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Peter Gran. *Beyond Eurocentrism: A New View of Modern World History.* Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1996. xiii + 440 pp. $19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8156-2693-0; $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8156-2692-3.

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Reconceptualizing World History

Peter Gran tells us in his first chapter that this book grew out of his experience teaching "Introduction to Third World History" at Temple University in Philadelphia. As a historian, he is best known for his earlier book, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism, Egypt 1760-1840.* As a teaching professor, he wanted to "teach against the current" to inspire his students. As a self-identified student of Foucault and Gramsci, he wanted to emphasize the importance of social history. In his conclusion he asks, "Would not, then, a break with Eurocentrism as proposed in this book spell the birth of a Golden Age for social history both in the academy and beyond?" (p. 349).

The book is a challenging *tour-de-force.* The apparent mastery of many areas of modern global history, the provocative and yet scholarly rhetoric of the argument, and the attempt to destroy "dominant paradigms" (one of his favorite terms), provides much food for thought by author-historians and teachers of world history. Few undergraduate students are prepared to read their way through this difficult book. Teaching professors, on the other hand, will find it worth their while. Their perspectives will be sharpened and their knowledge base will be deepened, even if they are not always convinced by the thrust of the argument.

Gran is very systematic in his approach. There are four (and only four, he emphasizes on p. 337) stable forms of hegemony in the modern world. He identifies these as 1) the Russian Road, 2) the Italian Road, 3) the tribal-ethnic state–for which he selects Albania, and 4) bourgeois democracy–typified by Britain. Each of these has parallel historical examples outside of Europe. Iraq follows the Russian Road; India and Mexico follow the Italian Road; Belgian Congo/Zaire follows the Albanian tribal-ethnic road; the United States follows the bourgeois-democratic road of Britain.

Each of these roads, in turn, has a standard set of three phases: an early "liberal" phase; a "corporate" or "collectivist" phase; followed by another liberal or "neoliberal" phase. The details for each country vary considerably, of course, and the elaborate commentaries in Gran's backnotes immediately defuse any criticism that he is unaware of individual differences along these "roads."

Such a brief summary might lead one to the false conclusion that Gran sees the Anglo-American road as superior to the false paths to modernity followed by the other models. On the contrary, Gran is caustic in his criticism of the Anglo-American bourgeois democracy. He argues that it is based upon institutionalized racism, in which Anglo working men are bought off by the ruling elites. People of color, and women in general, are intentionally kept in subordinate positions to keep the mass of men satisfied with their position and keep them from rising up against the elites. Even multiculturalism, he charges, was developed by the state in the United States as a "way to play one race's identity against another's" (p. 324).

Each of the other "roads," he argues, has its own way of maintaining the hegemony of one group of elites or another. In Russia, he deemphasizes the role of Marxism-Leninism and writes of "the ruling caste, or nomenklatura" (p. 24). On the Italian road he sees Mussolini's fascism on the right and the corporatism of the left in Nehru's India or Cardenas's Mexico as closely related forms (p. 89). On the Albanian "tribal-ethnic" road, he sees clan chiefs ruling through their family ties, whether under King Zog in the 1920s or under the Communist Enver Hoxha (p. 211) after World War II.

A reviewer faced with such a provocative book has many opportunities for critical comments. When the author writes that "standard world history is, in fact, so focused on the Western countries, their elites, and high cultures, that it does not permit much critical analysis of them" (p. 4), he at best overstates his case and at worst betrays ignorance of the whole literature of critical studies. When he claims that "the U.S. state promotes the existence of a racial under-caste; it plays the white worker off

against the black" (p. 288), and then omits all references to civil rights legislation, welfare programs, and affirmative action, he stacks his cards. When he dismisses German Nazism as "a mass movement, a part of democracy ..." (pp. 89-90) and fails to address the historiographical discussions over the German *Sonderweg* ("special way"), he misses an excellent opportunity to test his hypotheses about hegemonic roads on a very important case.

Given Gran's emphasis on social history in theory, it is remarkable how little social history he actually develops in the book itself. Indeed, one might object that his whole approach, which is designed to destroy Eurocentrism by emphasizing social history, is weakened by the fact that he spends most of his book analyzing the political economy of four or five European states rather than discussing social history throughout the globe.

To close on a more positive note, this reviewer was impressed by Gran's systematic analysis of history, historiography, and cultural history in each area of his major case studies. Though readers may have this or that objection to a particular point, the overall impression is that he has seriously come to grips with the ways in which history has played a didactic role in representing the views of the hegemonic (and occasionally the counter-hegemonic) powers in the countries under study.

Over the coming years, paradigms of world history may well shift beyond traditional Western/European-centeredness. This path-breaking work may not in fact provide the lasting paradigm which Gran would like to see. But it will provide an influential voice in the discourse.

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