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

Pullmann notes that while Husák's government was undoubtedly coercive and authoritarian, it rejected the arbitrary violence of Stalinism in favor of socialist legality. Eschewing the public spectacle of show trials, the normalization regime used the authority of scientific expertise to quietly discipline the deviant, allowing most citizens to live a "conflict-free and non-violent life" (p. 61). Kieran Williams underscores this in his chapter on the security service (StB). Using the example of Slovak editor Agneša Kalinová, he shows how the StB was constrained by the need to provide actual evidence to have a suspect convicted of espionage. Even though agents bugged Kalinová's home and tapped her phone, they were unable to charge her with a crime, although they did manage to get her husband convicted of sedition on flimsy grounds. Similarly, in his chapter on cultural policy, Jan Mervart shows how the regime's brutal purge of the cultural realm after 1968 was riddled with inconsistencies that allowed many ostracized artists to eventually return to creative work in some form.

Celia Donert's chapter on gender highlights the surprising complexity of a period that has often been characterized as a time of stagnation and stasis. In contrast to the more radical gender egalitarianism of the Stalinist period, the Husák regime adopted a pro-family stance that emphasized gender difference by offering mothers more resources to stay at home with young children. While we might label these policies conservative, Donert shows that they did not represent a simple return to the past. Normalization's pronatalist policies assumed women would do the caring work of the family, but they also gave financial benefits directly to women, including divorced women. The feminine gender ideal of normalization was not the stay-at-home housewife of the pre-communist period but a "socialist superwoman" (p. 179), who took care of the home and its inhabitants in addition to being economically independent and politically active.

While the book is about Czechoslovakia, four of the chapters look at how normalization affected Czechoslovakia's relations with the USSR (Rachel Applebaum), the GDR (Stibbe), Poland (Ondřej Klípa), and Yugoslavia (Ondřej Vojtěchovský and Jan Pelikán). The goal of the 1968 invasion was ostensibly to keep Czechoslovakia in the socialist camp and one aspect of normalization was rebuilding friendly ties between Czechoslovakia and its socialist allies. These chapters emphasize that friendship between nations encompassed a wide variety of contacts that moved well beyond elite interactions, including trade, labor migration, tourism, and cultural exchange.

The emphasis in this volume is on politics rather than everyday life, but the book makes the point that the two were inextricably intertwined. As Pullmann explains in his contribution, Husák's promise of a "quiet life" (p. 67) had significant popular appeal. In his chapter on Slovakia, Adam Hudek discusses why many Slovaks looked favorably on the normalization regime, which brought not only economic stability but also greater Slovak autonomy. Hudek's high-level analysis is usefully complicated by Miroslav Vaněk's chapter, which uses oral history to give a different perspective on the experience of normalization's economic stability. Vaněk's respondents were often frustrated by the consumer choices available to them in the 1970s and 1980s. But they emphasized their ability to overcome these challenges; rather than being apathetic and conformist, they were creative and resourceful. Were these people opportunists or oppositional, or both? Their narratives, Vaněk says, open up more questions than they answer. Like all the essays in this volume, they frustrate our attempts to see the normalization era in a neat and tidy way, exchanging the certainties of older narratives for a messier but ultimately more satisfying way of thinking about these decades of Czechoslovak history.

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