological establishment and who the key individuals were behind the formation of strategies of mass persuasion. Second, he analyses the process of disseminating propaganda messages to the wider population by focusing on the activity of the regime's activists, mostly in the context of party schools and study circles. Finally, he addresses the problem of the popular reception of the party's indoctrination efforts and offers a discussion of the overall impact of Stalinist propaganda on Soviet society. It is this multifocal, yet finely balanced, analysis of construction, dissemination and reception that makes the volume an original scholarly endeavor.

The term 'propaganda state' evokes images of an omnipotent polity—with a vast and smoothly run propaganda machine—the sole purpose of which is to indoctrinate the population along ideological lines. The story Brandenberger tells us, however, is not the story of strength and success, but one of weakness and failure. The Stalinist Soviet Union, he argues, ultimately failed to construct and inculcate a conception of identity that was coherent and distinctively "Soviet" at the same time. The book demonstrates that communist propaganda in the 1930s was far from being a carefully planned and efficiently managed enterprise. It was, in fact, characterized by spontaneity, improvisation, and spectacular inefficiency. Brandenberger offers a fascinating account of the trajectory of a deepening crisis in the attempts of the state to mobilize the masses in the name of ideology and the often hasty and ad hoc responses that the party-state conjured up to overcome the problems it faced on the ideological front. The lack of a centrally devised master plan and the scarcity of competent cadres to implement the party's improvised—and sometimes contradictory—policies exacerbated the crisis and paralyzed the regime's propaganda machine by the end of the decade. Therefore, if viewed through the prism of political indoctrination, the Soviet Union in the 1930s does not appear to have been all-powerful at all; rather it resembled a failing state.

The author's emphasis on system malfunction reflects a recent trend in historical studies of Soviet-type regimes. There is a growing interest in the

role of agency in the functioning of such states and the ways in which the representatives of the system shaped the outcomes and popular reception of the party's policies. Historians addressing this particular aspect of Soviet rule focus not so much on how certain decisions are made, but on how they are implemented and how they are perceived by the population. The narratives that emerged as a result further erode the idea of a monolithic state exercising total control over identity formation.² Incompetence, it seems, was a systemic feature of communism. It contributed to the overall failure of the Bolsheviks to nurture enthusiasm for their utopian goals and aspirations, resulting in widespread popular indifference to the propaganda messages of the party.³ For example, in his recent book on Stalinist Hungary György Gyarmati argues that the general incompetence of the party's cadres almost incapacitated the state in the early 1950s.⁴ While Brandenberger's argument also revolves around the theme of a chaotically managed state on the verge of paralysis, it offers one of the most detailed analyses of the topic so far.

The book is not merely a story of incompetence and failure, however. Some of the chapters in the volume, in fact, present a case of unexpected success: the emergence of a populist version of communist propaganda, dominated by the tropes of heroism and patriotism. While this campaign seems to have struck a chord with society, it did not actually originate in the party headquarters. Although it enjoyed the support of the leadership, the new line did not come from prominent party functionaries and ideologues; it came from the "sidelines," and was most actively advocated and shaped by the intelligentsia, and key figures of the Soviet cultural propaganda machine (Maksim Gorky, for example).

2 While the revisionist school has criticized the notion of the monolithic (totalitarian) state extensively, especially in works that revolve around the concept of "resistance," the efficiency of party propaganda has not been in the limelight of historical research. "Classic" works on popular resistance include, for example, Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), and Lynne Viola, *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002). Historical discussions that address—among other things—the efficiency of party cadres in implementing the regime's symbolic policies include Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000) and David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

3 For an analysis of the relationship between the incompetence of party agitators and popular indifference see Balázs Apor, "‘Ignorance is bliss’: Cult-Reception and Popular Indifference in Communist Hungary (1947–1956)," in *Der Führer im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Benno Ennker and Heidi Hein-Kirchner (Marburg: Herder Institut, 2010), 90–107.

4 György Gyarmati, *A Rákosi-korszak. Rendszerváltó fordulatok évtizede Magyarországon, 1945–1956* (Budapest: ÁBTL–Rubicon, 2011), 215–19.

Thus, somewhat unexpectedly, one of the most successful projects of Stalinist propaganda did not come from the party's headquarters, but from the margins of the institutional hierarchy. Brandenberger shows that the popularity of the new line was more the unintended consequence of a spontaneous and populist response to a mobilization crisis than it was the result of the implementation of a carefully crafted master plan. Despite this remarkable success, however, the Stalinist leadership decided to—quite literally—terminate the culture of heroes in the late 1930s. The Great Terror and the last few years of the 1930s bore witness to the symbolic and the physical elimination of “heroes” in Soviet political culture and the return in the propaganda of the abstract and inaccessible concepts of dialectical materialism. The book, thus, tells us a story of sudden, unpredictable, and even contradictory zig-zags in the official line, which were largely responsible for the failure of the state to mobilize its citizens to labor for the realization of a communist utopia in the mid to late 1930s.

The book consists of eleven chapters, but it could be divided chronologically, as well as thematically, into four parts. The first three chapters discuss the mobilizational crisis that crippled the Soviet state in the late 1920s and early 1930s and analyze some of the strategies the Bolsheviks implemented to tackle the problems of propaganda. Brandenberger shows how the failure of the party to popularize the key concepts of its ideology in the 1920s triggered the intensification of indoctrination efforts during the first five-year plan and how it contributed to the renewal of attempts to create a credible historical narrative. Although the leadership was very much aware of the crisis, the policies they implemented lacked coordination and were ad hoc in nature. Therefore, they generally remained unable to mobilize Soviet citizens for the cause. Historians had struggled to produce an accessible text on party history that could be used for propaganda purposes, and the quest for the official biography of Stalin was also aborted, after a sequence of events that the author merely describes as “a comedy of errors.”

Where party historians and leading ideologues failed, less influential members of the creative intelligentsia (writers, journalists, film directors, etc.) succeeded. In an attempt to offer a more accessible master narrative to Soviet citizens, newspapers and the Soviet cultural propaganda machine (literature, cinema, etc.) took the lead in promoting new themes—heroism and patriotism—that instantly gained popularity in Soviet society. In chapters 4, 5, and 6, Brandenberger offers a detailed discussion of the emergence of Soviet patriotism and the Stalinist culture of heroes in the 1930s, highlighting the role of key members of the

intelligentsia (such as Gorky) in the process and paying equal attention to the construction of both “real” (members of the Cheliuskin expedition, military commanders, shock workers and Stakhanovites) and fictional (Chapaev or Pavel Korchagin) heroes. The author argues that the shift from the promotion of abstract ideological principles towards more concrete, and even populist, themes fell on fertile ground and was received positively by the population. Whereas the tenets of dialectical materialism had failed to provoke enthusiastic responses in Soviet society before, the tropes of patriotism and heroism were successful in advancing Soviet mass mobilization. These themes contributed to the formation of an accessible historical narrative that was populated by lively heroic figures struggling for the construction of a new world or fighting for the motherland.

While the early 1930s spawned a wide variety of heroes, the end of the decade witnessed their brutal decimation. The purging of the party elite during the years of the Great Terror, in general, had a dramatic effect on communist propaganda. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 analyze the damaging impact of the violent events on indoctrination and mass mobilization. The fall of prominent individuals, including party historians Vil’gel’m G. Knorin and Nikolay N. Popov, put an end to the proliferation of heroes and triggered a drastic readjustment of propaganda material in the midst of a chaotic and traumatic upheaval. Heroes were turned into criminals overnight, textbooks, novels and film scripts were rewritten, and books were removed from shops and libraries as their authors disappeared in NKVD prisons or Gulag camps. While the impact of the terror on Soviet society has been assessed and analyzed by numerous historians before, Brandenberger claims that the extent of the purges in the ideological sphere was far greater than is normally acknowledged. The elimination of the most successful component of communist propaganda—or “the murder of the usable past” to use the author’s phrase—brought communist mobilization to a standstill and provoked an atmosphere of confusion, anxiety, and doubt.

As the last chapters of the book demonstrate, Soviet propaganda was unable to recover from the desolation caused by the terror before the onset of the war in 1941. The mobilization crisis continued despite the party’s efforts to reinvigorate the campaign for ideological indoctrination. Due to Stalin’s personal intervention, a new textbook on party history was published—the (in)famous *Short Course*—which enjoyed the support of the leadership and quickly became the primary material used in party education. The crystallization of a new historical narrative, after more than a decade of failed attempts, was complemented by the publication of an official biography of Stalin in 1939. Despite the successful

realization of these long overdue projects, the new line generally failed to revive popular enthusiasm for the cause. As Brandenberger shows, the new Bolshevik master narrative remained excessively complex, inaccessible and impersonal. Apart from the theme of patriotism, there was very little in the party propaganda that inspired Soviet citizens. The new heroes were stock figures that lacked any depth, and the *Short Course*, with its abstract, theoretical narrative, caused more frustration than intellectual excitement for the students (and teachers) in communist study circles. The elevation of complex, depersonalized texts to the center of propaganda, argues Brandenberger, led to the “ossification” of the official line “into a gray amalgam of stultifying theory, cultish hagiography, and dogmatic catechism” (p.215). Whereas the fabrication of the Soviet “usable past” had failed to produce the results expected by the regime, the war effort certainly provoked a remarkable degree of enthusiasm for the state.⁵ However, it was the patriotic (“national Bolshevik”) aspects of communist propaganda that struck a chord with the population, whereas the uniquely utopian claims of “Soviet” ideology were generally ignored. Although Bolshevik mass mobilization regained some of its momentum after 1945 through the integration of the Great Patriotic War into Stalinist mythology, abstract dogmatism—symbolized by the *Short Course*—continued to characterize Soviet propaganda until the collapse of the state in 1991.

Although the volume offers a detailed analysis of the functioning of the propaganda machine in the Stalinist Soviet Union, the heavy focus of the narrative on individual historians and the production of certain texts may seem somewhat daunting for the non-specialist. In a similar way, the lengthy descriptive paragraphs recounting the plots of Soviet feature films are somewhat excessive. The book would have benefitted from an attempt to balance the dominance of textual and cinematic propaganda with reflections on other visual means of mass persuasion—posters, paintings, etc.—even if there is already a substantial body of scholarly work on the visual aspects of Soviet indoctrination campaigns. A more elaborate engagement with historiographical and theoretical debates on the key concepts discussed in the book (propaganda, agency, reception, state, etc.) would also have contributed to the emergence of a more sophisticated narrative. While the author’s analysis of the malfunctioning state is illuminating, the story needs

5 The turn towards nationalist themes in Communist propaganda has been analysed by the same author in his previous monograph. See Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*. See also Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of the War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

to be interpreted in the broader context of (Russian) traditions of dysfunctional state-building. Chaotically managed states can exist for long periods of time and even demonstrate a certain degree of stability, despite inefficient bureaucracies and failed propaganda campaigns. To what extent was the chaotic administration of the Stalinist state unique in Russian history? Are there any historical parallels that would help us better understand the nature of failing states? However, these objections and unanswered questions notwithstanding, David Brandenberger's book, *Propaganda State in Crisis* will no doubt remain one of the seminal volumes on Soviet propaganda in the years to come.

Balázs Apor

A magyar népi mozgalom története: 1920–1990

[History of the Hungarian Populist Movement: 1920–1990].

By István Papp. Budapest: Jaffa, 2012. 282 pp.*

The so-called “populist movement” (“népi mozgalom”) was one of the most distinctive and important political, social and cultural movements in Hungary in the twentieth century. While one might be hard pressed to find something analogous in the other countries of Europe at the time, several of the strains of the movement nonetheless invite comparisons with tendencies involving groups in Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, and even the United States. The movement in Hungary, which was brought into being in the 1930s primarily by writers and people passionately interested in social issues, sought to bring an end to the economic and cultural stagnation of village societies, as well as their political and social exclusion. The programs devised by the group were intended to help the peasantry (much of which lived in the eastern part of the country in poverty or even squalor) acquire land, secure a reliable livelihood, and have equal access to education and schooling. The leaders of the movement also saw economic dependence—which was perpetuated primarily by owners of large estates and large industrialists—as something that could be alleviated and indeed eliminated, and this in turn, it was hoped, would have helped further the assertion of the rights of the peasantry. The Hungarian populist movement, which was fundamentally cultural in its origins, in a wider sense strove to address the problems surrounding the modernization of essentially agrarian societies on the periphery of the capitalist global economy, societies that either had fallen behind in or never really undergone the process of industrialization.

Although many writers who were part of the populist movement worked together in various ways with the communist authorities, because of their ambivalent attitudes towards the programs of the communist government and communist politicians and also the roles they played in the 1956 Revolution, until the 1980s the ideas of the movement were rarely part of public discussion in Hungary. Even following the change of regimes in 1989, the intellectual milieu that emerged did not really allow for a politically unbiased critical study of the

* An earlier version of this paper was published in *Múltunk* 58, no. 1 (2013): 283–90. This research was supported by the European Union and the State of Hungary, co-financed by the European Social Fund, within the framework of TÁMOP-4.2.4.A/ 2-11/1-2012-0001 “National Excellence Program.”

movement as part of intellectual and cultural history. In recent years, however, the apparent lack of interest in the populist movement—a lack of interest which has been characteristic of the community of historians in Hungary since the publication of the recently deceased Gyula Borbándi’s seminal work almost three decades ago—seems to be giving way. In 2012, two relevant volumes were published on the subject in Hungarian: a monograph by Bulcsu Bognár entitled *A népies irányzat a két háború között* [The Populist Tendency in the Interwar Period]¹ and the book by István Papp on which I am writing here. As he himself notes, Papp is writing for the wider reading public, but he is also attempting to “rethink and reinterpret the history of the populist movement for the discipline [of history] as well” (p.11). Has he in fact achieved this goal?

The quite lovely pop-art cover of the hardback book aptly symbolizes the variegated nature of the populist movement. The book is divided into eight chapters on the writers of the movement, beginning with the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 and concluding with the first free elections, which were held in 1990. Although the use of 1920 as a starting point instead of 1928 (the year which has come to be accepted as the starting point of the movement in the secondary literature, in part because it bore witness to the publication of two important essays by László Németh) is justified more on political grounds than it is on any considerations concerning the movement itself, it nonetheless provides a good bookend, as it were, for the discussion. The title of the first chapter, however, “A magyar populisták” (“The Hungarian Populists”), is a bit harder to explain, since the chapter deals primarily with historical antecedents and similar trends and movements in the United States, Argentina, Finland, and Russia. More important than the title is the fact that in the pre-history of the movement, the elements that were common in analogous trends across the globe were less emphatic, though clearly regulated markets or plans for the creation of cooperatives were hardly Hungarian inventions. Indeed populisms abroad and the populist movement in Hungary shared numerous shortcomings. Yet however praiseworthy an attempt to situate the Hungarian phenomenon in an international context may be, grouping the movement among (agrarian) populisms (p.34) is debatable at best. The international secondary literature on populism, at least, does not deal with the Hungarian movement at all.²

1 Bognár Bulcsu, *A népies irányzat a két háború között*. Erdei Ferenc és a harmadik út képviselői [The Populist Tendency in the Interwar Period] (Budapest, Loisir, 2012).

2 See, for instance, Ionescu, Ghiță, Gellner, and Ernest, eds., *Populism. Its Meaning and National Characteristics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969); Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (London: n.p., 1981), Pierre-André

Papp often adopts a retrospective glance, and he is prudent to do so. I.E. the chronology of the account is a bit loose, and this makes it more easily readable than it might otherwise have been, but this does not compromise the scholarly nature of the account. The third chapter, “Az alvó népek zörgetése” [“The Rattling of the Sleeping Peoples”], contains significant (if not always accurate) data. The following claim, for instance, is hardly persuasive, at least not in light of recent research: “10 cadastral acres were by no means adequate to ensure a livelihood for a family with three children” (p.64).³ While Papp makes mention several times of the flawed value judgments of the “older” secondary literature, he accepts without qualification the generalization so often made before 1989, according to which, “the elite of the Horthy era (...) showed little interest in the efficient husbandry of manorial estates either.”⁴ However, Papp makes persuasive use of the terminology of political science, clearly demonstrating the capacity of the movement to establish broad coalitions, which also meant the desire and ability to create dialogue with the prevailing authorities.

The fourth chapter, “Néma forradalmárok” [“Mute Revolutionaries”], in which Papp presents the sociographical wave of the mid-1930s, sheds the biases and habits of earlier accounts and offers a genuinely balanced examination of the meeting points of the institutions and figures of power and the populist writers. Papp does not hide behind tired clichés. Rather he dares to utter his views on sensitive questions that for a long time have been glossed over, for instance the work of writer József Darvas (p.109), who joined the communists in the 1950s, or (later) the reputation of László Németh (p.132), who has been accused of anti-Semitism. It is characteristic that while Papp considers Imre Kovács, who was forced to emigrate by the communists after the war, the prototype of the

Taguieff, “Political Science Confronts Populism: From a Conceptual Mirage to a Real Problem,” *Telos* 27, no. 2 (1995): 9–43; Margaret Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy,” *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 2–16; Yves Meny and Yves Surel, eds., *Democracies and Populist Challenge*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Francisco Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, (N.P.: Verso, 2005); Koen Ants and Stefan Rummens, “Populism versus Democracy,” *Political Studies* 55, no. 2 (2007): 405–24. Christa Deiwiks, “Populism,” *Living Reviews in Democracy* 1, no. 1 (2009): 1–9. David Van Reybrouck, *A populizmus védelmében* [In Defense of Populism] (Budapest: Gondolat, 2010); Ernesto Laclau, *A populista ész* [The Populist Mind] (Budapest: Noran Libro, 2011); Marco d’Eramo, “Populism and the New Oligarchy,” *New Left Review* 53, no. 4 (2013): 5–28.

3 See Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig* [The Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to World War II] (Budapest: Osiris, 2006), 307.

4 See Levente Püski, *Főúri identitás a két világháború közötti Magyarországon: Esterházy Pál herceg = Generációk a történelemben* [Aristocratic Identity in the Interwar Period in Hungary: Prince Pál Esterházy = Generations in History], ed. Gábor Gyáni and Magdolna Láczy (Nyíregyháza: NYF GTTK–HIK TTE, 2008), 167–73.

professional populist politician, he does not ignore the “nadir of his career,” when Kovács campaigned aggressively and with vulgar language in support of the expulsion from Hungary of the German-speaking members of its citizenry (pp.195–96). He also makes the important observation that because of the politicized vetting and the trials that were held by so-called people’s courts, “among the populists there was never any genuine confrontation with the events of the war years or the Holocaust” (p.182).

In the chapter entitled *Az útkeresés stációi* (“The Stations of the Search for a Path”), Papp offers a detailed discussion of one of this fundamental contentions, according to which, in contrast with the earlier concept of decline, during World War II populism began to burgeon with a “vigorous” (p.126), “heretofore unseen” (p.211) fervor, which brought with it the creation of institutions and periodicals, government measures, and polarization. Papp keeps his distance from the mythos of the various ideological systems, but he nonetheless makes bold diagnoses, not trying to hide the political orientations of the populists.

The sixth chapter provides an exemplary examination of the history of the populist movement after 1945, a history which is rife with contradictions. Papp examines the process whereby, with the turn towards a more “popular” form of rule (i.e. the ascension to power of a regime that at least in principle represented the people but which in fact was a precursor to the Stalinization of the country), the term “nép” (“people” or “folk”) both was given a kind of absolute meaning and at the same time simply lost its value and connotations as it was appropriated by the new ruling ideology. This irreparably divided the “populist” camp. Although of the prominent populists who were regarded as right-wing (József Erdélyi, Géza Féja, János Kodolányi, István Sinka), only Erdélyi was brought before the aforementioned people’s courts, the communists forcefully marginalized the group, while at the same time they put populists who were willing to cooperate with them on a pedestal (Ferenc Erdei, Péter Veres, József Darvas). The seventh chapter contains a detailed account of the fate of the populists under the socialist regime, though according to Papp “we cannot really speak of a movement” (p.212) under the dictatorship of Mátyás Rákosi. One gets a sense from the book of how a certain group mentality survived among the populists, even if, given the circumstances, life led them down very different paths. This mentality found manifestation in the help they provided for those who were labeled right-wing. At the end of the chapter, Papp offers an interpretation of 1956 as a historical moment at which a third road would have been possible. He then examines the “insights” and “dealings” that followed

the suppression of the uprising. Essentially, this brings his discussion of the history of the populist writers to a close. In his epilogue, Papp characterizes the populist-nationalist movement merely as the “bearer of the populist tradition” (p.245). He faults the successors to the Kádár era first and foremost for their lack of “positive vision” (p.270), since the reformers who gathered around Imre Pozsgay and later won widespread support at Lakitelek (a village to the southeast of Budapest, Lakitelek was the site of several meetings of the emerging opposition parties in the years leading up to the change of regimes in Hungary) were hardly driven by the fervent opposition to the system that had been characteristic of the 1930s.

In the end, Papp essentially achieves the two goals he sets for himself in his prologue. His book, which has been written in a refreshingly effortless style (the complexity of the topic notwithstanding), bears ample testimony to the breadth of his reading and research. He offers balanced assessments, and he does not allow his respect for the populists (which he admits from the outset) to lead him astray. However, since he also intended the book to serve as a contribution to the smaller community of scholars, one cannot pass over without comment the frustratingly short and unstructured bibliography, not to mention the insufficient and sometimes haphazardly-looking footnotes, which are more striking than the occasional typos. It would have been worthwhile to have included an index of names similar to the one found in the work of Borbándi. At the same time, it is worth emphasizing that Papp repeatedly uses the Historical Archives of the State Security Services. Thus the reports of the organs of state security provide a great deal of interesting data on the relationship between the populists and the government after 1945. Furthermore, one cannot stress enough the relevance and importance of Papp’s value judgements, which are both moderate and firm. Perhaps in the long-term, such assessments will further the widespread acceptance of a healthier view of the past less encumbered by bias.

Ákos Bartha

Magyar idők a Felvidéken 1938–1945. Az első bécsi döntés és következményei [Hungarian Times in the Upper Lands, 1938–1945. The First Vienna Award and Its Consequences]. By Attila Simon. Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó, 2014. 247 pp.

On November 2, 1938, as a consequence of German and Italian arbitration, a strip of territory in what today is the southern part of Slovakia was awarded to Hungary. The majority of the population of this territory was Hungarian by mother tongue at the time, and indeed many communities of the region have significant Hungarian communities to this day. For Slovak national consciousness, this decision represented a crime committed against the Slovak nation, which had fallen victim to a dictate enforced by foreign powers. According to public opinion in Hungary, in contrast, the decision represented a just revision of one of the provisions of the Treaty of Trianon, which had been concluded in the wake of World War I. With his new monograph on the subject, Attila Simon attempts to add a third perspective to this discourse on the First Vienna Award. The book, *Magyar idők a Felvidéken 1938–1945. Az első bécsi döntés és következményei* [Hungarian Times in the Upper Lands, 1938–1945. The First Vienna Award and Its Consequences], examines the reintegration of the region into Hungary from the perspective of the Hungarian community of the territory itself, which at the time of the change of rule had lived for some two decades as a linguistic minority within the Czechoslovak state. Simon's book is the most recent work in the historiographical series edited by Balázs Ablonczy and published by Jaffa Publishing House. The series constitutes an attempt to present the history of Hungary and the Hungarian minority communities of Central Europe in the twentieth century in a style that will appeal to a broad readership. It was launched a few years back with the publication of two volumes by Ablonczy,¹ and since then many works by well-established Hungarian historians have been published as part of the series. Simon's newest book should be understood as part of this larger endeavor. Indeed, while working on the manuscript, he was inspired in part by a book by Ablonczy entitled *A visszatért Erdély 1940–1944* [Transylvania Returned, 1940–1944].

1 Balázs Ablonczy, *Trianon-legendák* [Trianon Legends] (Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó, 2010); Idem, *A visszatért Erdély 1940–1944* [Transylvania Returned, 1940–1944] (Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó, 2011).

The choice of titles (the reference to “Hungarian times”) indicates the focus of the inquiry and should not be misunderstood as an expression of any kind of nostalgia for a time when what was (and sometimes still is) referred to in Hungarian as “Felvidék” (meaning northern lands and often translated into English as Upper Hungary) was part of Hungary. The brief year between the Vienna Award and the outbreak of World War II and the years of the war itself (during which the territory in question remained part of Hungary) are known in the historical memory of the Hungarian community of Slovakia as the “Hungarian times,” in contrast with the period between 1918 and 1938 or the period after 1945, which are remembered as the Czechoslovak eras. The author’s subjective stance with regard to the subject adds emphasis to this approach. Simon himself is a member of the Hungarian community of Slovakia, and he serves as the director of the Forum Minority Research Institute. This, in part, is why he has striven, as a member of a minority community, to examine an important period in the history of this community.

However, the subjective nature of his perspective in no way detracts from the credibility or seriousness of his inquiry. His attempt to arrive at an understanding of perspectives on the past is not tinged with personal sentiment, nor does it have any shades of victimhood or nostalgia. On the contrary, he has set an important goal as a historian, which indeed he has reached: he draws attention to the failure among historians to devote significant study to the subject and (in no small part a consequence of this) the failure of society to come to foster open discussion of this period of its history. The “Hungarian times” of southern Slovakia have remained undiscussed. As Simon notes in the preface to the book, “even my parents never spoke of it” (p.10). And indeed not only was it not made an openly discussed topic of public memory, it has even been neglected by Slovak and Hungarian historians. Only a few studies have been published on the topic, and to this day no monograph or collection of primary sources has been published dealing with the everyday lives of the Hungarian community of Czechoslovakia in the period following the First Vienna Award. Simon’s book is significant for this reason alone, given that interest in the history of Czechoslovakia in the international community of scholars has tended to focus on the territory that is now the independent Czech Republic and, for instance, the centralist politics of Prague,² the so-called German question in the case of Czechoslovakia, or most

2 Andrea Orzoff, *The Battle for the Castle. The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914–1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

recently the question of the loyalties of the Jewish communities of Slovakia.³ Essentially, Leslie M. Waters is the only international scholar to have addressed the issues pertaining to the Hungarian communities of the region in the period under examination.⁴

With this book, Simon also makes an important contribution to general cultural history. This crucial moment in the history of the Hungarian communities of Slovakia, which now stretches back almost a century, are presented not only through discussions of figures who will be familiar to the Hungarian readership, such as internationally celebrated author Sándor Márai, or the propaganda slogans about “Upper Hungary returned,” as for instance Gyula Popély does in his often cited work on the period.⁵ Some of the chapters of the book deal with figures of the Czechoslovak milieu. Lajos Jócsik, for example, who had been a prominent member of the Sick Movement is one of the important figures of reference, as are Pál Szvatkó, an important publicist of the interwar period, László Mécs, a priest and poet, and Endre Kovács, who later became a literary historian. Similarly, the book also includes discussion of Tamás Weis, a young Jewish boy of Párkány (today Štúrovo in Slovakia), who was deported to Auschwitz in 1944 and who, after his return from the concentration camp, changed his name to Tomáš Radil and, as a member of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science, wrote a Holocaust novel which has since been translated into Hungarian.⁶

Perhaps not surprisingly, the preface begins with a few remarks of Sándor Márai, who has become an emblematic figure of the city of Košice, in which Márai gives voice to the joy he felt at the “return” of the city to Hungary.⁷ Simon is quick to note, however, that years after the Vienna Award Márai gave an assessment of the meeting between the Hungarian community of what had been the southern strip of Czechoslovakia and the prevailing system in post-

3 Rebekah Klein-Pejšová, *Mapping Jewish Loyalties in Interwar Slovakia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

4 Leslie M. Waters, “Resurrecting the Nation. Felvidék and the Hungarian Territorial Revisionist Project, 1938–1945,” (PhD diss., University of California, 2012); Idem, “Learning and Unlearning Nationality: Hungarian National Education in Reannexed Felvidék, 1938–1944,” *Hungarian Historical Review* 3 (2013): 538–65.

5 Gyula Popély, *Hazatéréstől a hazavesztésig* [From the Return to the Homeland to the Loss of the Homeland] (Bratislava: Madách-Posonium, 2006).

6 Tomáš Radil, *Az auschwitzi fiúk* [Boys of Auschwitz] (Budapest: Pesti Kalligram, 2014).

7 Sándor Márai, *Ajándék a végeztől* [Gift of Fate] (Budapest: Helikon, 2004).

Trianon Hungary that was far more critical than his response immediately after the change.⁸

The second part of the book, which is entitled “Borderline Case,” offers a summary and assessment of the events that led to the First Vienna Award and its later repeal. Simon strives to trace the threads of the events, from the Peace Treaty of Trianon and the domestic policies of the first Czechoslovak Republic to Germany’s foreign policy in the wake of the Munich Agreement, the transformation of the Slovak–Hungarian relationship, and finally the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty in 1947. This task is relatively simple, given that there is already a significant body of secondary literature on the diplomatic history and foreign policy implications of the First Vienna Award.⁹

It is worth taking a moment to mention again the problem of terminology that inevitably arises in discussions of the fate of the territory in question. Should one refer to it as “Felvidék” or “Upper Hungary,” as was done in the Hungarian propaganda at time and indeed is sometimes still done to this day? Or should one simply refer to it as Slovakia, its name today? Can these terms be used as synonyms? And is the phrase “southern Upper Hungary” useful, or “southern Slovakia”? This question is complicated by the fact that in the secondary literature in Slovak the phrase “territory ceded by the First Vienna Arbitration to Hungary” (in Slovak *arbitrážne územie*) is frequently used.

Simon tends to use the two terms interchangeably, as indeed he has done in earlier works.¹⁰ He refers most often, however, to “southern Slovakia,” as if this were ever some kind of independent, clearly demarcated region.¹¹ In my view, this term may be a bit confusing to a reader less familiar with the topic, who is reading about a period in which the southern slice of what today is Slovakia was indeed made part of Hungary, but at the same time, the independent state of Slovakia (the territory of which was essentially contiguous with the northern half of Slovakia today) was not created until March of 1939. Thus I find the term “southern Slovakia” a bit anachronistic in this context.

Simon offers not a synthesis of the topic, but rather a kind of catalogue of issues. Thus in the ten chapters that follow the preface (in which Simon

8 Sándor Márai, *Hallgatni akartam* [I Wished to Remain Silent] (Budapest: Helikon, 2013).

9 See for instance Gergely Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés* [The First Vienna Award] (Budapest: Osiris, 2002).

10 For instance, Attila Simon, *Egy rövid esztendő krónikája. A szlovákiai magyarok 1938-ban* [The Chronicle of a Short Year. The Hungarians of Slovakia in 1938] (Šamorín: Fórum Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2010).

11 For more on the term Southern Slovakia, see Elena Mannová, “Southern Slovakia as an Imagined Territory,” in *Frontiers, Religions and Identities in Europe*, ed. Steven G. Ellis and Raingard Eßer with Jean-François Berdah and Miloš Rezník (Pisa: Plus–Pisa University Press, 2009), 185–204.

sketches the outlines of his inquiry) and the second part of the book (in which he summarizes the historical events), Simon addresses the most important issues pertaining to the reintegration of the Hungarian community from the perspectives of political, economic, social, cultural, mentality and even sports and educational history, though naturally not always in equal proportions. He very clearly devotes more attention to political and social history, and he often draws on much of his earlier scholarship. Thus the fourth chapter, which examines the diversity of the party politics of the Hungarian minority communities before 1938 and the ways in which this diversity dwindled after 1938, and the seventh chapter, which deals with the Czech settlement policies in the interwar period, contain the most thorough analyses in the book. Simon gives scant emphasis, however, to the question of economic factors, which are presented in a matter of a few pages in the third chapter (pp.44–50), and the everyday lives of the populations of the region that changed hands. Furthermore, he devotes only a single chapter (the tenth) to the question of sports in the region, which he discusses alongside the transformation of educational and cultural life after 1938, either of which would have merited a separate chapter in and of themselves.

Simon's essay-like anecdotes more than compensate for these shortcomings, however. They make the book more enjoyable and the period under examination more vivid and personal. For instance, in the fifth chapter, which deals with the mechanics of the political screenings, Simon writes about the case of János Kozma, a school principal who before 1938 was both a respected figure of his community and also an active part of local Hungarian cultural life. Nonetheless, following the First Vienna Award, because of baseless accusations and a good bit of human spitefulness, he did not make it past the screenings (pp.93–94). The book also acquaints the reader with the case of Štefan Bolda, a Slovak employee of the Hungarian state railway. He was allegedly more polite, when conducting his job, with Slovak train passengers, so he was reported and then moved from Košice to a place where he would have little chance of coming across Slovaks (pp.140–41). These kinds of anecdotes offer vivid illustrations of the ways in which the policies of the Hungarian state following the First Vienna Award affected the everyday lives of the people living in the territory that had been ceded to Hungary.

Simon identifies the differing forms of socialization in the Hungarian and Czechoslovak communities as the principle source of the grievances of the one-time minority Hungarian community. In 1938, the Czechoslovak Hungarians went from living in a more democratic state that was more developed from

the perspective of social welfare and more tolerant in its nationalities policy to the deeply hierarchical, autocratic Hungary under the rule of Miklós Horthy, where they were often (mostly in government offices) derisively referred to as “Upper Hungary communists.” In the administrative and economic spheres, the Hungarian state demanded immediate transformation. The question of loyalty to the nation, which in the nation-state mentality of Central Europe meant loyalty to the state, was of utmost importance. Even in the more democratic first Czechoslovak Republic this loyalty had been a significant issue. The Hungarian population of the territory that had again come under Hungarian rule thus had to prove its “faithfulness to the nation,” or more precisely that during the twenty some years of “Czechoslovak occupation” it had conducted itself in a manner that was faithful to the traditions and culture of the Hungarian nationality.

The manner in which the population of the territory in question was expected to demonstrate its “fidelity” to the Hungarian nation fundamentally influenced the image of Hungary among the elites of the minority society following the First Vienna Award. In the fifth chapter of the book, Simon offers a vivid portrayal of the frame of mind that characterized the majority of the “Upper Lands middle class” towards the end of 1938 and the beginning of 1939. Members of this community, who for twenty years had not been able, as citizens of Czechoslovakia who belonged to a national minority, to count on positions in state administration, were confident that the change would open the gates to new opportunities for them and that they would receive some kind of compensation from the Hungarian state as if in exchange for the decades of neglect they had suffered. Simon clearly regards the work of the screening committees as having been a miscarriage of justice, since they “put the entire official staff of the region on the accused’s bench” (p.95) and did not provide them with employment after the First Vienna Award. He notes, however, that in the future historians should be cautious to modify the view according to which, instead of members of the Hungarian community from the region, only Hungarians arriving from within the borders of post-Trianon Hungary (referred to in the parlance of the time as “anyások,” i.e. Hungarians from the mother country, or as Paul Robert Magocsi writes, Hungarians who were “pampered and tied to the motherland’s apron strings”)¹² were given positions in government administration in the re-annexed territory.

12 Paul Robert Magocsi, “Magyars and Carpatho-Rusyns. On the Seventieth Anniversary of the Founding of Czechoslovakia,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 14, no. 3/4 (1990): 427–60.

The foundations for this part are laid in large part by the sixth chapter, which deals with one of the distinctive cultural-history aspects of the integration of the minority Hungarian community of the region, a community that had undergone processes of socialization different from those in Hungary, or what was referred to in the contemporary discourses as the so-called “spirit of the Upper Lands.” Simon draws a contrast between the “neo-Baroque Hungary” of Horthy and the “social idea of the Upper Lands.” This mentality, however, was more an idealized self-image of the Hungarians of the region than it was a regional identity that might bear comparison with the regional identity of Transylvania, for instance. While the Czechoslovak Hungarian communities never had any kind of regional traditions or regional sense of identity before 1918 (since the southern slice of the state of Czechoslovakia, stretching from Bratislava in the west to the sub-Carpathian region in the east, earlier had been an integral part of historical Hungary), Transylvania had been a distinctive and separate region not only from the perspective of geography, but also from the perspective of several centuries of constitutional law. Thus it was hardly a coincidence that after 1938 the notion of a “spirit of the Upper Lands” soon became a concept exploited by politicians, since politicians of every leaning, from social democrats to members of the Arrow Cross party, were able to mold the term as they sought fit. Simon concludes that any such simplistic division of the two societies rests on too many generalizations to remain plausible. The narrowing of the history of the “Hungarian times” to this problem is misleading, since it bears the personal and collective grievances of the minority community. The elite of the Hungarian communities of the region rapidly integrated into the system of the “mother country” after 1938.

This is all complemented by two indispensable chapters on the circumstances of the Slovak and Jewish communities of the territory ceded by the First Vienna Arbitration to Hungary. Slovaks regarded the Award as a kind of national tragedy. Simon clearly dismisses the stereotypical image of the “pious Slovak” and the notion, which to this day is widely accepted, according to which political activism and awareness was much lower among Slovaks at the time than it was among Hungarians. In 1938, a Slovak population that clearly had a strong sense of self-awareness and had experienced democracy in the Czechoslovak republic of the interwar period, enjoying all the advantages of a developed social system (including general and secret suffrage), found itself confronted with Hungary under Horthy. For the Hungarian government, the “Slovak question” was not regarded as an issue to be solved with forceful magyarization, but rather involved

nurturing loyalty among the Slovak communities to the Hungarian state, though it was not easy to persuade Hungarian public opinion of this at the time. In the case of the Jewry of the region, Simon makes the important observation that it would be misleading to speak of any kind of distinctive “Upper Lands” Holocaust. The events of the Holocaust in the territory, which resulted in the deportation of some 30,000 Jews, took place essentially in the same manner as they did in other parts of Hungary. The chapter entitled “Hungarian Followers of Moses” provides a thorough presentation of the processes of the disenfranchisement and persecution of the Jewry of the region.

The chapter devoted to the city of Košice addresses something of a lacuna in the secondary literature, as neither the Hungarian nor the Slovak historiography has dealt with the history of the city between 1938 and 1945.¹³ From the Middle Ages to the latter half of the 1940s, Košice was a diverse mix of ethnicities, languages, and religious denominations. And as Simon notes, the city became a kind of symbol of the struggle between Hungarians and Slovaks for control of the territory. According to official census statistics, during the time of the first Czechoslovak Republic the proportion of Hungarians in the city fell below 20 percent, while after the First Vienna Award Košice seemed to change back, from one day to the next, to a city with a Hungarian majority. Simon is therefore cautious about relying on the statistics, as indeed other authors, such as Éva Kovács, have been.¹⁴ In her examination of the national identity of the Jewry of Košice in the interwar period, Kovács persuasively demonstrates that on the basis of the results of the elections that were held in Czechoslovakia, one should be skeptical of the Czechoslovak census results. Her research has shown, for instance, that a far higher proportion of the people of Košice voted for the Hungarian political parties than the proportion of residents of the city who were, according to the census results, of Hungarian nationality. Even into the first decades of the twentieth century, Košice and the other cities of the region were inhabited by a citizenry that was multilingual and often changed its national identity, depending on the pressures of the prevailing state powers. In the case of the city of Košice, it is quite clear that some people replied differently to questions regarding nationality depending on the census

13 On the secondary literature on the topic see Tímea Verešová, “Košice v období rokov 1938–1945 – stav výskumu dejín mesta,” in *Košice a dejiny – dejiny Košíc*, ed. Štefan Šutaj (Košice: UPJŠ, 2011), 147–52.

14 Éva Kovács, *Felemás asszimiláció: a kassai zsidóság a két világháború között, 1918–1938* [Ambiguous Assimilation: The Jewry of Košice in the Interwar Period, 1918–1938] (Šamorín–Dunajská Streda: Fórum Kisebbségkutató Intézet–Lilium Aurum Könyvkiadó, 2004).

(i.e. the government in power). Simon shares Kovács' conclusion, and he offers an illustration of the phenomenon in the case of Košice by examining data concerning the political attitudes and cultural consumption (for instance reading habits) of the population. The chapter also contains a detailed presentation of the modernization of Košice in the interwar period and the transformation of the city into an administrative center.

After 1945, the “Hungarian times,” i.e. the re-annexation by Hungary of territory in the southern part of what today is Slovakia, was one of the primary justifications for the notion of the collective guilt of the Hungarians of the region, a notion that in turn was used to justify deportations, so-called “re-Slovakization,” and Slovak–Hungarian population exchanges. This remains one of the traumatic elements of the shared historical consciousness of the Hungarian communities of present-day Slovakia, and it continues to exert an indirect influence on relations between politics in Hungary and the Hungarian minority of Slovakia. The period between 1938 and 1945 also bore witness to an array of injuries and offences to the Slovaks of the region, and thus the memory of this period continues to encumber relations between Slovaks and Hungarians.

Simon had to find balance in his assessment of the internal and foreign affairs of Hungary under the government of Horthy and the functionality of the interwar Czechoslovak democracy and, within it, the social history of the minorities of Czechoslovakia, for the meanings of the history of the “Hungarian times” in Upper Hungary lie perhaps first and foremost in the meeting—or collision—of these two divergent worlds and the subsequent endeavors to put them on parallel courses towards common goals. With this book, he has made an inspiring contribution that addresses absences and shortcomings in the secondary literature while also providing a highly readable account that will be accessible to a broad readership with an interest in the history of the region.

Veronika Gayer

Imposing, Maintaining, and Tearing Open the Iron Curtain: The Cold War and East-Central Europe, 1945–1989. Edited by Mark Kramer and Vít Smetana. (The Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series.) Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014. xviii + 563 pp.

Recently, an ambitious work was published under the editorship of Mark Kramer and Vít Smetana on the history of East Central Europe in the period beginning with the end of World War II and concluding with the fall of communism in the Eastern Bloc in 1989. The volume, entitled *Imposing, Maintaining, and Tearing Open the Iron Curtain: The Cold War and East-Central Europe, 1945–1989*, consists of twenty-four essays organized into four chapters. The essays in the first chapter deal with the period of the formation of the Iron Curtain. The opening essay, which was written by Kramer, examines the goals of Moscow's politics and policies with regards to Eastern Europe between 1941 and 1948 and the role of the leading stratum of the emerging communist camp. The chapter also contains an essay on the role of the United States in Eastern Europe between 1943 and 1948. We are then offered comprehensive pictures of the various countries of the emerging "Soviet Bloc," namely Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. The essays by Vít Smetana, László Borhi and Mark Kramer draw on a remarkably impressive array of sources in their analyses of the distinctive features of the time. Kramer stands out even among this superb trio of authors. He is thoroughly familiar with the primary and secondary literature that has been published in the West, but he also has a dazzling knowledge of the Russian primary sources that have been published over the course of the past two decades and the essays and monographs that deal with Soviet–Yugoslav relations. The last two essays in the first chapter analyze the roles of Austria and Germany following the war.

The second chapter contains essays dealing with the "German question" and the politics of the era within the Eastern Bloc following the death of Stalin. One essay examines how London perceived the evolution of relations between Germany and Eastern Europe during the Cold War. Another offers a discussion of the "German question" from the perspective of France. The essay by Csaba Békés, which brings the chapter to a close, attempts to summarize the coordination of the foreign policy conduct of the countries of the Eastern Bloc in the period beginning with the death of Stalin and ending in 1975.

The third chapter examines the roles that were played by Eastern Europe, the United States, and the Soviet Union in bringing the Cold War to an end. This is

perhaps the most exciting part of the book, perhaps simply because the history of the “end game” still raises innumerable questions that will challenge historians. For instance, what role did the people who were affected by the process play in the collapse of the Soviet societies? (This is a question that is the subject of debate in many circles.) In this process of collapse or transformation, which was more significant, the internal changes that took place within the Eastern Bloc, the influence of U.S. foreign policy on the Soviet Union, or the inclination of the Soviet leadership to “yield”? It is clearly not easy to give a simple answer to this question, in part simply because almost all of the terms and concepts that are used to describe the process beg interpretation themselves. For instance, what does it mean to say that the leadership under Gorbachev proved “inclined to yield”? Does it mean that Moscow deliberately presented itself as prepared to “let go of” the countries of the Soviet Bloc? Or does it mean that Russia could do little else, since after a point it would have had to have used violence in order to maintain control over the states of Eastern Europe, and this would have undermined a politics based on attempts to reach a compromise with the West? Or does it mean simply that Gorbachev inaccurately assessed the popularity of the system in the region and concluded that the countries of Eastern Europe would remain within the Soviet Bloc and would preserve their Soviet systems of governance, even if Moscow did not exert any pressure on them or threaten them with intervention? Given that Gorbachev and his immediate circle realized only very late—sometime around late 1988 and early 1989—that they might face problems when it came to the countries of the Bloc, one could conclude that Moscow regarded it as self-evident that these countries would remain committed to socialism.

In his superb essay, Alex Pravda, another one of the contributors to the volume, examines the background of this enduring “optimism.” He discusses, for instance, the talk that took place in Budapest in November 1988 between Károly Grósz, the secretary general of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, and Alexander Nikolaevich Yakovlev, a member of the political delegation of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. This meeting merits discussion in this context, for in all likelihood it was here that Yakovlev was first confronted with the deep divisions within the Hungarian party leadership. Grósz spoke with remarkable openness in the course of their private meeting on the situation in Hungary, which was increasingly dire, as well as on the tensions within the party and the mutual mistrustfulness. Clearly this experience played a role in Yakovlev’s decision, which was made soon after his meeting with Grósz, to ask four institutes in Moscow to prepare analyses of the situations in the countries of the Soviet Bloc.

By February 1989, the Bogomolov Institute, a research institute of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR which dealt with the socialist world order, the International Division of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the KGB submitted their reports. Of these four reports, three were made public some time ago, thus we have a fairly clear idea of what the Soviet leadership thought about Eastern Europe towards the late 1980s. Of the four, the one submitted by the Institute of the Academy was unquestionably the most interesting, and it was the most critical of Soviet policies. At the beginning of the analysis, it contained an emphatic ascertainment according to which “the attempt to build socialism that was done with Soviet participation and Stalinist and neo-Stalinist methods was a dead end.” These were harsh words, but they revealed a great deal about the political mood that had emerged in Moscow in the late 1980s. Specifically, they reveal that by that time a great deal was permissible among the circles at the Academy that would have been unthinkable in earlier times. In consequence, the social sciences gradually ceased to serve the function they had earlier had of legitimizing the regime. In the spirit of this shift, the analysis left no doubt as to the fact that, in the European allies of the Soviet Union, the position of the communist parties, which earlier had maintained control over events, “had weakened significantly.” Their social support was dwindling, and indeed “in some cases one can speak of a complete lack of trust.” The report divided the countries of Eastern Europe into two groups on the basis of the nature of the crisis-processes that were underway in them. In one of these groups (Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia), “the crisis-processes have become open and intense,” while in the other (Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Bulgaria, and Romania), “for the moment the social and political conflicts are taking place in a concealed manner, but at the same time they are clearly discernible.” In spite of the fact that the analysis that was submitted by the Bogomolov Institute dispelled all doubt regarding the crisis in the region, the Soviet leadership continued to conduct affairs as if it were still in control of the situation. The shorthand text of the minutes of the summit that took place in Malta in December 1989 between the American president and the secretary general of the Soviet party demonstrates this (the text was made public a few years ago). The minutes make very clear that Gorbachev was still convinced that unless the United States and its allies forced “Western values” on the states of Eastern Europe, these states would in all likelihood vote in favor of a form of socialism that was simply more humane and more effective than the socialism to which they had become accustomed. According to the minutes of the meeting, Gorbachev did not explicitly say this, but it was nonetheless implied, for instance

by the fact that both in the meetings in private and the plenary sittings the secretary general returned to this question. In the course of the first private meeting he made the following very clear: “I am under the impression that U.S. leaders are now quite actively advancing the idea of conquering the division of Europe on the basis of ‘Western values.’ [...] At one time in the West there was anxiety that the Soviet Union was planning to export revolution. But the aim of exporting ‘Western values’ sounds similar.” It is bit surprising that the essays in this chapter essentially do not deal with the meeting between George Bush and Gorbachev in Malta, in spite of the fact that many people are firmly convinced that it was in the course of this meeting, on December 2 and 3, 1989, that the Soviet secretary general and the American president reached an agreement on the re-division of Europe. Of course, the hesitancy on their part to do this is understandable. The Malta Summit continues to be enshrouded in mystery and uncertainty. We do not even know how many times the two statesmen met in the course of these two days or within what frameworks. It is quite certain, however, that they met at least twice in private and twice for the plenary sittings.

This is all revealed in a collection of documents in Russian that was published in 2010. Numbering roughly 1,000 pages, this collection (*Отвечая на вызов времени. Внешняя политика перестройки: документальные свидетельства*, Москва, 2010) is quite justifiably considered the most important and the most comprehensive publication of primary source material on the foreign policy of the Gorbachev period. It contains the shorthand minutes of all of the four meetings (pp.234–49), though none of the four is actually complete. Nonetheless, they are remarkably edifying. They are significant in part because the meetings did not lead to the drafting of any written agreement. This is one of the reasons why so many hypotheses have been made concerning the Malta Summit. For instance, the notion that there was a top-secret fifth meeting, in addition to the four meetings the minutes of which were kept in writing, has proven quite enduring. During this fifth meeting, Gorbachev allegedly accepted all the demands of the Americans. In other words, he agreed to dissolve the Warsaw Pact, dismantle the socialist systems in the Soviet satellite countries, and allow for the reunification of Germany. There may or may not have been a fifth meeting between the two heads of state. If there was, however, it is hardly likely that Gorbachev would have been prepared to make such concessions. If we read the shorthand minutes of the meetings held at the Malta Summit attentively, they suggest, rather, that Gorbachev simply misunderstood or misperceived the situation in late 1989. He seems to have failed to notice or appreciate the pace at which the events

had accelerated. What he said to Bush on the question of German reunification in the course of their first private meeting is revealing indeed. According to Gorbachev, it was impossible to foresee whether “a unified Germany [would] be neutral, not a member of any political-military alliances, or would it be a member of NATO?” He then added that, in his view, “it is still too early to discuss either of these options. Let the process take its course without artificial acceleration.” All this clearly indicates that Gorbachev continued to believe that European and global politics would be shaped by a kind of compromise between Western and Soviet values. It does not seem to occur to him that perhaps the societies of Eastern Europe would want nothing to do with “Soviet values” if they had a chance to choose freely.

The minutes of the Malta Summit, incomplete though they may be, are nonetheless immensely interesting in part because they clearly show the extent to which the Soviet leadership misunderstood the processes that were underway in Central Europe. And, because the Soviet leaders failed to understand these processes, they never realized that they would need to follow an alternative script. It is surprising that the extremely knowledgeable contributors to this collection of essays do not seem to be familiar with the collection of documents in Russian containing these minutes. They also do not seem to be familiar with the ambitious Russian undertaking that traces the political processes that were underway in the six countries of Central and Southeastern Europe from the beginning of the 1970s up to the collapse of the Soviet-type systems. This two volume, 1,600-page collection of documents (*АНАТОМИЯ КОНФЛИКТОВ. Центральная и Юго-Восточная Европа. Документы и материалы последней трети XX века. т. 1-2. СПб. 2012–2013*) is the only serious scholarly undertaking in Russia that could be compared to this collection of essays. The Russian publication does not attempt to present the history of the last two decades of communist rule in the Soviet Union and Central Europe in essays, but rather seeks “only” to make primary sources available. It achieves this goal on an admirably ambitious scale. However, the failure on the part of the contributors to the collection edited by Kramer and Smetana does not in any way detract from its importance or merits. The international group of authors has enriched the secondary literature on the history of the Cold War with an impressive collection of essays that bears testimony to thorough research and impressive knowledge.

Translated by Thomas Cooper

Zoltán Sz. Bíró

Fabricating Authenticity in Soviet Hungary. The Afterlife of the First Hungarian Soviet Republic in the Age of State Socialism. By Péter Apor. London–New York: Anthem Press, 2014. 228 pp.

At the end of 1956, after the Hungarian revolt, János Kádár's communist leadership had to answer some crucial questions. How could his despised, de facto illegitimate government obtain legitimacy and justify itself in the eyes of the population? How could the regime deprive the 1956 revolutionaries of their identity as freedom fighters and enforce a new negative image of them as murderers, fascists and counterrevolutionaries? The answer lay partly in fabricating a new historical narrative based on the merciless struggle between progressive, revolutionary forces and forces of counterrevolution in twentieth-century Hungary. The source of this battle was found in the obscure and controversial history of the establishing and downfall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. As a result, "within the two and a half years that passed between October 1956 and March 1959, from the Communist perspective the Soviet Republic was transformed from a relatively insignificant event in the party's own history into the most important anniversary of the nation" (p.155).

Péter Apor's book meticulously analyses this process of revision, as well as the creation of a new interpretation of Hungarian history in the twentieth century. One of the primary aims during the early years of Kádár's government was to create direct continuity between the actors of 1919 and 1956 and to construct a narrative of October 1956 as an integral part of the story based on the continuous revolution and counterrevolution, which started with the White Terror that followed the fall of Soviet Republic (p.1). In this narrative, the heritage of the anti-communist persecutions of 1919–1921 played a role as important as the "progressive tradition" of Béla Kun's Soviet Republic. It allowed for the creation of the chronological sequence of violent counterrevolutionary attempts, beginning with the White Terror, then the mass murders committed by Szálasi's fascist Arrow Cross Party in 1944/45, and concluding (allegedly) with the atrocities of the 1956 revolt.

These events were presented as historical manifestations of the rule of one essentially unchanging, continuous destructive force directed against all progressive, antifascist groups, particularly the communists. According to this narrative, it was precisely the communists, the most cruelly persecuted victims of these tragic events in Hungarian history, who got the historical task

of protecting Hungarians against the perils of counterrevolution and, more importantly, against the return of its perpetrators to power.

However, as the title of the book suggests, it does not deal only with the problem of the instrumentalization of the history and the creation of the new post-Stalinist narrative. Apor is much more concerned with the following question: “What makes abstract historical interpretations authentic?” (p.1). He thus analyses the creation of a new post-Stalinist metanarrative, “a body of discourse which presents a simplified form of the ideology and which is the vehicle of communication between the regime and those who live under it,” by projecting “a conception of society that explains both past current reality and future trajectory.”¹ In order to win society’s acceptance of this metanarrative, party historians and ideologists had to offer a virtual reality comprised of myths and supported by carefully chosen symbols. The post-1956 communist regime had to introduce a meaningful symbolic politics expressed through an interconnected network of interrelated objects, texts, persons and events in order to amalgamate the various representations of the Soviet Republic into a system of cross-references, interconnectedness and self-reflection (p.23). Apor concentrates on the concept of authenticity as an essential precondition of the establishment of the success of the new memory constructions. According to Apor, historical representations have their histories, and his book “strives to describe the web that connects creative imagination and the objects of representation, as well as historical traditions mobilized by the modalities and means of representation” (p.21).

The book is divided into the five chapters (plus an introduction and epilogue), covering the changing interpretations of the First Hungarian Soviet Republic between 1949 and 1959. However, at the same time, the chapters constitute case studies dealing with distinct symbols crucial for the legitimization of the post-1956 metanarrative. Each of these five parts offers a different perspective and analyses a special aspect of the state symbolic politics. Apor’s interest includes language, visual media and orchestrated rituals, as well as judicial decisions, places of memory and of course official historiography. The broad scope of primary sources and methodological approaches utilized for their analysis constitutes the most significant positive virtue of the monograph.

The first part, “Prefiguration,” analyses the historical interpretation of the Soviet regime during the Rákosi dictatorship. It shows why the regime could

1 Graeme Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy in Soviet Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3.

not and did not want to appeal to the traditions of the previous Soviet regime or see it as a direct predecessor of postwar communist Hungary. Although the revolutionary year 1919 officially counted as one of the progressive events of the country's history, it was at the same time a controversial topic for the Stalinist historiography of the early 1950s, and the commemorations remained unpopular events for large segments of Hungarian society. For the communist ideologists, it was therefore easier to present the Party as the heir of the 1848/49 revolution than as a descendant of the short-lived experiment, the leaders of which perished during Stalin's purges.

The second chapter, "Resurrection," deals with the creation of the historical connection between the White Terror and 1956 revolt in order to legitimize the measures that were taken by Kádár's government against the allegedly "counterrevolutionary" forces. In the narrative about the continuity of the counterrevolution, the story of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was nearly completely overshadowed by the focus on the White Terror. As Apor demonstrates by citing the example of the so-called White Books about the atrocities of 1956, the abstract connection between 1919 and 1956 was authenticated by the similarity of the two cases, especially by visualizing the use of physical violence against the communists.

The following chapter, entitled "Lives," is devoted to the trials of war criminals. The life stories of the perpetrators of the White Terror were used to strengthen the thesis of permanent counterrevolution in Hungary. In this case, the legal evidence should have authenticated the historical narrative and "populated" the existing abstract constructions. Apor states that, in the end, the Hungarian communists were unable to "demonstrate the direct tangible physical continuity between the actors of 1919 and 1956," and they had to "rely on vague implications of family relationships and blurred conceptions of blood ties," which made the whole narrative "unconvincingly abstract, ineffective and, in fact, ridiculous" (p.86). However, given the general communist obsession with "class origin" and the widespread belief that the negative traits of "bourgeois roots" are more or less hereditary (a notion the influence of which can be observed already at the beginning of the communist movement), "conceptions of blood ties" were probably not so absurd and unbelievable as the author assumes, at least not to the people involved in the construction of the metanarrative.²

2 See the words of the Chekist from 1921: "The first question you must ask is: what class does [the accused] belong to, what education, upbringing, origin, or profession does he have? These questions must

The chapter “Funeral” is devoted to the planning, building and unveiling of the very specific sepulcher, the Pantheon of the Labor Movement. In this monument, the historical continuity of revolutionaries “was crystallized around the bodies of the dead” (p.22). In this case, Apor refers to the medieval notion of the mystical body that played a crucial role in the self-construction of the party. He uses the arguments of E. H. Kantorowicz regarding the medieval royal tombs, and states that “the troubles with the search for communities in the late 1950s [...] resulted in similar ideas in diverse contexts: the idea that the mere gathering of individuals in some mystical way shaped by the power of religion, law or politics could be transformed into a thoroughly distinct quality, a genuine community” (p.137). However, one should also note dead kings and queens were buried in royal tombs in succession, regardless of their deeds. This was a means of reinforcing the legitimacy of the dynasty, and not only the current ruler. The Pantheon of the Labor Movement, which represented a formal celebration of the communist movement in general, in fact gave legitimacy only to the Kádár’s party leadership. The dead who were buried there had to be selected and approved by the current ruler, while his predecessors were explicitly excluded from the list.³

The fifth chapter, “Narration,” is dedicated to the historical scholarship, fiction and documentaries on paper, on film or as exhibitions in museums based on the newly created narrative introduced as part of the 40th anniversary of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. In contrast with the interpretation presented in 1949, ten years later the Soviet Republic was characterized not by its alleged mistakes, but by its glorious achievements. What was even more important, it provided a perfect means of clarifying “basic ideological-political issues related to the interpretation of revolution and counterrevolution, Communist revisionism, nationalism and socialist patriotism without the need to openly address the revolt in 1956” (p.168).

Apor’s work concludes that, in the end, the attempt to fabricate a new authenticity failed. The book offers enough evidence to prove this point. It was nearly impossible to link the abstract ideological statements to comprehensible

determine the accused’s fate.” Quoted in: Edward Kanterian, “Communism: The Shadows Of A Utopia,” *Baltic Worlds* 7, no. 4 (2014): 4–11, 8. See also: Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia,” *The Journal of Modern History* 65, no. 4 (1993): 745–70.

3 This was because the form of succession in the Eastern European communist parties was much closer to the byzantine (or Russian czarist) tradition of conquering the throne by defeating the predecessor than it was to the hereditary tradition of the western kingdoms.

accounts because the implied story was full of blanks, contradictions and silences, while the First Hungarian Soviet Republic remained largely lacking in credibility and appeal. This failure then resulted in the mutually accepted politics of “deliberate amnesia.” As a consequence of an unspoken compromise between the communist leadership and Hungarian society, mention simply ceased to be made of the 1956 revolt. The counterrevolutionary narrative was formally respected, but in reality lost its plausibility. But can be such a situation really defined as failure? In the light of Havel’s “The Power of the Powerless,” one may well ask, is it really necessary for people to believe as long as they act as if they believe? Does it matter whether there was any genuine widespread conviction, or is it sufficient for the rituals to be held and for the principles of the metanarrative to be observed?⁴ However, Apor makes no such inquires.

The book lacks comparative context, even if the author briefly refers to the situation in the other communist countries in the introduction. It is perhaps unfair to make this demand, since this book was not meant to be a comparative study. However, occasional reference to the international context would help the reader better understand which processes were specific to the Hungarian case and which were generic traits present elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc. The post-1968 developments in Czechoslovakia in particular would have provided ideal material for occasional comparisons.

The monograph mentions (albeit only as a side note) that the history of the First Soviet Republic had a clear nationalist undertone in the sense of a patriotic war against newly established Hungarian neighbors (p.201). This is an interesting point which would have merited further reflection and development. The communist regimes everywhere routinely relied on nationalist (patriotic) argumentation to make their narratives more acceptable.⁵ An analysis of this approach in the case of the First Hungarian Soviet Republic would bring one more interesting aspect to the problem of creating the post-1956 metanarrative.

I would venture one more minor critical remark concerning the frequent references to the early Christian and medieval politics of symbols and rituals.

4 Gill, *Symbols*, 273. See also: Michal Pullmann, “Konec experimentu.” *Přestavba a pád komunismu v Československu* [End of an Experiment. Rebuilding and Fall of Communism in Czechoslovakia] (Prague: Scriptorium, 2011).

5 See: Frank Hadler, “Drachen und Drachentöter. Das Problem der nationalgeschichtlichen Fixierung in den Historiographien Ostmitteleuropas nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in *Die Nation schreiben. Geschichtswissenschaft im internationalen Vergleich*, ed. Christoph Conrad and Sebastian Conrad (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 137–64.

Apor does not always adequately explain the relevance of such comparisons with communist symbolic politics.

However, these few objections notwithstanding, Apor's book offers a fascinating, sophisticated and multifaceted analysis of the communist memory politics and politics of history in a communist regime. The scope and number of primary and secondary sources is truly admirable. It clearly demonstrates profound research and is ample testimony to the erudition of the author. In this sense, Apor's book is a valuable contribution to our understanding of communist power from the perspective of symbolic politics. It offers an admirable example of how to deconstruct the processes of fabricating history in the socialist dictatorships. As such, it is an important work on the history of communist regimes in the Central and Eastern Europe.

Adam Hudek

The Collectivization of Agriculture in Communist Eastern Europe. Comparison and Entanglements. Edited by Constantin Iordachi and Arnd Bauerkämper. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014. 557 pp.

This collection of studies is the first attempt to discuss collectivization in the former socialist countries of Europe in a single publication. The time frame applied throughout the volume is not strict, but generally does not go beyond 1965. The volume brings together some of the most established specialists of the Eastern Bloc who are also active in the international academia.¹ According to the introduction, the book limits itself to a discussion of collectivization within the context of Sovietization. It seeks to go beyond the conception of Soviet power and state socialism as a one-way violent intrusion into normalcy. Moreover, one of the editors objectives was to establish a timeline. The collection of studies achieves this by adopting a methodology that addresses the criticism that has been raised regarding comparative methods by those that practice and theorize transnational history without, however, rejecting this criticism altogether.

The book is divided into four main sections. When deciding on the way to arrange the fifteen papers, the editors opted for a mix between geographical and methodological logic. The first section deals with the Soviet Union, including republics that came under Soviet domination during World War II. The second section examines the countries that are regarded by the editors as part of Central Europe. The logic of this division is not self-evident. The case of Hungary represents the complexity of the choices that one has to make if one seeks to group a country in one of the areas under consideration in the book. Such decisions ultimately rest on a distinction between countries (and cultures) that allegedly do or do not have enough in common with a group of other countries (and cultures) to be considered “in.” In other words, these decisions represent definitions of the “other.” “German historical scholarship has no issue with the classification of Hungary as a country of Southeastern Europe.”² Hungarian

1 Namely, Lynne Viola, Nigel Swain, Melissa K. Bokovoy or Constantin Iordachi, professors working at the national level who have created schools, namely, Arnd Bauerkämper, Michail Gruev, József Ö. Kovács, Darius Jarosz and Jan Rychlik, and a younger generation of experts working in the region. In random order, they are Zsuzsanna Varga, David Feest, Dorin Dobrinu, and Jens Schöne. Örjan Sjöberg and Gregory Witkowski join this group as country specialists from Swedish and American academic circles respectively.

2 See e.g. Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy 1933–1939: The Road to World War II* (New York: Enigma, 2005).

public opinion, in contrast, resents the idea of being put together with countries of the Balkans, such as Romania and Bulgaria. However, if one studies the entangled history,³ the decision to group Romania and Hungary together may seem reasonable. To make things even more complicated, in the specific case of collectivization interaction between Bulgaria and Hungary is of importance in terms of policy design and outcome due to the expert group that was dispatched by the Hungarian leadership to Bulgaria with the explicit goal of making recommendations based on experience in the field. At any rate, Iordachi and Bauerkämper decided to group the GDR, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary under the heading “Central Europe” and Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania as “Southeastern Europe.” The fourth section of the book includes two papers that provide novel interpretative frameworks for the study of individual cases and two papers that were written with the goal of juxtaposing individual cases. Since methodologically these papers are the more adventurous of the fifteen and in this respect have a great deal in common with the introduction, they might have served the volume better had they been the opening essays.

The introduction, which is the joint effort of Iordachi and Bauerkämper, argues that there is a way to develop a methodology that uses both comparative methods and the idea of entanglement, and in fact the theme of collectivization in the Soviet sphere requires this. Following up on this thesis, in his contribution Arnd Bauerkämper argues that the manner in which Soviet collectivization was experienced and the manner in which the Third Reich was remembered influenced attitudes towards collectivization in the GDR, so they had a bearing on modes and practices of resistance against collectivization. In other words, the field of memory studies is not only relevant to the interpretation of collectivization because oral history interviews are important sources, but also because of the ways in which popular historical knowledge was changing as a result of interaction between personal memory, stories told by those who claimed to be witnesses, and propaganda. Zsuzsanna Varga also keeps the overall objective in mind when she applies a concept that political science has developed in recent decades: policy learning. She argues that collectivized agriculture became viable in Hungary because the government was capable of learning from experiences outside of Hungary and from local opposition and claims. Gregory R. Witkowski makes an effort to emphasize the aspects of collectivization that made its negotiated

3 For the term “entangled history” see Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity,” *History and Theory* 45 (2006): 30–50.

nature visible. He explicitly puts himself among revisionist historians who do not accept totalitarianism as a valid interpretative framework and emphasize the possibility of historical agency. It must be taken into account that with regards to Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, his archival material mostly comes from the US State Department, thus, events narrated were filtered through multiple lenses and translations. Moreover, authors of the reports cited were in all likelihood delighted when they came across anything that could be understood as a sign of popular resistance. In the closing essay of section IV and of the volume, Nigel Swain hits a reflective tone. He is critical of his own work published in the 1980s,⁴ in which he characterizes Hungary as a unique example within the Soviet zone in terms of deviation from the ideal type. He emphasizes that the relationship between ideal type and practice was a complex one in each country, despite the textual form of the ideal type, i.e. Stalin's Model Charter. Relying on the wealth of material and information with which contributors provided him, he points out six areas in which comparison and a study of entanglements look feasible. These are: the policy context of land reform; available resources; the concept and figure of the *kulak*; campaigning techniques; and peasant responses. The studies that make up the volume are efficient and effective in addressing each of these, with the exception of the failure to provide a clear picture of the post-war policy context in terms of the availability of food and the sustainability of pre-war structures.

The Country level case studies that make up the first three sections do not follow a uniform structure or methodology, but they are more than a series of disconnected essays with similar titles. On the one hand, each of the papers demonstrates persuasively that measures and waves to collectivize derived from decisions taken or assumed to be taken in Moscow. Contributors were unable to track this process in the documents available to them, but the similarities of the timelines serve as indirect evidence. On the other hand, the papers are written from a perspective from which the local context of violence, coercion, and contest for victory, language and meaning is visible. They attempt to answer questions about the rhythm and internal logic of collectivization, as well as the relationship between the dynamics of internal party struggle and agricultural policy. They all emphasize that post-war rural societies faced a triple burden: famine following the war and the occupation, compulsory deliveries in order to

4 Nigel Swain, *Collective Farms which Work?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

avoid famine, and collectivization, which disrupted social and economic frames and was coupled with punitive measures.

There are two cases in which collectivization did not become a major constituent of state socialism. In the case of Yugoslavia, Melissa Bokovoy does not explain away the reversal by dwelling on the Soviet-Yugoslav relationship. Instead, she writes of widespread and violent resistance that bore the potential of rekindling the culture of violence that had emerged during World War II and reviving or reinvigorating ethnic divisions, thus threatening Tito's plans for the regime. Turning to Bokovoy's assumption about the weight that Soviet relations carried in policy outcomes, one may hypothesize that Soviet leadership appreciated both the strategic importance of Poland and the extent to which the population internalized its hostility towards the Soviet Union and did not regard it as possible or prudent to indulge in any behavior that might provoke a wrathful response. In his paper, Dariusz Jarosz avoids giving a comprehensive argument about why Soviet leaders accepted that Poland definitively gave up on full scale collectivization. He emphasizes the importance and extent of the territorial changes that reshaped Poland in 1945. He argues that the cleavage between hereditary farmers and newcomers (refugees) was the most important factor in explaining why the northwestern areas were the only ones in which collectivization took place on any significant scale. However, one may argue that the so called 'Type 1b collective can hardly be regarded as a collective at all.⁵ The narrative that Iordachi and Dobrinicu establish for the case of Romania shows that internal struggle among communist leaders, violence and violent resistance do not suffice to explain outcomes in the case of collectivization. Romania experienced instances of open, if localized, revolt, as well as the longest-lasting collectivization efforts and cultural struggle concerning notions of desirable social stratification, yet the regime implemented collectivization and the transformation of rural society, as a result which the Socialist Republic was indeed born. The transformation did not bring about improvement in material conditions. On the contrary, by the 1980s Romania was one of the countries where food shortages were persistent, both in rural and urban areas.

József Ö. Kovács's study stands out, as it outlines a broader social history of the functioning of the collectivized rural world. In addition to explaining

5 Miklós Mitrovits, "A lengyel kollektivizálási kísérlet sikertelensége: okok és következmények" [Failure of the Attempt to Collectivize in Poland], in *Állami erőszak és kollektivizálás a kommunista diktatúrában* [State Violence and Collectivization in the Communist Dictatorship], ed. Sándor Horváth and József Ö. Kovács [(Budapest: MTA BTK ITI, 2015), 335–48, 337.

different phases, stressing (like most of the studies in the volume) that post-war land distribution measures were irrational in economic terms, and recounting how discriminative taxation, compulsory requisition and imprisonment were linked and served as tools with which to force people and families into cooperatives, he also includes age composition and various indices of quality of life to show the depth of the changes that occurred as a consequence of collectivization. He argues that as a result of the changes arising from collectivization, rural society experienced structural exclusion in terms of social and material capital.

Taken together, these papers address questions pertaining to the location of power and violence in a region that remained peripheral on a global scale in the time frame under consideration. If one goes beyond the notion that the communist regimes were the outcome of the presence of armies and illegal moves to take power, one starts to raise questions about what was particular and typical about the ways in which power was used and how it was related to various imageries of modernity at various levels of politics and local communities in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. Moreover, have specific entanglements produced a specific political anthropology or responses to the presence of power? The questions of collectivization provide fertile ground for answers to such questions, since discussion of the events has to involve a narrative about economic relations and reform initiatives before 1945, long-term changes, the social imaginary within and about peasant society, the role of violence in post-war conditions, and the changing scope of state administration.

Of the authors, Lynne Viola is perhaps the most effective in explaining how collectivization was fundamental for state building in the Soviet Union. She goes so far as to state that this was indeed the meaning of all of the violence and change, and economic, political or class aspects were secondary. David Feast's paper is particularly interesting from this perspective, since the focal points of his inquiry, the Baltic countries, were at the frontier of the Soviet Union during and immediately after World War II. It was a region in which, on the one hand, state building was a necessity from the regime's point of view, but it also fell in the zone where tactics of a popular front government had been used in 1944–47. On the other hand, the frontier nature of these areas meant that population movements carried information and knowledge across political borders. As in the case of policy implementation and the politics of history, here too entanglements turn direct and emerge as one of the defining features of the former Eastern Bloc. With regards to junctures of modernity and discourse as a factor in modifying practices of repression and social and political structures,

the case studies on Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria are particularly revealing. Both countries had some tradition of collective farming and pre-war land reform. However, while Czechoslovakia was one of the most agriculturally developed countries of the region, Bulgarian farmers had extremely scanty resources. Gruev argues that collectivization in Bulgaria not only involved state violence in the form of absurd and discriminatory taxation that made life impossible and mass imprisonment and execution following uprisings and open resistance, but also triggered an avalanche of marginalization in localities that squeezed peasants to such an extent that rural culture and society disappeared within three decades. Jan Rychlík argues that due to the substantial differences that remained between Czechoslovak forms of collective farms and Soviet kolkhozes, widespread resistance never reached the level of uprising and indeed by the 1970s had won a large measure of acceptance. He also stresses the importance of the implications of the changes in ownership patterns in areas where a significant proportion of the population was German speaking.

In summary, the collection of studies fulfills the objectives stated in the introduction. They show how efficient the comparative method and *histoire croisée* are in narrating collectivization as a major political venture and cause of trauma in the former Soviet bloc. They also reach out to the local level. However, it is worth reflecting on what other agendas are possible in the field.

The papers in the volume do not address the gender dimension systematically. Such a move might have shown contours of the region both vis-a-vis other peripheries (such as post-colonial areas and the so-called “West”). Viola has done extensive research on resistance among women, but her excellent essay in the volume does not keep gender at the center of her argument. Throughout the studies, we find cases in which women actively resist and cases in which an administration arrests women as a tactical move to weaken households in emotional and economic terms. We also see how male heads of household would cite the stubbornness of the women in their lives as an explanation for not joining the party. However, the inclusion of standpoint theory as a methodological approach would have enabled a richer interpretation of work, labor, food and welfare and would have shed some light on the relationships between these aspects and the location of power during collectivization.⁶ József

6 Martha Lampland emphasizes that the drive to bring women into wage labor was fundamental for the idea of the socialist body politic and for socialist modernity, including in the rural zone. See “Unthinkable Subjects: Women and Labor in Socialist Hungary,” *East European Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1990) and Martha Lampland, *The Object of Labor: Commodification in Socialist Hungary* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995).

Ö. Kovács's broader social history, which considers gender as one of the axes, points in this direction.

Considering that Constantin Iordachi has recently edited a volume concerned with the historical and human geography of the Danube Delta, it is surprising that none of the studies consider collectivization from an environmental history perspective.⁷ The ecological impact of policies of Sovietization and related changes of the landscape are at least as under researched as collectivization. However, related monographs, such as the work of Arvid Nelson and that of David Blackburn dealing with the GDR and Germany as a whole respectively indicate how questions of ecological sustainability and practices of power related to land can be discussed in a common framework.⁸

The volume is Eurocentric to the extent that other areas of the world are hardly mentioned. Arguably, it ends up downplaying the importance of the Cold War. Varga mentions Chinese models and campaigns at the end of 1950s, but otherwise non-European experiences are confined to a few footnotes, in spite of the fact that Soviet–Chinese rivalry was one of the key aspects of the era in the years when the last vehement rounds of collectivization were launched in Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania and the GDR. There is no reference to Cuba, North Korea or Southeast Asian communist regimes, nor is there any discussion of how agriculture figured in Soviet Cold War strategies in North Africa and Western Asia. The question of institutionalized expertise and scientific knowledge does not arise simply because of the absence from the volume of ecological and global concerns.

The reader struggles to find a comprehensive terminology of collectivization and business/financial practices of collectivized farms. As the contributors to a collection of studies designed to practice comparative methods and study entanglements, the editors and contributors had to face the task of translating terminology. This question was especially salient in the case of defining types of collectives and tackling the contemporary discourse on “kulaks.” Regarding types, they opted to translate all terms into English, and this resulted in a mix of terms that at times lacks clarity. This is particularly disturbing in the case of Poland, where we do not actually see what Type 1b meant in practice or how

7 Constantin Iordachi and Kristof Van Assche, eds., *The Bio-politics of the Danube Delta. Nature, History and Policies* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015).

8 Arvid Nelson, *Cold War Ecology. Forests, Farms and People in the East German Landscape 1945–1989* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); David Blackburn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water and the Making of Modern German Landscape* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

distant it was from “real collectives” classed as Type 2 or Type 3. While making an effort to create a political history of collectivization as a narrative in which peasant resistance plays a central part, the authors are insensitive to the small-scale economic history of the collective farms.

Notwithstanding the number of options left unaddressed, as the first comprehensive volume adopting a regional perspective, the book achieves much. It provides comparable country-specific timelines and highlights key aspects of the political anthropology of collectivization (such as resistance, responses to the notion of the “kulak,” and differentiation between contexts of central and local party administration). It brings together experts from various academic and geographic background and demonstrates clearly that collectivization is one of the most important fields in the study of the regimes under Soviet domination.

Róbert Balogh

Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania's Secret Police. By Katherine Verdery. Budapest: CEU Press, 2014. 294 pp.

Katherine Verdery's ethnographic study of the file containing 2,780 pages kept by the Romanian Secret Police (the *Securitate*) on her activities in Romania between 1973 and 1989 is a thought-provoking analysis of this organization's approach. The American author is Julien J. Studley Faculty Scholar and Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Verdery, who has a broad understanding and personal experience of Romanian society, has authored several important volumes. Her book entitled *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (1991) was a groundbreaking analysis of the ways in which nationalism was used in the cultural sphere and of the strategies adopted by artists who were competing for limited resources and thus willingly adapted to the trends that were imposed from above.

In her analysis of her own files, Verdery makes a compelling argument that “the Communist Party tried to create a new kind of family, a political one encompassing the whole society,” and “[t]he Securitate's job was to implement this vision” (p.205). From the perspective of the scholarship on the role of the Securitate, Verdery's analysis is interesting because it affords us access to a specific case, that of the author, which is also a scholar. Thus she treats her experience like a case study and applies a scientific approach to it, which is a rarity in the discussions of these kinds of files, discussions which are usually of interest only to those directly involved. Verdery reminds us of how “the Securitate's fundamental working assumption was that *people are not who they seem*; its job [...] was to find out *who people really were*” (p.xiv).

In Romania, gaining access to the files of the former secret police, the Securitate, was not a simple task, and it only began to become easier after 2005, when Traian Băseșcu, who served as president for a decade (2004–14), allowed the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS, established in 2000) to make more extensive use of the resources of the former surveillance institution. Katherine Verdery underlines the triple function given to archives of the secret police after 1989: political, research and personal. She also examines how they “involved potential revisions of history in the service of a transformed present” (xi-xii), as well as the revision of the truths they really encompass. In recent years, Romanian society and politics have been marked by

an instrumental use of the archives of the Securitate files, and the truth-value of these files has only rarely been questioned. For example, the latest troubling discovery at the beginning of 2015 was that Dinu Zamfirescu, honorary director of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile (IICCMER) and a member of the directive college of CNSAS, had himself given information to the Securitate before leaving the country in the 1970s. He has been one of the leaders of the emigration, and he founded the Institute for the Memory of the Romanian Exile, which merged with the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes (IICCR) to become the IICCMER. Zamfirescu declared he feels no pressure to resign from the CNSAS or the IICCMER, as he was himself questioned by the Securitate and did not inform, although documents indicate that this is not the case. The study that Verdery has done of her own file advances some important issues and addresses significant questions related to the meaning of the work that was done by the Securitate.

The Introduction to the volume first presents Verdery's approach to the study of the Securitate files. In the second part, the author asks as a subtitle "What Was the Securitate?" She offers a history of the institution since 1948. Her goal is to study the files themselves and to see what they can tell us about the socialist system that we didn't already know (p.4). By adopting an ethnographic approach, she intends to shed light on the way her methods and those of the Securitate bear affinities. In other words, she considers how both an ethnographer and a secret police examine "everyday behaviors and interpret what they found" (p.7). The historical approach of the Securitate underlines the organization's importance as one of the largest intelligence services in the Eastern bloc in proportion to the population (p.9). The ascent of Ceaușescu to power is also acknowledged, and Verdery emphasizes how the role of the Securitate was transformed by this change, "from 'destroying the class enemy' to 'preventing infractions against state security' and 'defending fundamental national values'" (p.16). Verdery makes the very important observation that, in the last period of the socialist system, "the Securitate increasingly became a pedagogical or didactic rather than a punitive institution" (p.17). In fact, the Securitate sought to influence a large part of the population through indirect means, using more refined types of surveillance, instead of relying on the kinds of direct repressive measures that had been in pervasive use before.

The first chapter, "An archive and its fictions," describes first the resources the CNSAS has at its disposal, namely "as of 2013 (...) 1,800,000 paper files," which

would stretch twenty-four kilometers (pp.32–33). Verdery stresses an important detail. Many of the documents that were created or kept by the Securitate were destroyed, either accidentally or intentionally (p.33). The chapter contains a description of the work that was performed by the agents in the construction of a file. Verdery shares an impression I also had as a researcher at the CNSAS, namely the “extraordinary expenditure of time, money, and effort” (p.41) put into the Securitate’s activities. Moreover, “the organization of a surveillance file is not chronological but activity-based” (p.52). At the same time, Verdery’s approach is ethnographic and extends beyond the file itself. She quotes Cristina Vătulescu’s conclusion, according to which “[w]hile a personal file can mislead about the particulars of a victim’s fate, its close reading can be abundantly revealing about what the secret police understood by evidence, record, writing, human nature, and criminality” (p.40). Verdery considers that “the truth-value of what is in the file may not be the most interesting question we can entertain about it,” nor is the question of “whether [the] files tell ‘what really happened’” the most significant aspect. Rather, she is interested in “the agency of the file: what social effects does it have? What [...] does it fashion” (pp.62, 63). These questions are in the forefront of the distinct approach Verdery proposes in her study of the files, far more so than the one that dominates public discourse in Romania today, where “files can make ‘informers’ out of people who staunchly deny that they ever held this role” (p.66). Indeed, in this public discourse the files have been transformed into sources for political or moral capital because “they are seen as repositories of truth” (p.72). Verdery throws into question the truth-value with which the files have been invested, both by considering the ways in which the files were constructed by the agents and addressing the motives of the informers, “who reported under duress, out of malice, or inaccurately,” and the case officers (the officers responsible for the informers), who “made tendentious interpretations that suited their ends.” Equally important in this regard is the fact that the “destruction of files left enormous lacunae in the corpus; agents opened files on people even when their ‘recruits’ refused to cooperate; the demands of the planned economy set performance targets that compelled sloppy work; competition among officers and branches of the secret service aggravated that tendency and so forth” (pp.72–73).

In the second chapter, “The Secrets of the Secret Police,” Verdery embarks on a comparison of the Securitate with secret societies of New Guinea and Africa, taking some ideas from the anthropological literature on secrecy with the goal of “disrupt[ing] our accustomed way of thinking about it” (p.82). The

essential point, one worth repeating, is that “[f]rom the anthropology of secrecy we learn that what counts is not the content of a secret but the structure it is embedded in” (p.112). Verdery underlines the oppositions between the different institutions of the communist regime, the party and the secret police and the distinct types of secrets they handled. The author emphasizes the paradoxical condition of the Securitate and asks, “[h]ow are we to put these two things together: the sometimes chaotic view from inside the organization and the fearful view from the populace,” two groups that were always separated by secrecy (p.80). The analysis continues with a detailed examination of the content of secrets that were kept by the Securitate and Verdery’s emphasis on the nature of the organization as a “SECRET police” and not a “secret POLICE,” which was mainly preoccupied with the task of unmasking secrets (p.85). The parallel with the secret societies in Africa and New Guinea is based on an “‘Ur-secret’ representing what the community most fears” (p.88), which, in the case of communist regimes, was the “enemy within” (p.89). Examining secrecy as a social-structural and cultural system, Verdery analyzes how this functioned inside the Securitate. The initiation practices for officers and informers had in common “the signature acts of secret societies: a loyalty oath and one or more new names,” which were essential for “the fabrication of an alternative reality” (p.99).

Drawing on Gilbert Herdt’s “theory of secrecy based on an analysis of male secret societies” in the United States “as a response to major social transformations in gender and class relations” (p.107), Verdery discusses the Securitate as a secret society that had to compete with others at the time (p.110). Summarizing what the parallel with secret societies brought to the understanding of the Securitate, Verdery recalls how she showed that “secrecy in the form of conspirativity promoted inequality in the organization,” as well as how the ritual character of recruitment helped create “an exciting parallel world” (p.115). Finally, she showed how the Securitate competed with other similar organizations in a context that was favorable to the flourishing of such societies (p.115). In the subchapter of chapter 2, “The lives of agents,” Verdery sheds some light on the officers of the Securitate. Interestingly, the Securitate had only limited resources compared to other similar organizations in Eastern Europe. While it numbered only 39,000 officers, compared to the 93,000 members of the Stasi in the German Democratic Republic (p.129), the Securitate seemed omnipresent to the citizenry of Romania. As Verdery writes, “[n]o one was certain who the officers were, who was informing, how much information was being obtained,

or how it would be used” (p.150). Verdery underlines at the same time how “the ‘mask’ of secrecy – its state effect” was able to conceal from most Romanians the fact that the Romanian Party-state “was not a coherent, unified actor”, and “the field of power at the center was highly fragmented among disparate competing groups” (p.149).

The third chapter, “Knowledge Practices and the Social Relations of Surveillance,” addresses the situation of the 486,000 informers who helped the 39,000 officers of the Securitate. Verdery discusses the “practices whereby the Securitate sought to create knowledge about reality, uncovering the secrets that might prove dangerous to the government” (p.158). She argues that “their most important methods for producing knowledge were at the same time socially transformative, aiming to produce a new social landscape, with implications for creating the ‘new socialist person’ and a new society” (p.159). Verdery notes that “many people (...) became informers because they were deeply embedded in social ties” (p.176). This is important because the strategy of the Securitate developed into an approach that sought to influence larger social groups and thus targeted those who had strong social relations. At the same time, Verdery’s analysis provides important details on the different aspects of collaboration and the refusal to collaborate, as well as the termination of collaboration with the Securitate. “I have been showing that the regime was not simply disintegrating social relations but *striving to reforge them*, thereby altering the kinds of human beings they enmeshed. *Securisti* intended to create new contacts for people while disrupting older ones: their aim was not just to obtain knowledge but to transform the conditions under which information would be produced (...) they sought to induce networks around their targets” (p.201). She argues that “personalistic ties were the currency of social life in socialism” (p.188). Thus, “it was networks, not individuals, that the Securitate pursued” (p.189). Finally, the author acknowledges how her analysis aims to critique lustration in transitional justice, which, “targets not categories (p.all forms of collaboration), but individual persons who collaborated” (p.210). As she observes, “if collaboration was quintessentially a networked phenomenon, not an individual one [...], such interventions appear misguided” (pp.210–11). Finally, the author insists on the problematic nature of the use, in the service of truth during democratization, of the files produced by the Securitate (p.211).

In her “Conclusions,” subtitled “The Radiant Future?”, Verdery discusses the relevance of the surveillance conducted by the Securitate for today’s world, especially in the case of the United States. She addresses the issue of voluntary

online surveillance on social networks such as Facebook, but also the more problematic surveillance deployed by the United States in the aftermath of September 11 by the National Security Agency.

The volume authored by Katherine Verdery, *Secrets and Truths*, is a good overview of the approaches used by the secret police in Romania in which the author uses her own files, but also information from other files either directly or in a published form, as well as recent scholarship on secret police forces in Eastern Europe. The book is well organized in three distinct chapters that consider the truths encompassed in the secret archives, the type of work undertaken by the secret agents, and, finally, the ways in which informers were manipulated by the Securitate in the creation of new ties within society. The volume provides detailed information on the Securitate and its activities that helps further a deconstruction of many of the myths on its approach.

The author compares her ethnographic method to that of the Securitate operations, and at the same she time compares the Securitate to secret (male) societies. While the former is useful in her analysis of the secret police in Romania because it shows the type of knowledge and practices they used, the latter is less immediately pertinent, except perhaps to the anthropological study of secrecy practices.

Secrets and Truths provides an understanding of the Securitate that does not take it as a provider of truth, but rather shows the multiplicity of aspects included in the practices of this institution. Verdery's ultimate purpose is to criticize the ways in which the archives have been used since the transition to democracy as a source of truth in a manner that continues to follow the logic of the Securitate itself.

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