BOOK REVIEWS

Südosteuropa: Gesellschaft, Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur. Ein Handbuch. Ed. Magarditsch Hatschikjan and Stefan Troebst. Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1999. xvii, 570 pp. Appendix. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Tables. Maps. Hard bound.

The Germans have excelled in the Handbuch genre, a category that does not easily translate into handbook but corresponds more to the academic companion or guide. Since the 1970s, the publisher Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht in Göttingen has published an entire series of volumes on southeastern Europe with Klaus-Detlev Grothusen as the general editor: Südosteuropa-Handbuch. Vol. 1, Jugoslawien (1975), Vol. 2, Rumänien (1977), Vol. 3, Griechenland (1980), Vol. 4, Türkei (1985), Vol. 5, Ungarn (1987), Vol. 6, Bulgarien (1990), Vol. 7, Albanien (1993), Vol. 8, Zypern (1998). The present volume treats the region as a whole, by privileging a structural approach and emphasizing the final decade of the past century.

Although written by an international team, the work represents mostly German-language scholarship. One would have wished, therefore, to read something in the introduction about the institutional setting as well as the main characteristics of Südostforschung. Although this does not detract from the general informative value of the volume, it is a missed opportunity to elevate the work to a more sophisticated methodological level where it would be able to reflect not only on the object of study but on its own epistemological exercise. The bibliography, which is one of the valuable features of this volume, is wisely titled "selected," but the criteria for the selection are unclear. It comprises mostly German and English titles with a sprinkling of French, and the classification is useful. Scholarly works, however, coexist with sometimes questionable journalistic ones, and brief annotations or an explanatory note at the outset would have been most helpful.

This work bears all the blessings and curses of any collective undertaking. The introduction by Magarditsch Hatschikjan is an interpretive essay on the notion of "Europe" and the precarious place of "Southeastern Europe." It is one of the more thoughtful pieces in this collection with, at moments, interesting historiographical insights. Its hesitancy, however, to take a clear epistemological and political stand and to situate the volume within a general historiographic analysis serves, in the end, to illustrate the state and practice of the historical profession in Germany, with its internal hierarchies. The same hesitancy applies to the general editing of the volume; the separate contributions have not been "adjusted" to a common viewpoint or shared tenor, thus running the risk of numerous overlaps. But this has its trade-offs. Precisely because the reader can see the authors' distinct physiognomies, this work is closer to a collected volume of articles than to a mere handbook.

The different and often opposing authorial approaches are nowhere as obvious as in the first part with its longue durée engagement with the structural framework and the historical legacy. Stefan Troebst's sweeping overview of the political development of the region in the modern era is excellent and balanced and should serve as a model for similar surveys. It reaches a felicitous proportion of factological narrative and analysis. Even the occasional surprising lapse—such as attributing lagging democratization to alleged incompatibilities with "western" ways of thinking, a charge not that long ago leveled at Germans themselves—does not detract from the high quality of this chapter. Similarly, Karl Kaser's treatment of space and settlements introduces a historical anthropological perspective, a refreshing exception from the otherwise conventional approach that dominates the rest of the contributions. Edgar Hôsch's essay on cultures and state formation is in a way an abstract of his comprehensive history of the Balkans (Geschichte der Balkanländer: Von der Frühzeit bis zur Gegenwart, 1995). It works within the familiar framework of dichotomous oppositions: western versus Byzantine, European versus Oriental, traditional versus modern, civilized versus barbarian, local/native versus outside/foreign. While the author is clearly overwhelmed by the inextricable complexities of the region, the reader is overwhelmed by statements like the one asserting that one of the deep continuities in the consciousness of Balkan inhabitants is their sense of having been defenders of the European community of peoples from the time of the ancient Persian wars to the Cold War.
The chapter on modernization (Roumen Daskalov and Holm Sundhaussen) which opens part 2, "People and Societies," is predicated on the problematic opposition of two models, the western and the Byzantine, but provides an informed and professional introduction to the "catching-up" policies of the Balkans during the last two centuries. The chapters on population movement and social structure (Sundhaussen), churches and religious communities (Thomas Bremer), and minorities and national policies (Gerhard Seewann) come closer to the compendium format. The same is true of parts 3 and 4—"States and Politics" and "The Economy"—with their coverage of the last decade. Despite some overlap, they offer informative synthetic overviews of the political systems (Richard Crampston), the constitutions (Herbert Küpper), state-building and disintegration (Wolfgang Hüpken), an especially clear-sighted essay on foreign and defense policies (Marie-Janine Calic), richly researched coverage of the institutional and structural aspects of the economic transition (Marvin Jackson), new economic structures (Bruno Schönfelder), reform policies (Franz-Lothar Altmann), and foreign trade (Vladimir Gligorov). The excellent statistical addendum prepared by Stephan Stuch with detailed comparative demographic and economic data is an important reference tool illustrating these parts of the volume.

The four contributions of the final part, "Culture," are more uneven than any of the preceding. At one end is Klaus Steinke’s carefully researched and theorized chapter on language and language policies, which demonstrates how academic knowledge is both inspired by and instrumentalized for political purposes. At the other end is Reinhard Lauer’s chapter on literatures, which is, at best, an essay on Yugoslav literature with a stress on Ivo Andrić and Miroslav Krleža. Greek, Romanian, and Albanian literatures do not exist at all, and as someone who has gone through the Bulgarian educational system, I was surprised to learn that the symbolist poets Peyu Vavorov and Teodor Traynov, the first of whom we had to recite by heart, must now be reintegrated or newly discovered. It is, of course, a convenient cliché to claim that for forty years this literature has been in the grips of literary doctrinaires, if one has not heard of Valeri Petrov, Damyan Damyanov, Radoi Ralin, Yordan Radichkov, Nikolai Khaitov, Emiliyan Stanev, Dimitir Dimov, Stefan Tsanev, to mention but a few of the old guard, without even beginning to enumerate new voices. The two chapters on education (Wolfgang Mitter), and the media (Rossen Milev) provide some useful information, although their analysis is occasionally naive.

There are a number of the unavoidable factological errors that characterize a work of such scope: the Latin/Greek linguistic division along the Haemus line long predated the missionary activities of Rome and Constantinople; Armenians had already settled in the Balkans by the Byzantine period; the estimate of over 10 million Muslims killed or displaced sounds unrealistic; the schism in the Bulgarian Orthodox church has not been resolved to this day; many of the Turks who left Bulgaria in the summer of 1989 returned before, not after, the fall of the communist regime. Nonetheless, for all its unevenness, quite understandable in a collective work, this volume fulfills its publisher’s ambition: to provide the "background knowledge to the Balkan crisis." In a revised version, it may also be useful and welcome in English.

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East Central Europe in the Modern World: The Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Postcommunism. By Andrew C. Janos. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000. xviii, 488 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. Maps. $65.00, hard bound.

Andrew Janos, ever the astute observer of Europe’s eastern flank, has done us all a great service by writing a thorough, highly readable, and yet provocative history of the political and economic evolution of east central Europe over the past two hundred years. The book is divided into three parts: the precommunist period (which begins, roughly, in the Middle Ages, but which concentrates most heavily on the nineteenth century through the end of the interwar years), the communist era, and the first decade of postcommunism. The