Gáll hatte erst 1968 den Doktorgrad erlangt, wurde bereits 1970 Mitglied der Akademie für Gesellschafts- und Politikwissenschaft und erhielt 1975 eine wichtige Auszeichnung des Schriftstellerverbandes. Seine theoretischen Schriften in ungarischer Sprache blieben von der Zensur verschont. Er durfte auch im westlichen Ausland auf Tagungen sprechen und hatte Zugang zu den Schriften ausländischer Philosophen; besonders orientierte er sich an Ernst Bloch, Ernst Fischer und Jean-Paul Sartre.

Im Jahr 1984 trat Gáll freiwillig von seinen Posten als Chefredakteur der *Korunk* und als Hochschullehrer zurück. Mit 67 Jahren begann er, sich mit seinen dogmatischen Positionen aus der stalinistischen Ära auseinanderzusetzen. Zunehmend beschäftigte er sich nun auch mit jüdischen Themen und dem Holocaust. Vor 1989 hatte er den Faschismus als Folge der kapitalistischen Widersprüche dargestellt und den Rassismus nicht untersucht. Seine neue Orientierung stand im Zusammenhang mit den Angriffen auf die Träger des kommunistischen Systems nach 1989, bei denen oft deren jüdische Herkunft hervorgehoben wurde. Bis zu seinem Tod im Jahr 2000 blieb er im Gespräch mit vielen ungarischen und rumänischen Kulturschaffenden.

H. konstatiert Gáll die typische Intellektuellenbiografie eines Osteuropäers, der im kommunistischen System zwischen den Kulturen zu vermitteln suchte. Bis 1971 nahm er als Stalinist seine eigene ethnische Identität nicht wahr, um danach jedoch unter neuem staatlichem Druck schrittweise seine multiplen Identitäten als Jude, Linker und Angehöriger des ungarischen Kulturkreises zu reflektieren. Das flüssig geschriebene Buch gibt einen guten Einblick in die beschränkten Handlungsoptionen von Angehörigen einer Minderheit im kommunistischen Rumänien und bereichert die Forschungen über situative Ethnizität.

Berlin Mariana Hausleitner

After Utopia. Czechoslovak Normalization between Experiment and Experience, 1968–1989. Hrsg. vov Christiane Brenner, Michal Pullmann und Anja Tippner. (Bad Wiesseer Tagungen des Collegium Carolinum, Bd. 41.) Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. Göttingen 2022. 406 S. ISBN 978-3-525-33614-4. (€ 70,–.)

Within the past few years, many Czech historians of communism have somehow been involved in, or at least affected by, a harsh form of *Historikerstreit*, which has taken the form of a public and scientific debate about so-called "historical revisionism." The nature of the dispute itself relates, above all, to the common understanding and interpretation of the communist past, particularly the period of Normalization. About 30 years after the collapse of the system of a state socialist dictatorship, Czech society was confronted once again with the specter of Normalization, this ghost of the past, which, resembling the ancient deity of Janus, had several, often contradictory, faces.

It soon became obvious that the task of producing a contextual, historical, and social analysis of Normalization is rather complex and often gives rise to new, unexpected questions regarding not only the character of power relations but a whole universe of social interactions as well. However widely accepted or even prevailing it still may appear, the established narrative of Normalization as a period of oppression, stagnation, and "darkness" now seems not to be very revealing, and the very essence of this kind of interpretation has been exposed rather as a set of ideological aspirations and self-confirmations. Its analytical potential nevertheless remains encapsulated in a tricky and looped hypothesis, which is posed not as a question but rather as an already prefabricated answer.

In *After Utopia*, a transnational group of about 20 historians, mostly from Central Europe, is taking its research aspirations in quite the opposite direction. For them, the discussion of Normalization and its connection to the present "is an ongoing process that continually receives new impulses" (p. 15). By that, they mean more than the already mentioned discussion about "historical revisionism." The global disarray of, for instance, the COVID-19 pandemic, represents a kind of disruptive moment in world history. That

was a moment when we, as Europeans, entered into a serious debate about the character and extent of personal freedom and social policy and their complex interrelationship. At such times, we encounter the same problem that played a major role in the state socialist systems in the 1970s and 1980s. The era of late socialism, with all its very own dynamics and crises, is still a phase of industrial and post-industrial modernity. It seems to be fundamentally connected to the everyday problems of our lifetime, and though in the past, it is still somehow connected to the character of our present conditions of living. Inspired by this awareness, the authors of the presented publication decided to characterize the era of Normalization in general, using heterogeneous perspectives from social, political, cultural, and conceptual history as the guiding principle of theory and methodology.

The volume itself is structurally divided into four partitions or chapters and an epilogue. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are intended as well-founded and rather empirical clarifications of how Normalization was "made" in its political and social context from the perspective of the top-down hierarchy (Chapter 2), how it was "lived" in the sense of the everyday lifestyle and cultural representation (Chapter 3), and finally, how Normalization is now "remembered" in its post-socialist "afterlife" of the neoliberal era (Chapter 4). The first, introductory part also includes a contribution by Martin Schulze Wessel ("The Genesis of the Normalization")— an essential analysis and a brief, yet still worthwhile summary of how Normalization was gradually generated as a form of political praxis between 1968 and 1970.

The first chapter, entitled "Normality and Normalization," embraces a significantly theoretical, explanatory standpoint of conceptual and intellectual history. That is part of the reason I will focus on this chapter in particular. In his paper called "Normalization between Experience, Expectation, and *Ostalgie*," Thomas Lindenberger observes the conceptual problem of normality as such. He traces the very genesis and transformations of the term itself, and its relevance in the modern industrial era. Based on the profound theoretical works of Michel Foucault, Lindenberger explains that "experiences with and expectations of normality and normalization are nothing new." Quite the contrary, "they form part of the longue durée of modern, post-traditional societies" (p. 23). According to Lindenberger, "Normalization as a concept, an expectation, an experience, and an argument […] is equally the product of modern industrial society and an agent of the labor movement" (p. 20). Normalization as such is, therefore, the most present symbol of modernity since it refers to the general and continually growing tendency to "datafication" as well as to "the technical standardization in everyday measurement processes" (p. 21).

Standardization, as a generalization of the forms of human knowledge, also defined the "horizons of expectations" during the tumultuous and often violent years of the twentieth century. Predictable and normal life was more than just a popular desire; it was an actual goal to attain; where life floats in the channels of predictability, there is an actual, solid chance of a decent existence for individuals and families that also seems to be more obtainable. Thus normalcy as the desirable horizon of the living standard and the social welfare state is also a key factor of social and political stability. It is a factor that should not be omitted if we aim to address Normalization not only as a critical and contradictory period of political history but also as the lived experience of the masses.

Lindenberger's observation of the conceptual and social framework of Normality and Normalization draws our attention to the crucial point of understanding the Normalization era as such, and to the fact that despite all the oppressive authority and executive power of state apparatuses and secret police, all of which remained so vividly imprinted in the public memory, Normalization as a social phenomenon was characterized by more than just that. As an era of its own significance, Normalization established a kind of social contract between the state power and the masses, a social contract that reflected "horizons of expectation." Reaching these horizons was completely in the interests of the ruling structures of power and was, therefore, part of the practice through which the state power legitimized and consolidated itself. Such a fact is well presented, especially in the articles of Jakub

Rákosník ("The Social Policy of Czechoslovak Normalization") and Filip Keller ("The Making of the Czechoslovak Socialist Working Class"). Therefore, Normalization cannot be reflected upon without taking into consideration the "horizons of expectations" created by its historical actors and agents. Only within these horizons is it possible to analyze Normalization properly.

After Utopia is a collection of essays and articles of considerable significance. It demonstrates the unrelenting validity of the Foucaultian perspective for social and historical analysis. As the symbiosis of intellectual and social history, the publication will suit anyone who desires to understand the complexity of the late socialism era in the space of Central Europe.

Praha Ondřej Holub

Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe in the Era of Normalisation, 1969–1989. Hrsg. von Kevin McDermott und Matthew Stibbe. Palgrave Macmillan. Cham 2022. XIX, 345 S. ISBN 978-3-030-98270-6 ($ 139,–.)

On the night of 20–21 August 1968, Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia, abruptly ending the reform movement that had unleashed the Prague Spring. Under Soviet pressure, the country was forced to renounce the changes of the previous few months, a process referred to as "normalization." This term eventually came to refer to the entire period between the invasion and 1989. The era of normalization has often been described as a time when nothing happened. Indeed, according to Czechoslovak dissident Václav Havel, the very goal of the normalization regime was to prevent anything from happening. After 1989, many historians adopted Havel's perspective; normalization has typically been described by scholars as characterized by repression, stagnation, apathy, conformity, and cynicism. The editors of this volume, Kevin McDermott, and Matthew Stibbe, want to add nuance to this one-dimensional perspective. The book's 14 essays provide a broad overview of current scholarship on the history of normalization. The authors are all leading scholars in the field, and most of them are Czech or Slovak. Some of the chapters are case studies based on current research projects, some are distillations of the author's previous work, and some are synthetic accounts based largely on secondary sources. Taken together, they collectively illustrate how "post-1969 Czechoslovakia was not simply coercive, destructive and immobile" (p. 15). While not denying the reality of repression and apathy, the authors highlight how normalization also encompassed moments of negotiation, creativity, and opportunity.

Normalization required crushing the reform movement, but this happened gradually over several years. For months after the invasion, many people continued to hope that some aspects of the reforms might be salvaged. Several chapters discuss different elements of this process. James Krapfl's chapter is a case study of how normalization unfolded in the district of Nymburk. Using records from the district-level communist party committee and the local weekly newspaper, *Nymbursko*, he shows how widespread support for continuing the reforms gradually faltered under pressure. In September 1968, *Nymbursko* quoted teachers endorsing "a humane, democratically socialist society," a clear reference to the reform movement. A year later, however, the paper published a letter from another group of teachers declaring, "Now it is clear to us that the August arrival of armies from fraternal states saved socialism" (p. 44). Vítežslav Sommer's chapter focuses on the city of Gottwaldov (today's Zlín). Here, reformers remained in control of the district throughout the summer of 1969. Even after that, local Communist Party cells had trouble getting their members to stick to the official line. Many quit the party in disgust and others refused to vote to expel colleagues or cancel their memberships.

Several chapters emphasize that the regime of normalization leader Gustav Husák was more multifaceted than it appears in dissident writing like Havel's "The Power of the Powerless" from 1978. In his chapter on the "Ideological Face of Normalization," Michal