

Trencsényi, Balázs; Janowski, Maciej; Baar, Monika; Falina, Maria; Kopecek, Michal: *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe. Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the 'Long Nineteenth Century'*. New York: Oxford University Press 2016. ISBN: 978-0-19-873714-8; 704 S.

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This encyclopedic survey of modern political thought in East Central Europe is the first volume of a two-volume project that aims to shift „the reference point of historical thinking from the 'West' to the cross-European experience with a special emphasis on East Central Europe“ as well as to „contribute to the rethinking of the 'negotiation of political modernity,' facilitating the move from 'methodological nationalism' and oversimplification towards a more encompassing notion of what constitutes the European intellectual heritage“ (p. 1). The authors hope to modify the European intellectual canon – not just by expanding the discussion of shared references, but by trying to rethink the categories that are used to explain political thought and political modernity. They are not simply telling the story of the „spirit of the age,“ but rather their focus is on how intellectual thinkers used, modified, and confronted the emergence of modern terminologies as new ideological programs were formulated. One of the many reasons for this multi-authored volume was to break out of the conventions of the typical East Central European nationalist historiographical traditions.

The book is divided into four, chronological parts: „the discovery of modernity: enlightened statecraft, discourses of reform, and civilizational narratives,“ „spiritualizing modernity: the romantic framework of political ideas,“ „institutionalizing modernity: conceptions of state-building and nation-building in the second half of the nineteenth century,“ and „taming modernity: the fin de siècle and the rise of mass politics.“ The first three parts are divided into three chapters each, with the last part divided into five chapters. Each part begins with a very useful introduction to the time period under investigation, and af-

ter short prefaces each chapter discusses various thinkers from the different region of East Central Europe. One great advantage for the reader is that each political thinker being discussed is marked with bold typeface, so it is easy to find people and topics throughout the book.

In part one, „the discovery of modernity,“ the authors point out that even though most studies of the Enlightenment present the impression of a general uniformity regarding the Enlightenment, one cannot forget that the project of the Enlightenment relied everywhere on local preconditions. Their objective in this first part is to demonstrate that the history of the Enlightenment „needs to be told from the perspective of the plurality of 'Enlightenments,' rather than as 'a unified and universal intellectual movement' radiating concentrically from Paris“ (p. 15). The central theme for the Enlightenment across Europe was the feasibility of keeping together and in harmony societies that are institutionally and denominationally diverse. The outcome was not only enlightened absolutism, as the traditional narrative often argues, the authors here point out that „the reference to the Enlightenment could justify very different types of politics – centered on the estates or on a monarch, anticlerical or moderately religious, industrialist-mercantilist or agriculturalist-physiocratic, and so on“ (p. 18). Challenging the traditional narrative again, the authors argue that rather than a clear shift from Enlightenment to Romanticism in the early nineteenth century, there emerged „a number of transitional forms, hybrids, and dialogue between different intellectual subcultures“ (p. 23).

„Spiritualizing Modernity“ is the second part, which looks at the influence of Romanticism. Unlike the „West“ in the post-Napoleonic era, where the old Europe was restored, the status quo ante in East Central Europe could not simply be reinstated after the Congress of Vienna. „While the main autocratic imperial players in the region remained the same after 1815 as before 1800 – Austria, Prussia, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire – their ideological framework changed as they tried to dominate the region by evoking a supranational integrative principle, and by

so doing they sought to suppress the 'subversive' national movements [...]" (p. 138). The authors also point out that the forms of Romanticism in East Central Europe was not in reaction to the Enlightenment, but rather they were manifestations of the Enlightenment's internal crisis.

Part three, „institutionalizing modernity,“ moves away from the early periods that were dominated by ideological programs associated with the Enlightenment and Romanticism. The second half of the nineteenth century can be defined by certain common practical (and perhaps at times ideological) tasks whose purpose it was to assist in creating modern states and nations. In the post-1848 era new social groups took on larger roles – groups that favored social mobility and the liberalization of the economy. This was especially true in the Habsburg realm.

The final section, „taming modernity,“ examines the political thought of the turn of the century. The authors in this volume focus on two broad processes between 1890 and 1918: the birth of mass politics and the growth of irrationalism, and they argue that there were four aspects that led to the transformation of political thought: the impact of culture on politics, the strengthening of the vision of politics as a conflict, the escalation of ethnic tension in the region, and that the nature of politics was not incompatible with the growth of the transnational entanglement of political thought.

Throughout the volume one of the overarching themes was the changing meaning of „nation“ and nationalism. One of the first transitions in the meaning of the category of „nation“ took place in Jacobin thought in regions such as Poland and Hungary. „Nation“ (národ) increasingly came to mean all the inhabitants of the country – not a feudal 'noble nation,' nor an ethnic nation in the modern sense, but rather a democratic political nation similar to what the French Jacobins envisaged.“ (p. 118) During the early nineteenth century „the creation of an authentic national culture and the delineation of new historical models constituted a quintessential element of Romantic 'identity politics,““ (p. 168) which aimed to develop a common language among newly envisioned nations.

The post-1850 era saw new social groups gaining power, but the new interest in positivism, especially the disciplines such as biology and sociology, influenced how ethnicity was understood: „the elimination of the universalist pathos of the Romantic generation and the rise of far more self-centered nationalist doctrines.“ (p. 279) By the 1870s and 1880s anti-liberal trends focused on the losers in the modernization process and led to a growth in ethno-nationalism. Then in the new intellectual and political environment of the early twentieth century the authors see two divergent approaches to the nationality question: some people focused on the inevitability of conflict, while others proposed practical solutions for the peaceful cohabitation and coexistence of many nationalities in one state. It is in this context that the book also outlines the rise of modern anti-Semitism as well as the rise of Jewish nationalism.

This is an important volume for any student or scholar of East Central Europe. Despite its encyclopedic nature, it engages with the traditional historiography of the region, especially the intellectual and political narratives that are well known. It also summarizes well the ideas of the major thinkers from various regions of East Central Europe. All the authors should be commended for the clear presentation that the volume presents. This reviewer waits in anticipation for the second volume.

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