

## **Book Reviews**

John Higley and György Lengyel (eds). *Elites after State Socialism: Theories and Analysis*. Lanham, Boulder, New York and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000 (252pp., 24.95 USD, ISBN 0-8476-9897-1).

*Elites after State Socialism* is an edited collection of informative examinations of elite dynamics in nine East European countries in the 1990s. Although the eleven contributions naturally differ in quality, approach and concerns, they acquire unity through the methods and questions of political sociology they employ. As it often happens with collected volumes, however, the two framing essays, although important in themselves, fail to integrate the chapters into a cohesive discussion or theoretical model.

As advertised by its editors, *Elites after State Socialism* responds to a recently revived scholarly interest in elite theory. To those not closely acquainted with the theory, John Higley and Jan Pakulski's epilogue provides a valuable introduction. Founded around WWI, elite theory was a reaction against Marxist, class-based explanations of society and history. It portrayed a sober picture of social transformation propelled by elite interests and power struggles. In the 1980s and 1990s the old explanatory model was revitalized in order to analyze first the economic success of the East Asian Tigers, and then the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, events all seen as driven by local elites. Unfortunately, Higley and Pakulski argue, "the many who today focus on elites in their analysis do so in something like a theory void because there is no well-accepted body of definitions, interrelated concepts, and propositions guiding their focus" (p. 238).

Largely in an attempt to redress the problem of under-theorizing, the introduction by John Higley and György Lengyel offers a model of elite configurations in different political regimes. It establishes a correlation between elite structure, unity and strength, the mode of political change, and the democratic nature of political institutions in a given society. Higley and Lengyel's theoretical schema, however, is descriptive and falls short of interpreting the function of elites in the post-1989 social transformation. Instead, the editors apply it to assess comparatively the social and political advance of Eastern Europe during the 1990s.

The awkwardness of the introduction lies in the fact that the theoretical framework it suggests is hardly referred to by the eleven contributors, and they are not particularly interested (mostly to their credit) in affirming or challenging East European hierarchies of democratization and economic development.

Similarly isolated stands the appeal of the epilogue. With the exception of Mladen Lazic's essay on Serbia, none of the chapters explicitly tries to question or further develop elite-theory concepts, suppositions, or explanatory power.

The body of the book is divided in two sections. The first six essays look at political elites in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and East Germany. The second part examines the distribution of power within the economic leadership of Croatia, Hungary, Russia, Bulgaria, Poland and the Czech Republic. Most authors examine the composition of these countries' elites during the 1990s to ask what was their makeup in 1989, who participated in the construction of the post-socialist order, what sets of opinions directed the transformation, and finally, what changes occurred in this initial leadership in the course of the decade.

Instead of discussing each chapter individually, I would like to focus on two main themes that run through the essays. Central to the concerns of the volume is the extent of elite circulation or reproduction. While some countries have seen more of their old socialist elites remain in control, as a whole there has been a growing trend toward replacement, with younger people penetrating and altering the outlook and orientation of the political and economic leadership. Two related issues need to be noted as well. First, the social, political and educational capital of former elites allowed them to adjust successfully to the new conditions. Mladen Lazic in fact abandons the whole reproduction/circulation dichotomy and instead talks about the "adaptive reconstruction of elites," a concept that better reflects the transfiguring context of elite behavior. The role of nationalism in elite reconstruction is also worth exploring. As John Gould and Soňa Szomolányi, Dusko Sekulic and Zeljka Sporer, and Lazic show, the ability of elites to master national discourse has been a crucial factor in the development of Slovakia, Croatia and Serbia respectively, usually to the detriment of democratic values.

A peculiar characteristic of post-socialist transition is what Bogdan Mach and Włodzimierz Wesoloswski call "transformative correctness." The term signifies a general belief—even among disunited elites—in the desirability of changes in the direction of market and democratic reforms. Due either to a coagulating domestic consensus or to unrelenting pressure from EU institutions, it is clear that by the end of the 1990s most elites in Eastern Europe agree on the basic features of the political and economic system they are willing to endorse.

It is impossible to encompass here all questions and conclusions that readers might find interesting in the book: the relationship between post-socialist elites and democratic advance; the disjunction between elite ideas and practices; the considerable isolation of political elites from the public; the diverging and often clashing interests within and between political and economic elites, the process of elite mobility and so on. From the viewpoint of a trained historian, I find Christian Welzel's essay on East Germany and David Lane's exploration of the Russian oil-industry elite particularly interesting in their ability to historicize the process of elite formation. The final chapter by Ákos Róna-Tas and József

Böröcz presents a provocative hypothesis of a continuity in prewar and post-1989 social values (and mentalities) that readers might find stimulating. *Elites after State Socialism* adds to a growing body of research on post-socialist politics and society in Eastern Europe. The chapters would be of interest to people trying to understand the process of contemporary economic and political decision-making in the nine individual countries. For those seeking theoretical innovations in the theory of elites, the volume would be of less use. Finally, readers with historical approaches will find the majority of the essays lacking in an appreciation of the past as a factor influencing present developments.

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Fee Rauert, *Das Kosovo: Eine Völkerrechtliche Studie* [Kosovo: A Study in International Law]. Wien: Braumüller, 1999 (272pp., 380 ATS, 52 DM, 47 SFR, ISBN 3-7003-1265-2 (paperback)).

Nearly two years since the end of the Kosovo War and the beginning of the international administration of the province, the final status remains unclear. While the independence of Kosovo seemed likely while Milošević remained in power, the change of regime in October 2000 and return of Serbian army units to the buffer zone on the Serbian side of the border with Kosovo in March 2001 have reduced the likelihood of independence in the near future. Nevertheless, no concerted discussion on what a final status could entail has begun. So far, the most comprehensive contribution has been the suggestion of the independent international commission on Kosovo under the chairmanship of the former ICTY Chief Prosecutor Richard Goldstone to grant Kosovo “conditional independence.”<sup>1</sup>

Fee Rauert’s study of Kosovo from an international law perspective, completed just before the Kosovo war, discusses both the Milošević regime’s treatment of the Kosovo Albanian population in light of international minority rights instruments, and international law with regard to the claim for self-determination by the Kosovo Albanian population.

The author shows that despite the obvious discrimination against the Albanian population, very few international mechanisms were able to act. One of the causes was the international isolation of Yugoslavia, which rendered it more difficult to exert pressure on the country. Only during the brief interlude of Milan Panić as Yugoslav Prime Minister in 1992/93 could a CSCE monitoring mission

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<sup>1</sup> Independent International Commission on Kosovo, *The Kosovo Report* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

in Kosovo, Vojvodina and Sandzak be established. An additional cause for the lack of international protection, explored in detail by Rauert, is the absence of adequate universal minority rights standards. Before the escalation of the conflict into full-fledged violence in 1998, one might argue that many minorities across the world, including in Europe, were treated worse by their respective governments than were the Albanians in Kosovo.

In the book's discussion of the Kosovo Albanian community's claim to self-determination, it emerges that international law does not offer a conclusive answer in this respect either. The author is very critical of the approach of the international community in tying the recognition of the claim to self-determination in the former Yugoslavia to the existence of a republic (pp. 205–206). Instead, Rauert supports the claim for independence by the "Republic of Kosovo" on the basis of the human rights violations and the existence of a clearly defined territory.

While these conclusions are certainly controversial, the systematic discussion of both minority rights standards and self-determination in international law with regard to Kosovo are valuable and important for understanding the legal complexities surround the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the inadequacies of the "constitutional nationalisms" (Robert Hayden) in their treatment of minorities.

The value of the book is, unfortunately, diminished by a high number of misspellings and a number of factual errors. Serbian names, with the exception of Milošević, are misspelled and Serbian letters are used randomly and wrongly throughout the book. Dobrica Ćosić, for example, is rendered as Dobrić Cošić, which is a serious distraction. In addition, a number of factual inaccuracies, especially in the historical introduction, could easily have been corrected: the police suppressing the 1981 demonstrations and riots are described as "Serbian police" (p. 33), although they were the Kosovo police forces, consisting mostly of Albanians; Momčilo Trajković is described as Serbian vice-president, although he was only deputy prime minister of Kosovo (p. 41).

Although the historical introduction is useful in connecting the legal analysis with political developments, it would have benefited from including more information on the legal debates in Serbia on the status of Kosovo. Rauert mentions neither the Blue Book, commissioned by the Serbian League of Communists in 1977, which criticized the high degree of autonomy granted to Kosovo (and Vojvodina), nor the critique of Mihailo Djurić in 1971. The historical-political discussion would also have been more robust had a stronger

emphasis been put on the parallel institutions of Kosovo Albanians<sup>2</sup> and the legal measures taken by the Serbian regime against the Albanian population.<sup>3</sup>

This study of legal aspects of the status of Kosovo remains relevant, even after the war in 1999. As the final status of Kosovo remains unresolved, the temporary status of the province has only little institutional substance. This systematic analysis of the diverse aspects of international law pertaining to Kosovo can thus be a useful contribution to the debate to come on the final status of the province. As the author points out repeatedly, neither a universal standard of minority rights nor a set framework for self-determination can be implemented conclusively by international law alone. In the case of Kosovo, but elsewhere as well, political considerations triggered the international intervention in Yugoslavia and they will determine the final status of Kosovo.

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Gojko Vuckovic, *Ethnic Cleavages and Conflict: The Sources of National Cohesion and Disintegration*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997 (192pp., 42 GBP, ISBN 1-85972-640-2 (Cloth)).

This work by Dr Gojko Vuckovic examines the relevance of a number of theories of conflict and ethnic violence with respect to war and conflict in the past decade in former Yugoslavia. The book is divided into two major parts, the first dealing with theories of ethnic conflict and the second with the history of Yugoslavia and ethnic conflict and secession there.

The chapters which deal with ethnic conflict theory provide a succinct analysis of major theories, and in doing so cover ground rarely touched upon by studies dealing specifically with the former Yugoslavia. The theories covered include democratic theory, nation building theory, and the theory of international order, with respect to ethnic conflict, as well as that of conflict management itself. The analysis of nation building theory seems particularly relevant, not only to the fate of Yugoslavia but also to the current process of integration in Europe. The theory argues that as communication networks advance and link ethnic groups more closely, a common sense of ethnic identity is created. This theory has been criticized as unduly optimistic. Similar analyses of the other theories are

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo* (London and Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2000)

<sup>3</sup> See for example Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, *Kosovo. Pravo i politika: Kosovo u normativnim aktima pre i posle 1974. godine* (Belgrade: 1998).

presented, and in chapter three an overall model for the comparative study of ethnic conflict is drawn up which draws together the different theories and their elements. While this is an interesting exercise, its major weakness from the point of view of the reader is that it is very general, since it has been drawn up to cover all conflicts on a general basis. Only two pages are devoted to applying the model to Yugoslavia, and hence Vuckovic fails to use his theoretical analysis to explain the development of war and conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The main value of the theorizing is that it discusses and applies theories not often used in efforts to explain the decade of war in former Yugoslavia. The analysis is rather on the dry side, due to the absence of major attempts to apply it to the conflict.

The second part of the book deals with the historical and political background of the former Yugoslavia, especially in the post-World War II period. It succeeds in giving an impressive and detailed account of the history of South-Slav tribes in the Balkans, providing much supporting evidence of the events and factors behind the rise of nationalism and consequent dismantling of the Yugoslav federation. The chapters in this part provide information about characters and events in political and public life in the history of all parties to the conflict, including individuals closely involved in recent and current developments in former Yugoslavia.

It covers the issues faced by the different peoples emanating from the South Slavs throughout history, including their historical experiences and their connections such as those to the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburgs, and related motivations for support as well as opposition to the creation of a universal South-Slav state. There is a well argued explanation of the evolution of nationalistic feelings among Slavs during all stages that Yugoslavia endured, from before its creation in 1918 until its dismantlement.

However, where the more recent rise in nationalism in the seceding Yugoslav republics is considered, the focus on trends in the western republics is much stronger than that on developments in Serbia such as Dobrica Ćosić's influence and that of the Memorandum document, so that there is something of an imbalance in an otherwise excellent and impressive analysis.

The text draws attention to the many mistakes and the incompetence (possibly intentional) of the international community in its treatment of the problems of former Yugoslavia, as well as to ambiguities with regard to legal approaches, and the consequences of these. While Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were allowed to secede from Yugoslavia and be recognized as independent states, areas of Croatia and Bosnia with substantial Serb minority populations were not allowed to secede from the newly-created states, nor the Croat minority from Bosnia-Herzegovina, resulting in conflict, war and ethnic cleansing. As Vuckovic states, different world powers and interests sided with different parties to the conflict. Recognition of an independent Kosovo now would require rejection of the principles applied by the international community earlier in the conflict, and it remains to be seen whether a new "reordering" will

be permitted there and in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where severe divisions remain but a terrible price has been paid and there has been a consequent “demonization” of the Serbs from an international point of view.

Overall, the author provides an excellent and wide selection of documents and quotations in support of his arguments, reflecting extensive research into the issues. There are some minor textual errors and deficiencies in the reference list, and the maps are somewhat unclear, especially to readers without previous geographical knowledge of former Yugoslavia.

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Eric Gordy. *The Culture of Power in Serbia: Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives*. University Park, PA.: Penn State University Press, 1999 (230pp., 17.95 USD, ISBN 0-271-01958-1 (paperback)).

Eric Gordy’s *The Culture of Power in Serbia: Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives* is a fine piece of cultural history of Milošević’s Serbia. Posing the question, “how does the regime of Slobodan Milošević’s SPS remain in power in Serbia?” in the very first sentence of his work, Gordy sets out to answer it in some 200 pages, specifically analyzing the “destruction of alternatives” in four spheres of everyday life in Serbia in the early to mid-1990s: in the political arena, in the case of media, in the realm of music (culture) and in the sphere of what he terms as “sociability.”

Gordy approaches his topic by trying to reconstruct everyday life in Milošević’s Serbia. Although he does not draw explicitly on the theoretical foundations of Alf Ludtke and “*Alltagshistoriker*” (German historians who have advocated a new approach to cultural history since the mid-1970s, calling for a shift of analytical foci to everyday experiences, modes of social appropriation and the agency of individual subjects hitherto neglected by the prevalent social history), Gordy is doing exactly what historians of everyday life usually do: focusing on everyday phenomena and analyzing the choices and constraints ordinary people are forced to confront, and thus trying to arrive to the “big picture” from below.<sup>4</sup> It is also worth noting that *Alltag* (everyday) approaches

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<sup>4</sup> For an introduction to *Alltagsgeschichte*, see Alf Ludtke (ed.), *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), especially the foreword by Geoff Eley and the introductory essay, “What is the History of Everyday Life and Who are Its Practitioners?” by Alf Ludtke.

sprang up in Germany in the wake of the turmoil of 1968, one of their priorities being “coming to terms” with the Nazi past. Even though comparisons between Hitler and Milošević and their respective regimes are bound to be condemned as less than serious, the “everyday approach” to Serbian contemporary history can be instrumental for better understanding the less-investigated aspects of a regime that has caused much evil for Serbia’s neighbors and ultimately in Serbia itself, similarly to the way that this approach to the history of the Third Reich has problematized several important issues.

Gordy describes Milošević’s regime as “nationalist authoritarianist,” being characterized by “ideological eclecticism” and an “internally inconsistent combination of bases of support” (p. 18). Postulating that such a regime is inherently unstable, Gordy investigates its interventions in the cultural sphere designed to “destroy alternatives” ordinary people might otherwise turn to, and thereby to prolong its reign. Very insightful analyses follow, and the reader is informed about events and phenomena that might not have made it to other historical accounts of contemporary Serbia, but have nevertheless played tremendously important roles in shaping everyday perceptions of social reality and the options it left open for ordinary people. Among other things, Gordy investigates 9 March 1991, the case of *Nasa borba*, the “turbo folk” phenomenon, the hyperinflation of late 1993 and early 1994, as well as the combination of phenomena to which all these disparate instances contributed: the general atomization of the Serbian society, the demise of solidarity and an end to the belief in any possibility of change.

To Gordy’s credit, we now know that it is only after the Serbian opposition managed to present some kind of viable alternative to Milošević and convince people that change is, after all, possible (i.e. when they managed to overcome the major problems as postulated by Gordy) that Milošević’s regime crumbled almost overnight. With the luxury of hindsight, we also know that Gordy’s question whether the peaceful transfer of power in Serbia is possible was a rhetorical one (p. 53). In short, Gordy’s understanding of the strategies of Milošević’s regime hit the proverbial nail on the head.

The strength of *The Culture of Power in Serbia: Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives* lies in its novel approach to contemporary Serbian cultural history. Refreshingly, Gordy manages to write about Serbian nationalism without going back to 1389; rather, he focuses on the everyday life in Serbia itself, showing how Slobodan Milošević and his regime manipulated the available handles of power in order to convince people that there were no alternatives to their rule. The only shortcoming of this well-researched book lies in the unfortunate fact that its temporal focus leaves out some events that had profound impact on everyday life (most notably, the everyday rallies that followed the annulment of the 17 November 1996 local elections, in which the opposition gained control in almost all relevant cities in Serbia). Still, one cannot but notice that had Gordy covered these events, they would have supported his



thesis. His book is therefore an essential resource for anyone who is in any way interested in the culture and politics of contemporary Serbia.

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