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Gale Stokes. *Three Eras of Political Change in Eastern Europe.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. xii + 240 pp. $26.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-19-510482-0.

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Transforming Eastern Europe

Over the last twenty-five years, Gale Stokes has been a valuable contributor to the scholarship on Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, and more specifically Serbia. He has recently compiled a sampling of this work in *Three Eras of Political Change in Eastern Europe.* In his preface, Stokes explores for himself and his readers his interpretation of European history from 1500 to the present and where the eastern and southern part might fit into this model. He has found that his teaching, research, and writing have focused primarily on the question of how Europeans, East Europeans, Yugoslavs, and specifically Serbs have coped with the great transformation from agricultural to industrial society. *Three Eras of Political Change in Eastern Europe* discusses the political implications of this transformation through comparative and national examples.

In the first section, "The Origins of East European Politics," Stokes posits that Eastern Europe is a distinct historical entity and that it developed in a fundamentally different manner than Western Europe. Not a particularly stunning conclusion, but what is admirable about this section is Stokes's attempt to find overarching explanations for the "backwardness" of Eastern Europe. The author explains that three historical fault lines divided East from West: Orthodoxy from Catholicism; the Ottoman cultural area from Habsburg Austria, Prussia, and Russia; and the economically and politically developed West from the "underdeveloped" East. This essay goes over familiar territory for those initiated into the field of East European history, but the uninitiated will find this essay a must read. For the initiated, this essay will probably disappoint simply because the author treats the fault lines as benign and does not problematize the designation of East and West.

Readers will find the next two articles in this section far superior to the first. In the article, "Dependency and the Rise of Nationalism in Southeast Europe," Stokes explains that political and economic dependency on the West during the nineteenth produced a sense of inferiority among the Balkan elite. As a result of this feeling of "backwardness," the elites sought validation from the West by promoting national greatness. He argues that this greatness did not come from the Balkans' economic and political institutions but from "a glorious past, a beautiful language, a powerful literature" (p. 33). This path of modernization that the Balkan elites chose to tread did not lead to the modernization of the state and economy. Instead, the national elites used nationalism to legitimize their authority within the state and to impress those outside.

Written in 1980, this article explains Eastern Europe's backwardness in relation to dependency theory. Stokes very effectively utilizes this paradigm to show how Eastern Europe differs from the colonial periphery of the European empires. However, he does see dependency at work. He demonstrates that the political and intellectual aping of the West led to a type of dependency that was not economic, but political and ideological. The result was very similar to those states that were economically peripheral to the center. Economic modernization did not occur.

In "The Social Origins of East European Politics," Stokes uses Barrington Moore's model of political development to explain the varying paths of the East European states to democracy and dictatorship. He disagrees with Moore that the region's politics "lie outside their own boundaries" (p. 37). He shows that the preexisting socioeconomic conditions, class structures, and relationships had determinant roles in the development of politics in the region. Moving the reader through the "thickets of factual materials" on Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Serbia, Stokes finds the shortcomings of Moore's analysis for Eastern Europe. According to Stokes, Moore ignores the role of individuals at key moments in Eastern Europe's political life and the fact that many elites were a "class in themselves." The politi-

cal position of these elites was not dependent on socioeconomic relations but where they stood in relation to the state apparatus. With this conclusion, Stokes stands with Theda Skocpol and argues for "bringing the state back in"[1] to the analysis of politics. Stokes sees the state as an important actor in the modernization of the Balkan states' political world. In the next section, Stokes offers a case study for his views in the article, "Nineteenth Century Serbia, So What?"

The second part of the compilation deals primarily with the creation and the disintegration of the Yugoslav state. The article "Yugoslavism in the 1860s?" is an interesting piece of historiography. Writing in 1974, Stokes is responding to the scholarship coming out of Croatia during the early 1970s. This scholarship described the Croatian Yugoslavism of Bishop Strossmayer as "good" and the Serbian nationalism of Ilija Garasanin and Prince Michael Obrenovic as "bad." In addition, Stokes seeks to debunk the official LCY line that "community-building forces" were at work in both Serbia and Croatia in the 1860s.

Grounded in the historical and not the ideological, Stokes demonstrates that very few social or economic structures existed to draw the South Slav peoples together in the mid-nineteenth century. Also, in the mid-nineteenth century, the Croats and Serbs had different overlords to subvert. The Serbs sought outright independence from and expansion into the Ottoman Empire. Thus, Serbian nationalism in the latter half of the century tended toward an "aggressive" nationalism and a centralized state. The Croats, on the other hand, had to contend with an aggressive Magyar nationalism and sought solutions within the empire, usually choosing some type of federalism.

In the article, "The Role of the Yugoslav Committee in the Formation of Yugoslavia," Stokes explores how the Yugoslav Committee sought the creation of a South Slav state where no nation would dominate or be dominated. The Committee proved to be instrumental in creating the first South Slav state, but could not influence the process any further. Against the backdrop of his previous piece, it seems unlikely that the Yugoslav Committee could influence the Serbian government under Nikola Pasic, to accept the federalist solution. I am not sure that this was the Yugoslav Committee's failure. The wars Serbia had fought between 1912-1918 were fought first for the unification of all Serbs under one state, and then the unification of the South Slavs. Too much had been sacrificed for Pasic to allow the Croats to dictate the terms of the unification.

Stokes' next chapter, "The Devil's Finger: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia," explores the reasons for the collapse of the Yugoslav state. He understands that the reasons are not simple, but sees them connected to "the inherent weakness of Yugoslavism." The inherent weakness is that the Serbs and Croats were never on the same page about what Yugoslavism meant. Through this prism, he details the interwar political bickering and violence surrounding the question of more autonomy and independence for Croatia; the civil war fought among the various ethnic and political groups varying for power during W.W.II; the creation of the second Yugoslavia under the Communists; and the slow decentralization of this state from 1966 to 1991. Focusing on political elites, policies, and key individuals such as Slobodan Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman, Stokes explains the breakdown of the state, but never really explains why the "devil pointed his finger at this country." Much more needs to be done in the realm of social and cultural history to understand why "grotesque atrocities, ethnic cleansing, bombardment of priceless cultural artifacts, hundreds of thousands of refugees, cities destroyed, obsessive propaganda and disinformation" (p. 109) were features of Yugoslavia's disintegration.

Stokes begins to ponder the why in the last chapter of this section, "Nationalism, Responsibility, and the People as One: Reflections on the Possibilities for Peace in the Former Yugoslavia." In this piece, he asks the question: how can "the Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians, not to mention Kosovars and Macedonians, find a way to live peacefully with one another after the bitter passions engendered by the inhumanity of their conflicts?" (p. 144). He finds the answer in postwar Germany's acceptance of responsibility. Like Germany, the South Slavs, especially the Serbs and Croats, must embrace reconciliation, remembrance, and regret, and reject ethnic nationalism. To embrace the "three R's," the guilty parties must reject ethnic nationalism and turn to pluralism. For Stokes these two "isms" are mutually exclusive. However, the author is dealing in the realm of principle and not reality. His optimism and hope cloud the fact that the society he uses as an example, Germany, possesses a "pluralism" which still excludes German-born Turks from citizenship.

Part III of this collection moves to the contemporary period where Stokes assures us that the same two themes that have always interested him: 1) the struggle with backwardness; and 2) historical placement, will connect these articles to the first two sections. This is a bit of a stretch on his part, but the first article clearly fits into one of the more dominant themes in his work, the primacy of ideas and structures in generating change. "Modes of

Opposition Leading to the Revolution in Eastern Europe" attacks current thinking on the revolutions of 1989 that attributes the fall of the illegitimate communist regimes to an emergent civil society. Stokes argues that except for Solidarity and an emergent Hungarian middle class very few autonomous organizations, classes, and spaces existed in East European. Thus, 1989 cannot be explained by focusing solely on social relations or economic conditions, instead scholars must see how "ideas had an autonomous power" (p. 158). For Stokes, the revolutions of 1989 "are as much a product of the ethical and moral demands of the French Revolution, the calculus of freedom, and the demand for equity, as they are of social determinants" (p. 163).

The roots of these ethical and moral demands can be found in the idea of antipolitics. As Stokes describes it, "... the antipoliticians simply told people to ignore the regime and live an honest life" (p. 170). This alienation from the regimes eventually led to the collapse of the communist states. Once Gorbachev removed the threat of intervention on the side of the regimes, East Europeans began to agitate for a "normal life." This normal life meant that a person could live as an autonomous individual making his or her own choices about religion, politics, art, sexual preferences, or ethics (p. 175). He sees the Poles making this choice by supporting Solidarity, the Hungarians by taking to the street in June 1989 on the occasion of the reburial of the remains of Imre Nagy, the East Germans by streaming into Austria via Hungary in late summer 1989; and the Czechs, Slovaks, Bulgarians, and finally the Romanians by demonstrating in the streets during the waning months of the year. Ideas may have moved the people into the streets, but as Stokes implies crowds on the street do not constitute a "civil society," nor do they create the longer lasting institutions necessary for a pluralist society.

Stokes ponders what lessons can be learned from the revolutions of 1989 in the next chapter. And it is here he returns to one of the central themes of his work: Given the unprecedented economic and social changes of the last few centuries, how should human society organize itself? Stokes posits that three models have been tried in the twentieth century: 1) the antirationalist genre; 2) the hyper-rationalist genre; and 3) the pluralist genre. Nazism and fascism represent the first genre; Stalinism the second; and Western-style democracy the third. The first two models were tried and proved to be "incapable of solving the problems posed by rapid and economic change" (p. 183). The third genre, pluralism (despite its flaws), "has proven flexible enough to match the protean surge of economic and social development that has characterized the past hundred years" (p. 183). Once again, Stokes calls upon his fellow scholars to look at the moral and cultural factors to explain the demise of the hyper-rationalist genre and the role that ideas played in its failure.

The last chapter in the book, "Is it Possible to be Optimistic about Eastern Europe?" is based on the final chapter of the author's book, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down: The Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). The first third of the piece details the problems facing Eastern Europeans as they look to the future: uncivil and vicious political bickering, collapsing economies, ethnic rivalries, disillusioned and dispirited public, and unmet expectations. The second third gives the reader some hope by detailing a few successes: Poland's reconciliation policy toward the Jews; its rapprochement with Germany and its other neighbors; Slovakia's improved treatment of Hungarians; Hungary's adoption of a minorities law; and Czechoslovakia's privatization. In these successes, Stokes sees the new governments of Eastern Europe entering into the process of creating pluralist societies and what needs to be understood is the time that such a process takes.

Taken as a whole, this collection of essays showcases Gale Stokes' distinguished career as an intellectual and political historian of Eastern Europe. One cannot help but reflect upon this body of work against the backdrop of the Cold War. Stokes crafted a research agenda that brought Eastern Europe outside the shadows of the Soviet Union and placed it firmly in its historical context as a part of Europe. This reader was hoping for a final essay which might reflect upon this issue. As it stands, this compilation is a must read for students of European history.

Note:

[1]. Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research" in *Bringing the State Back In*, eds. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

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