

Hayoz, Nicolas, Leszek Jesień and Daniela Koleva (eds.). *20 Years after the Collapse of Communism. Expectations, Achievements and Disillusions of 1989 (Interdisciplinary Studies on Central and Eastern Europe, vol. 9)*. Bern: Peter Lang. 681 pp. Pb.: €50.90. ISBN: 9783034305389.

The period of twenty years since the fall of communism in Central, South-eastern and Eastern Europe has seen the growth of a new sub-discipline of research, namely the post-communist studies. Historians, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists and economists, to list only some, have produced a plethora of studies on the so-called post-communist, or post-socialist transformation processes of the geographical space from Russia to Albania since 1989. Against a background of a large body of books, articles, reports, reportages and journalistic accounts on post-communist realities, this book seems highly noteworthy. First, the papers collected here cover almost the entire European post-communist area, thus providing a general overview that has been missing or has not been fully exposed in some of the other publications on this topic. Second, the authors come from various disciplines and provide thus a multitude of voices and abundance of perspectives of analysis. And finally, third, what gives this book a remarkable flavour is the predominance of an insider's view. The majority of the authors originate from the countries they are writing about and thus they are describing and analysing the realities, which they intimately know, for better or for worse. By all means, the combination of a native's perspective with an in-depth analysis applied by scholars who look at post-communist realities from the outsider's point of view makes this book a remarkable achievement.

The book contains an introduction, twenty nine papers grouped in three parts, and a list of short biographies of the authors. The introduction, written by the editors, starts by describing the story behind the preparation of this book and maps a general theoretical background on which the book stands. They distinguish three paths of socio-political post-communist transformation. The first one is called "accelerated transformation", and was the case of several former communist countries, which overcame the economic, social and political difficulties of the post-communist period and successfully joined NATO and EU. The editors find the exemplification of the second path in the case of former Yugoslavia, but they do not provide this path with a specific name. Finally, the editors stress the existence of a third path, which they call "abandoned transformation" and exemplify in the case of Russia and Belarus, although, in my opinion, such a list could include also few other post-communist countries. In the introduction, the editors deliberately choose not to discuss the ambiguities around concepts such as Central, Eastern, or South-eastern Europe and only slightly elaborate on the terminological differences between "communist" and "socialist". The book is structured not by countries or chronologically, but around problems faced by post-communist countries during the transformation period. Thus the first part, entitled *Ambiguities of unfinished transformations*, contains papers that deal mainly with political transformation in various former communist/socialist countries. The second part, under the title *Confronting the past*, deals with the legacy of the communist period and its influence on the post-communist transformation. Finally, the third part, entitled *Texts in changing contexts: values and meanings*, includes

papers that discuss topics related to axiological and other changes that post-communist transformation caused or left behind.

In the field of post-communist studies, the dominant paradigm is that of focusing mainly on political and economic aspects of post-communist transformation. This is understandable, considering the fact that formerly communist/socialist countries faced radical political and social changes. The papers grouped in the first part of this volume follow this approach by focusing mainly on introduction or (mal)functioning of democratisation processes. However, the second chapter directs the attention towards issues related not strictly with the sphere of politics, but rather with phenomena that have serious impacts on how politics is done or undone in former communist countries. Under the lens of analysis come *lieux de memoire* as well as collective and social memory, nostalgia for and condemnation of communist years, mistrust for yesterday's nomenclature, which became today's democratic elite, politics of memory or finally politicising traumatic memories of both nations and individuals.

The third part of the book expands the spectrum of analysis to also include the ways in which old values are transformed or replaced by new ones; the shift from the control over cultural life to free cultural activity and its influence on literature, arts and everyday life; a flood of travelogues and essays as literary genres that channel and express the often traumatic post-communist social changes; and finally moral and ethical discussions around ways of dealing with the communist past in the post-communist present. Therefore, the contributions included in this volume offer an unusual and highly valuable insight into the experience of communism and post-communism in Eastern, Central and South-eastern Europe. The comparative approach alongside its interdisciplinary character make this book a must for everyone interested in post-communist studies and the modern history of half of European continent at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries.

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