

the “Ukraine Crisis” in that it shows where, why, and how Moscow has also been involved in the domestic affairs of countries less important to Russia than Ukraine.

Wilson is to be congratulated for having produced yet another groundbreaking study of post-Soviet affairs that will shape our understanding of eastern Europe for years to come. One hopes that it will not be the last.

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Erinnerungskultur—Kulturgeschichte—Geschichtsregion: Ostmitteleuropa in Europa. By Stefan Troebst. *Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Mitteleuropa*, no. 43. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013. 440 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Illustrations. Plates. Photographs. €64.00, hard bound.

This volume combines twenty-six essays written between 2006 and 2012. They were originally published in a wide variety of volumes and journals. The research presented touches on four different yet related themes: studies about the various notions of a Slavic Europe and their changing meanings, essays on memory culture in eastern and southeastern Europe, short pieces about the cultural history of eastern Europe, and, finally, two studies on spatial aspects of the east. With the exception of two English-language pieces, all of the reprinted articles are in German.

While most of Stefan Troebst’s essays may be read as contributions to academic debates in Germany and Europe, some are clearly interventions in the politics of history. These are arguably the most interesting and possibly also more controversial texts presented here. One subject discussed in great depth and from a wide range of perspectives is the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact between Nazi Germany and the USSR that sealed interwar Poland’s fate. The author shows how this event is remembered in different parts of the continent. He discusses the prospects for and difficulties of establishing August 23 as a *lieu de mémoire* in a united Europe. While the pact remains a highly emotional topic in east-central Europe, it is largely forgotten or ignored in the west of the continent. Putin’s Russia excludes the alliance with Adolf Hitler from the grand narrative of the Great Fatherland War (1941–45) and refuses to take responsibility for its consequences. In the west, some fear that establishing August 23 on the continent’s mental map would diminish the weight of January 27, the date of the liberation of Auschwitz, when the Holocaust is remembered. Thus, historical memory in eastern Europe as well as in Europe as a whole can still be a divisive factor. The recent crisis between Russia and the west has proven Troebst—who has written about these problems for more than a decade—right. While history and memory are not at the heart of the conflict between Kyiv, Moscow, and Brussels, they do play a role. The Kremlin’s history politics seek to undermine western scholarship at home and in the “near abroad.” Conflicts about historical memory the author has analyzed—like those between Poland and Russia (over 1939 and Katyń)—have intensified. They have once again become part of national identities and international politics.

Using numerous examples, Troebst discusses the inherent tension in a European memorial culture. While historical memory is part and parcel of the European project, it has been hard to find a consensus about the catastrophes that ought to be publicly remembered: the Holocaust, the gulag, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and colonialism have had different impacts in different parts of the continent. They carry different meanings in different national and regional contexts. The memory of 1945 is another example used to illustrate different perspectives on history. While in western Europe as well as in Russia, the end of World War II is celebrated as the “liberation” from

Nazism and German occupation, it is widely perceived as the beginning of decades of communist oppression and Soviet occupation in much of eastern Europe. Both positions can hardly be reconciled. Thus, the same year may still be remembered with positive and negative connotations by neighboring nations. Europe's politicians, historians, and, indeed, citizens have to learn to live with diverse interpretations of the past. The trend of regulating the national past through specific legislation shows that many countries are not willing to accept unrestrained academic discussion about the past.

Troebst's articles on eastern Europe's cultural history form the last part of the book. They are more heterogeneous than his work on memory. His texts include essays on historians and historiography as well as pieces on the German perception of Bulgaria, the Greek emigration after the civil war, 1989, and the wars in the former Yugoslavia. Thus, they point to the broad interests of an author who is known as an eastern Europeanist and not as a specialist on any one single nation. The volume will help make his oeuvre more accessible internationally. It will also promote an *histoire engagée*, often written *cum ira et studio* yet still able to carefully balance different national points of view. Troebst's work illuminates the complexities of the (east) European past.

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Green Barons, Force-of-Circumstance Entrepreneurs, Impotent Mayors: Rural Change in the Early Years of Post-Socialist Capitalist Democracy. By Nigel Swain. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013. xiv, 398 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Tables. Maps. \$70.00, hard bound.

After twenty years of extensive research and publications on different aspects of rural change in postsocialist eastern Europe, Nigel Swain is unquestionably a leading scholar in this field. With his *Green Barons, Force-of-Circumstance Entrepreneurs, Impotent Mayors*, a volume on rural change in east central and southeastern Europe from 1989 until the mid-1990s, he offers a synthesis of his knowledge. This is to be treated as overwhelmingly good news, with a slight reservation.

Swain has organized an impressive amount of information under four main topics: 1) the restructuring of agriculture, where he analyzes the legal and economic features of decollectivization and the subsequent functioning of large-scale private corporate farms and private family farmers; 2) the non-farm economy, especially the opportunity to close the "socialist personal services gap"; 3) local government and the burden it increasingly shoulders as defunct cooperatives and higher state authorities alike devolve tasks to it without commensurate growth in the tax base; and 4) rural communities and civil society.

The book's narrative is informed by more than fifty case studies from Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia (later the Czech and Slovak Republics), Bulgaria, and Romania. Swain conducted most of the interviews himself, though local colleagues handled some, either within Swain's project or independently. To some degree, the author also draws on information gathered by the social anthropologists Katherine Verdery, Chris Hann, Andrew Cartwright, Deema Kaneff, Frances Pine, and others. Swain admits that Verdery and Hann in particular have already produced pertinent analyses on some of his book's topics, coining influential notions like Verdery's "the elasticity of land" ("The Elasticity of Land: Problems of Property Restitution in Transylvania,"