

Geoffrey Swain and Nigel Swain. *Eastern Europe Since 1945*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. Pp. xiv, 255. Paper, \$14.50.

Contrary to popular perceptions, Eastern Europe is not a single entity. Geoffrey and Nigel Swain reject that perception by examining the uniqueness of each of the seven or eight countries making up the Eastern bloc. At times it seems that the distinctions are extremely minute, but the total of these small differences do support their thesis that each country came under the Soviet umbrella in distinct enough ways and, more importantly, emerged from under that umbrella in such different ways as to warrant the demise of the term Eastern Europe.

Although sometimes difficult to read, the book is well researched and written. One weakness is the lack of a comprehensive bibliography. Extensive notes do provide the necessary documentation, but they are not as useful for others researching the topic as a bibliography. A highly detailed index helps locate specific information. Additionally, at the beginning of the book is a detailed chronology of events affecting these countries from April 1, 1939, until January 15, 1992.

At times it seems as if this is the story of Yugoslavia and East Germany, but the authors prepare the reader for this perception and give a reasonable explanation for why the book may seem unbalanced. The authors chose eight themes and examined each country for that theme. Yugoslavia was closely identified with the first four themes, while East Germany best demonstrated the last four. Even though these two seem to dominate the book, each of the other countries is covered, frequently in contrast to the two major countries.

Geoffrey Swain is now Lecturer in History at the University of the West of England, Bristol, while Nigel is the Deputy Director at the Centre for Central and East European Studies, University of Liverpool. Consequently, each of the authors is a recognized expert in the field. Geoffrey's specialty is Tito and Yugoslavia, while Nigel's is Hungary. Together they bring much expertise to the joint effort. One of the results of this depth of knowledge is an increased understanding of Stalin's paranoia toward his fellow communists. The reader also comes away from the book with a much better understanding of how the term Eastern Europe came to be applied to these distinctly different countries and why the communist experiment failed so badly.

As a result, lecture material is abundant in the book. There are also some excellent charts that could make good overheads to help students see relationships between individuals, party positions, and government positions within and between countries. Because of the many subtle distinctions and depth of detail, the book, in its entirety, is probably most applicable to upper-division classes and/or seminars.

Lower-division classes could utilize individual essays for purposes of discussion and/or writing exercises. Some interesting current event projects might also be developed using the last essay and newspaper articles to see how the countries have progressed since 1989. Such a project could also be adapted for high school history classes.

Perhaps the greatest use for this book on all classroom levels would be to help students understand how Yugoslavia was formed and what has happened to the country. Because of the many fine distinctions, the book can also help students understand why the Balkans need to be considered separately from central Europe, something the authors insist the world must learn to do.

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