

Biografický slovník vedoucích funkcionářů KSČ v letech 1921– 1989 (2 vols), eds Petr Anev, Matěj Bílý. Prague: Academia, Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2018, 732+660.

The Czech Academy of Sciences and the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes have published the *Biographical Dictionary of the Leading Functionaries of the KSČ* (The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia), covering the entirety of its existence, from its establishment in 1921 until its demise in 1989. This extraordinary publishing endeavor is the joint work of forty-eight Czech and Slovak historians from various scholarly institutions. It contains biographies of 326 top Czechoslovak communists who held various posts throughout the party's history. Although it is a professionally-written academic work, the topic certainly also appeals to the general public, and the book itself was composed with this in mind, so that it can be read by experts and laypeople alike.

Some of the authors featured in the two-volume work are already well familiar to the historians in the post-Yugoslav space. Milan Sovilj and Ondřej Vojtěchovský, who penned several of the articles, are well-known historians of Yugoslavia and of Czechoslovak-Yugoslav relations. Sovilj had received his master's degree in history at the University of Belgrade before moving to Prague to do a PhD. He is the author of two monographs on Czechoslovak-Yugoslav ties, covering the period from 1939 to 1941, and 1945 to 1949.¹ Vojtěchovský is the author of a book on Yugoslav Cominformist émigrés in Czechoslovakia, which was published both in Czech and in Serbo-Croatian.² Moreover, he has co-authored a book on the history of Serbia, together with two of the reviewers for the *Biographical Dictionary*, Jan Pelikán and Jan Rychlík.³

The *Biographical Dictionary's* greatest strength is the fact that it is not a mere compendium of existing and well-known information on Czechoslovak communists, but that it also features original archival research conducted by the authors. This includes not only the National Archive and local archives, but also the holdings of the Security Services Archive, casting new light on topics such as the Stalinist show trials in 1952. The article on Rudolf Slánský, for instance (co-written by Vojtěchovský and Martin Pražák), contains a detailed summary of his investigation, the trumped up charges against him, and the struggle to get him to confess, which included his failed suicide attempt (Volume 2, 292). On top of

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- 1 Milan Sovilj, *Československo-jugoslávské vztahy v letech 1939–1941: od zániku Československé republiky do okupace Království Jugoslávie*, (Praha: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2016); Milan Sovilj, *U potrazi za nedostížním. Jugoslovensko-čehoslovačke kulturne veze 1945–1949*, (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2012).
 - 2 Ondřej Vojtěchovský, *Iz Praga protiv Tita! Jugoslavenska informbiroovska emigracija u Čehoslovačkoj*, (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2016). The Czech edition was published as: *Z Prahy proti Titovi! Jugoslávská informbyrovská emigrace v Československu* by the Charles University in 2012.
 - 3 Lubomíra Havlíková, Tomáš Chrobák, Jan Pelikán, Jan Rychlík, Miroslav Tejchman, Ondřej Vojtěchovský, *Dějiny Srbska* (3rd edition), (Prague: NLN, 2019).

that, all entries are based on a significant array of secondary and published primary sources, which can aid interested readers in finding out more about each individual of over three hundred communists listed.

The book covers not only the mainstream leading figures of the party, but also the long forgotten oppositionists, such as the “far-left” revolutionary wing of KSČ in 1921–1922, led by Václav Bolen, Bohumil Jílek, and Václav Štunc, as well as the Trotskyist group led by the ethnic German communist Alois Neurath, which seceded in 1929 to form the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Leninists). The first Czechoslovak communist dictator, Klement Gottwald (chronicled by Jiří Pernes), although presented critically, is also portrayed somewhat sympathetically, showing that he was not a mere puppet of Moscow, but also a sincere believer in the possibility of a unique “Czechoslovak road to socialism” (Volume 1, 365). This much needed interpretation is often absent from the Czech historical memory, and although it may raise eyebrows in some circles, it seems to be strongly corroborated by new sources. Nevertheless, the account is not apologetic and it does not gloss over his meek resistance to Soviet directives, or his complete submission to Moscow-imposed campaign of persecuting his party comrades.

The post-Yugoslav readers will be particularly interested in the coverage of key figures from the history of Czechoslovak-Yugoslav relations. They will be pleased to find an excellent biography of Bedřich Geminder, whose turbulent biography went from being one of the main promoters of Yugoslav-Czechoslovak ties, through being one of the leaders of the anti-Yugoslav campaign in 1948, only to be executed in the farcical trial of “Titoists” in 1952 (Volume 1, 351–353). In the second volume, they have the opportunity to learn of Viliam Šalgovič, arguably the only Czechoslovak communist who actually did harbor “pro-Yugoslav” sympathies in 1948, and who ironically survived the purges of the 1950s, only to rise to prominence as a reformer in 1968, but then make a political U-turn and become one of the leading figures of “Normalization” in the 1970s (341–342). The book also contains information on actual supporters of the “Yugoslav path” in 1968, such as Drahomír Kolder, and the architect of Dubček’s economic program Ota Šik (who was actually in Yugoslavia at the time of the Soviet invasion, and decided not to return to his home country).

Perhaps the only significant flaw of this excellent two-volume project is the underrepresentation of women. Out of 326 biographies, only twenty-one (or roughly 6.4%) are dedicated to female communists. Of course, this should not necessarily be blamed on the editors, who even included some women who were never in leading posts, because of their historical importance (Volume 1, 15–16). Rather, it was the KSČ itself which, in spite of a verbal embrace of women’s emancipation, generally kept women excluded from the leading bodies (Volume 1, 34). However, one cannot help but also notice the underrepresentation of women historians among the authors, as only eight out of 48 contributors are female. As historiography still remains largely a male-dominated discipline, the entirety of academia should make a conscious effort to support the work of female academics and better integrate them into the professional environment, as well as to remove any structural obstacles to their inclusion.

Overall, the *Biographical Dictionary* is bound to be remembered as one of the most ambitious and well-executed projects of Czech and Slovak historiography of the previous decade. The volume is bound to become a standard reference point for generations of historians, as well as the general public. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia is certainly one of the most interesting organizations of 20th century communism, and its international impact and significance guarantee that this book will be of interest not only to domestic audiences, but also globally, including of course the countries of former Yugoslavia, with whom the Czechoslovaks had had particularly close ties throughout different periods of the previous century.

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Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius. *Imaging and Mapping Eastern Europe. Sarmatia Europea to Post-Communist Bloc*.
New York – London: Routledge, 2021, 235.

The classics in the field of imagining and mental mapping of Eastern Europe, such as Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* or Vesna Goldsworthy's *Inventing Ruritania*, and to a lesser degree Larry Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe*, focus on texts. Even the newer additions to the study of representations of Eastern Europe such as Diana Mishkova's *Beyond Balkanism*, keep this focus with an occasional analysis of an image or map. This is exactly why Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, Associate Professor at the Department of History of Art at Birkbeck college, University of London, puts "images, art and non-art alike" at the centre of research. This *lacunae* is the reason why the author finds it necessary to add to a cramped field of representations of Eastern Europe, that "other Europe", that was defined as the mirror image of Western Europe through the supposed "lack" of civilization, enlightenment, progress, freedom.

The book is an organic one, coming together from decades long research that Murawska-Muthesius did under the influence of the school of iconology. The long writing process of the book might be the explanation of why the author is careful not to use a simplified application of the postcolonial discourse analysis to the region which results in a layered study of the images of the Eastern Europe. The introduction (*Welcome to Slaka*) and conclusion (*Farewell to Slaka*) rounds up the book, referring to the imaginary Eastern European country of "Slaka" from Malcom Bradbury's 1983. novel *Rates of Exchange*. It serves as a handy metaphor for the shifting imaginaries of the region.

The second chapter, *Mapping Eastern Europe*, is an in-depth study of maps of the region which "kept testifying to the shifting political landscapes". Reaching as far back as renaissance renderings of Ptolemy's knowledge of the