

approach may be useful for analyzing other cases, especially in the Polish territories gained and lost during the war.

PIOTR M. MAJEWSKI
University of Warsaw, Poland

Czech Feminisms: Perspectives on Gender in East Central Europe. Ed. Iveta Jusová and Jiřina Šiklová. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 2016. ix, 325 pp. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Tables. \$30.00, paper.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2017.298

Czech intellectual thought has been a niche interest on the international scholarly scene for decades. The involvement of scholars and cultural personages in the reform process that led to the Prague Spring no doubt provided a spark for this interest. It next gathered momentum after the demise of state socialism in 1989. Indeed, the whole Eastern Bloc and the process of democratic transition in the former member states became all the rage in international scholarship, until the tragic events of 9/11 shifted the attention of researchers and publishers to other issues and other regions. The discussions between the feminist scholars from the “east” and the “west” about the shape and meaningfulness of feminism in postsocialist countries that took place at conferences and on the pages of the scholarly press in the 1990s constituted a part of that broader interest in the transition process. Czech feminists took front seats in these discussions and contributed numerous essays to top English-language journals and edited volumes. It is perhaps this history that motivated the editors of *Czech Feminisms* to put together a volume located between a “retrospective” and “new directions” in Czech feminist scholarship.

The collection consists of sixteen chapters divided into two parts and prefaced by an introduction by Iveta Jusová, one of the editors. The first, shorter part covers “Gender issues in Czech society prior to 1989,” the second “Gender issues in Czech society post-1989.” All of the contributors and the editors are originally Czech, although several of them are based in the US, and they include junior as well as established academics, activists, and journalists. This broad authorship base renders the volume a wide scope of perspectives, topics, and approaches, however mixed that blessing may be.

On the one hand, one can view the collection as a colorful bouquet offering an overview of directions taken by Czech feminist scholarship since the 1990s. On the other, however, the mixture of journalistic, activist and scholarly approaches increases the unevenness of the treatment of the various subject matters that is always a risk in any collective work. As to the former, chapters recapitulating and adding to some of the earlier discussions provide contexts for new research. These chapters include Jitka Malečková’s on nineteenth-century nationalism, Alena Wagnerová’s on women’s status under state-socialism, Simona Fojtová’s on east-west debates of the 1990s, Hana Hašková and Zuzana Uhde’s on women’s NGOs, Kateřina Nedbálková’s on the LGBT community and, to a degree, also Jana Valdřová’s chapter on the masculine bias in Czech language use.

Karla Huebner’s chapter on Toyen and Zuzana Štefková’s on the contemporary art scene stand out among the authors presenting new research. They both offer subtle and well-researched analyses of the respective period-specific gender contexts. Other authors venture into new or barely-touched-upon areas of inquiry, such as Karolina Ryvolová and Mária Strašáková on gender in Romani and Vietnamese communities, Iva Šmídová on the unchallenged persistence of masculine discourse in the medical

profession, and Jiřina Šiklová on the intersection of age and gender with regard to the vulnerabilities of elderly women. Iveta Jusová then tries on a new theoretical garment in which to dress Czech feminist discussions, namely, postcolonial theory.

All these are undeniable points of interest and strengths of the volume. It is perhaps inevitable, that in a volume with such diverse authorship several of the chapters are informative rather than analytical, and lag somewhat behind recent scholarship. That is particularly the case with Alena Wagnerová's chapter, in which the author draws mostly on her own research conducted in the 1970s, and Pavla Frýdlová's text that is more or less a report on already well-published oral history project in Czech. Both authors are writers and activists, rather than scholars, so their approach is understandable. In a volume with a tight internal coherence, these two chapters and a couple of others written from an activist perspective would have complemented the more scholarly texts well in providing counterpoints and different material.

The lack of a clear focus, however, is the principal flaw of this otherwise commendable initiative. The editors entitled the collection *Czech Feminisms*, yet they do not define the concept. The individual chapters bring together women's and feminist organizing, gender analyses, sexuality and gender discourses, but a synthesizing discussion on how all of this constitutes "feminisms" is missing. The titles of the two parts of the book imply that "feminisms" is synonymous with "gender issues," which is certainly contestable. Moreover, to gather the various chapters under the title "gender issues in Czech society" suggests that these issues have been addressed as such in Czech societal discourse. It is clear from the authors' arguments that only some of the subjects have been discussed as gender issues in public, political, or cultural discourses. Societal discourse failed or refused to identify as gender issues a number of other subjects covered in the volume and it is the authors' original contribution to make that argument. At the end of the book, the reader has a reasonable idea of the areas current in Czech gender research, but the forms that Czech feminisms take remain elusive, as indeed are the locations of their articulations.

This criticism notwithstanding, the collection will find its audience among those with interest in Czech and east central European feminist scholarship.

LIBORA OATES-INDRUCHOVÁ
University of Graz

Romania since the Second World War: A Political, Social and Economic History.

By Florin Abraham. London: Bloomsbury, 2017. xv, 340 pp. Bibliography. Index. Tables. \$39.95, paper.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2017.299

Florin Abraham has provided the specialist and the more general reader with a thorough account of Romania at (yet another) crossroads in its history, when the very foundations of state and society as they had been evolving during the preceding century and a half were put at risk. The matter at issue, then, was, as it had always been in modern times, whether the Romanians would cleave to tradition by seeking inspiration in the east, or whether they would embrace change and find their models in "Europe," that is, the west. Abraham's careful investigation of the period from just before the outbreak of the Second World War through the first twenty-five years of the postcommunist era is, in effect, a case study of a middle-sized country confronting the ambitions of the great European powers. Of course, he also acquaints the reader in detail with the many sides of Romania's political, economic, and social development.