

**Socialist Internationalism and the Gritty Politics of the Particular.** Second-Third World Spaces in the Cold War. Hrsg. von Kristin Roth-Ey. (Histories of Internationalism). New York – London. Bloomsbury Academic 2023. XI, 279 S., Ill. ISBN 978-1-3503-0278-5. (\$ 103,50.)

The Cold War, once perceived as a geopolitical struggle confined to the rivalry between the USA and the USSR, is now seen as a global conflict with broader implications. *Socialist Internationalism and the Gritty Politics of the Particular*, edited by Kristin Roth-Ey, is a notable example of this evolving perspective. This compelling contribution not only reshapes our comprehension of the Cold War but also deftly intertwines the narratives of globalization and decolonization.

At the heart of this book is an intriguing exploration of social spaces co-constructed by the countries in so-called “Second” and “Third” World countries. By exploring such cases, the contributors highlight the strategic, ideological, and everyday considerations that shaped interactions between emerging countries and socialist forces. Many of those instances transcended the usual diplomatic channels and were not limited to cabinet rooms of officials but also included places that are much less commonly understood as socialist spaces, such as bars, prisons, schools, or even the airwaves and letters. Experts from the Czech military, economists from Poland, women from the Soviet Union, doctors from Romania, and writers from Hungary, among others, perceived themselves as influential figures in guiding the postcolonial world and, at times, their own countries to explore possibilities beyond the boundaries of the Socialist Bloc. However, the editor notes that despite the many works on the permeable nature of the Iron Curtain, the lives of those who bridged the gap were anything but ordinary (p. 7.) The book brings these extraordinary individuals to the forefront, humanizes politics, and reveals the complexity of personal experiences.

Throughout the chapters, the specter of imperialism hovers discreetly but persistently in the background, contributing to an undercurrent that nuances the protagonists’ experiences and leaves a mark on the interactions described in the work. It is particularly evident in the stories of the book’s heroes, such as the chapter “The Travelogue,” in which white Eastern Europeans face hostility in former colonies because of their appearance (p. 254.) Małgorzata Mazurek’s contribution further emphasizes this theme, illustrating how London-based Polish professors became participants in the Africanization of the university. Thus, former metropolises exerted a subtle influence and shaped the experiences and identities of individuals who, at first glance, seemed liberated from the colonial past. Such cases skillfully highlight the complex interplay of personal factors, particularly emphasizing the critical role of race, colonial experiences, and gender in shaping access dynamics and apparent power imbalances. The contributors’ analysis reveals a painful truth, namely the paradox that access to “global” was not synonymous with “universal”, as Roth-Ey puts it in her introduction (p. 11). Against this background, the book makes a convincing case for a concept that goes by various names: “colonialism without colonies,”<sup>1</sup> “crypto-colonies,”<sup>2</sup> or “colonial complicity.”<sup>3</sup> Eastern, Central, and Southern European states were entangled in colonial structures and struggled with the complexities and long-term consequences of colonialism. The persistence of the fantasies and social imagination of individuals in these regions, even when they come face-to-face with “the Other” in intimate contexts, is clear

<sup>1</sup> BARBARA LÜTHI: Colonialism without Colonies in Europe: Defining Lines, in: MARKÉTA KRÍŽOVÁ, JITKA MALEČKOVÁ (eds.): Central Europe and the Non-European World in the Long 19th Century, Berlin 2022, pp. 201–213.

<sup>2</sup> MICHAEL HERZFELD: The Absence Presence: Discourses of Crypto-Colonialism, in: The South Atlantic Quarterly 101 (2002), 4, pp. 899–926.

<sup>3</sup> ULLA VUORELA: Colonial Complicity: The “Postcolonial” in a Nordic Context, in: SUVI KESKINEN, SALLA TUORI et al (eds.): Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region, Burlington 2009. pp. 19–34.

evidence of the continuing influence of colonial history. Therefore, the book not only captures the dynamics of personal encounters but also serves as a mirror reflecting the complex interaction of historical legacy with the realities of “Second” and “Third” World meetings.

The key problem of the book is the omission of source materials originating from the “Third” world. Most narratives are based on evidence from the Bloc and represent just socialist perspectives, resulting in a noticeable deficiency of experiences of the other side. Such narrative asymmetry becomes evident when considering the intrinsic dualistic nature of the bilateral agreements in the Cold War, which oftentimes included more than two parties (p. 14). As a result, readers are afforded only occasional insights into the diverse and complex experiences of individuals from the “Third” World. One such instance could be seen in the contribution of Alena Alamgir, who gives agency to Vietnamese prisoners in Czechoslovakia (p. 229). However, she relies on materials from the Czech archives, which also poses limitations. Thus, by giving a voice to other actors, scholars could have developed a more comprehensive, inclusive, and holistic portrayal of the reciprocal interactions at play.

Nevertheless, in delving into each chapter, the reader is treated to a series of distinct cases, each resembling a captivating stand-alone story. These narratives, though diverse in their focus, harmoniously converge to weave a cohesive tapestry. The stories beautifully contribute to the broader narrative of co-constructing spaces and unveil the interconnectedness of Eastern Europe with the global community. Moreover, the text transcends a mere collection of stories; it serves as a lens through which the reader can appreciate the dynamic and multifaceted nature of global entanglements.

Overall, the book stands as a captivating and multifaceted read. It deftly dismantles the limitations of the binary Cold War paradigm and reveals that the geopolitical chessboard is much more complex and vaster than previously thought. The book is undoubtedly essential for scholars and enthusiasts of this historical period, but it also extends an invitation to a wider audience. Its unique strength lies in the panoramic geographical and thematic scope of its contributions. Whether military training, economic incentives, personal histories, or cultural expectations, each thematic thread contributes to a holistic understanding of the Cold War’s impact on individuals.

Gießen

Mariia Zimina

**Kyryll Kunakhovich: Communism’s Public Sphere.** Culture as Politics in Cold War Poland and East Germany. Cornell University Press. Ithaca – London 2022. XIII, 337 S., Ill., Kt. ISBN 978-1-5017-6704-3. (\$ 46,95.)

Kultur hat im Sozialismus die Rolle einer Ersatzöffentlichkeit gespielt – diese These, die dem vorliegenden Buch Kyryll Kunakhovichs zugrunde liegt, ist weder neu noch besonders innovativ. Das Werk des an der University of Virginia lehrenden Historikers ist dennoch in höchstem Maße lesenswert: Ausgehend von der Frage, welche (wandelbare) Funktion Kultur und Kulturpolitik im Sozialismus in seinen unterschiedlichen Phasen hatte, gelingt dem Autor gleichsam nebenbei eine gut lesbare Gesamtdarstellung der Geschichte des Sozialismus.

In seiner Definition von Öffentlichkeit bezieht sich K. lose auf Jürgen Habermas, der ihm aber eher als Aufhänger für seine Fragestellung nach einer Öffentlichkeit im Sozialismus denn als wirkliche theoretische Grundlage dient. Auch die Ausführungen zum transnationalen Charakter des Ostblocks und die Frage nach der Repräsentativität von lokalen Fallstudien – der Vf. nähert sich seinem Thema aus dem Blickwinkel von Krakau und Leipzig – sind knapp gehalten.

Der Aufbau des Buches orientiert sich weitgehend an bekannten Zäsuren. Die ersten beiden Kapitel sind der Phase des Stalinismus gewidmet. K. zeichnet darin am Beispiel der Kulturfunktionäre Bolesław Drobner (Krakau) und Rudolf Hartig (Leipzig) nach, wie der