

risch-landeskundlichen Forschung in Deutschland bzw. der institutionalisierten „Ostkunde“ nach 1945 dar. Dabei werden in einigen Bereichen auch neue Fakten präsentiert, etwa im Aufsatz von Spannberger in Bezug auf die Biografie von Valjavec, die in Ermangelung einer umfangreicheren Studie bis heute ein Desiderat darstellt. Auch Feests Studie zu der Baltischen Historischen Kommission und ihrer Transformation von einer erlebnisgeschichtlichen zu einer von Erkenntnisinteresse getragenen Institution ist ein lesenswerter Beitrag hinsichtlich der Professionalisierung der Beschäftigung mit dem östlichen Europa nach der Wiedererlangung der staatlichen Autonomie der baltischen Republiken nach der Zeit der Bevormundung durch die UdSSR.

Dieser Beitrag wie auch die Darstellung von Gehrke zur Historischen Kommission für Schlesien zeigt letztlich, wie stark Kontinuitäten der Zeit vor 1945 in der Nachkriegszeit nachwirkten. In dieser Hinsicht unterschieden sich auch die west- und die „ostdeutschen“ Historischen Kommissionen nur wenig voneinander. In einer Zeit aber, in der die Historischen Kommissionen zunehmend mit internationalen Expert:innen besetzt werden, dürfte die Frage nach „mit“ oder „ohne Land“ ohnehin immer mehr an Relevanz verlieren.

München

Tobias Weger

**Melissa Feinberg: Communism in Eastern Europe.** Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. London – New York 2022. X, 229 S., Ill., Kt. ISBN 978-0-367-08609-1. (£ 36,99.)

In *Communism in Eastern Europe*, Melissa Feinberg provides a concise yet insightful history of the countries that adopted Communist governments while remaining outside the Soviet Union after World War II. These include Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, and their successor states. F.'s narrative, rooted in the politics of everyday life, strikes a thoughtful balance between depth and accessibility. Rather than overwhelming readers with excessive details, the book offers a thorough overview of the major developments that shaped the post-war history of Eastern Europe. *Communism in Eastern Europe* serves as an excellent introduction for both undergraduate and graduate students seeking to understand this region's complex history.

The book opens with a succinct introduction that sets the stage for the subsequent chapters. Organized chronologically, the eight chapters discuss the major phases of the region's history: the establishment of communist regimes (chapter 1), the transformation of societies under Stalinism (chapter 2), the dynamics of socialist modernity (chapter 3), post-Stalinist reform and retrenchment (chapter 4), the rise of consumer culture (chapter 5), the crises of the 1980s (chapter 6), the shift from late socialism to neoliberalism (chapter 7), and the post-communist developments following the eastward enlargements of the European Union (chapter 8).

The study is built upon two central premises. First, F. argues that communism granted Eastern Europe "a larger degree of unity than it has ever known before. Under Communism, the countries of Eastern Europe had similar forms of governments and similar economic systems. They shared some of the same vacation spots, consumer goods and television programs. Even more significantly, they were joined by the same guiding ideology and set of values" (p. 6). This claim is compellingly demonstrated throughout the book. Through cross-country comparisons and exploration of the region's complex ties with both the Soviet Union and the West, F. effectively shows how shared structures and practices forged a regional identity distinct from both the Soviet Union and the capitalist West. By highlighting common political frameworks, economic policies, and cultural touchpoints, F. makes a convincing case for the unifying role of communism across diverse national contexts.

The second premise, however, is somewhat less fully realized. F. characterizes Eastern Europe under communism as "a world of seeming contradictions" and observes that it "censored books but also ended illiteracy. It put some people in jail for their political beliefs but gave women legal equality with men and access to a wide range of new careers.

It was a world where bananas were almost impossible to find in the stores, but where on average people had more to eat than ever before" (p. 3). While these contradictions are touched upon in the book, they are not as thoroughly explored as the first premise. The notion of a contradictory reality under communism, though compelling, often appears more as a background theme than a central analytical thread.

The author's treatment of women's history (pp. 81–85, 129–133) and the role of media (pp. 123–129, 136–140) stands out for its depth and nuance. Her exploration of women's experiences under communism is particularly impressive. F. highlights the profound societal changes prompted by policies promoting gender equality, such as increased access to education, employment opportunities, and legal rights. She illustrates how these measures, though often ideologically driven and inconsistently implemented, reshaped gender roles and challenged traditional norms, even as they coexisted with persistent inequalities and limitations. Similarly, the discussion of media under communism is insightful. F. captures the dual nature of media as both a tool of state propaganda and a space for shared cultural experiences that transcended national boundaries. Through examples of popular television programs, films, and consumer advertisements she shows how media reflected socialist modernity, illustrating both the aspirations and contradictions of the era. Together, these sections of the book offer fresh perspectives on the everyday lives and cultural dynamics of Eastern Europe under communism.

Crafting a synthesis inevitably requires prioritizing certain topics while leaving others less explored, and F.'s book navigates this balance thoughtfully. Some readers might hope for a more in-depth exploration of the socio-economic policies introduced during the war by the Nazi and Soviet occupiers and their long-term impacts. Others may wish for a closer examination of regional differences within individual countries, whereas those with a particular interest in the history of entanglements between the Second and Third Worlds might find the discussion of the global dimensions of socialism (pp. 189–195) somewhat brief. That said, F.'s broad and inclusive approach to Eastern Europe's post-war history serves as a highly valuable resource for both students and scholars, offering a rich foundation for further readings.

The book's usability in academic settings is further enhanced by two features: a well-organized and comprehensive index, which makes it a practical tool for students and researchers interested in specific topics within the history of Eastern Europe after 1945, and references to iconic cultural representations—such as Milan Kundera's novel *The Joke* or the Czechoslovak TV series *A Hospital on the Edge of Town*—which complement the book's narrative and provide readers with cultural perspectives that bring the historical context to life.

Bielefeld

Kornelia Kończal

**Rüdiger Ritter, Britta Albers: Haren/Maczków 1945–1948.** Zwei Perspektiven auf die emsländische Gemeinde Haren in der Nachkriegszeit. / Haren/Maczków 1945–1948. Dwa spojrzenia na miejscowość Haren w rejonie Emsland po II wojnie światowej. Stadt Haren (Ems). Haren 2023. 255 S., Ill. ISBN 978-3-00-074934-6. (€ 19,95.)

Rüdiger Ritter, der Vf. dieses zweisprachig deutsch-polnischen Buches, leitet das Dokumentationszentrum Haren/Maczków in der niedersächsischen Kleinstadt Haren (Ems). Die Ko-Autorin, Britta Albers, arbeitet im dortigen Stadtarchiv. Das Dokumentationszentrum und das Stadtarchiv sind Abteilungen des Hauses der Harener Geschichte „Inselmühle“. Der Band ist überaus reich illustriert und überhaupt sehr sorgfältig gestaltet.

Die Zweisprachigkeit des Buches ist – angesichts der Nachkriegsgeschichte der Schifferstadt Haren an der Ems – naheliegend. An Pfingsten, dem 20. Mai 1945 (also wenige Tage nach Kriegsende), wurden die etwas 5.000 Einwohner Harens auf Anordnung der britischen Militärverwaltung in die umliegenden Ortschaften ausgesiedelt. In der Stadt wurden dafür in Deutschland befreite Polen einquartiert – ehemalige Zwangsarbeiter, KZ-