

Zitierhinweis

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mann manages to combine her expertise from two disciplines into an impressively broad contextualization. A little less convincing is her sensitivity regarding terminology. She often simply copies the modes of expression of her sources, for example when discussing the role of the Ottoman Empire. She uses 'Turk', 'Turkish yoke', 'Russian-Turkish War' (82, 295, 413, etc.) without marking these terms as non-exact. Perhaps most crucially, she herself falls into one of the bleakest traps of Balkanization when she labels the Yugoslav wars of dissolution as 'Balkan wars', even in a chapter heading (see above).

However, these are among the few items of criticism to be put forth in reviewing this very interesting book. Zimmermann succeeds not only in integrating Western and Eastern imaginaries of the Balkans but also shows how these projections have influenced people and politics, not least in the Balkans themselves. She has analysed and decoded an impressive amount of literature and artistic work, and empirically shows how national identities were constructed also as a response to projections from outside. Last but not least, she establishes the mental ties between (stereotypical) images of the Balkans between the 19th and the 21st centuries. The book thus is highly recommended.

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Martin Upchurch / Darko Marinković,
Workers and Revolution in Serbia.
From Tito to Milošević, Manchester:
 Manchester University Press, 2013,
 160 pp., ISBN 978-071-908-508-6, £65.00

Manchester University Press places this book within the generic BIC standard subject categories of 'Political Science / Gen-

eral, Society & Social Sciences', and in the more specific one 'Revolutionary Groups & Movements'. The 'revolution' referred to is the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević's regime in Serbia in October 2000, and the 'movement' behind it one consisting of 'the workers'. In assessing these workers' role in Yugoslavia's / Serbia's late socialist period and the subsequent transition, the authors take the reader chronologically from 'The Tito Years' (Chapter Two) to an assessment of 'Serbia's New Period of Crisis' (Chapter Six)—the crisis experienced during the time of the global economic downturn between 2008 and 2010)—, covering on the way 'Serbia in the World Economy' (Chapter Three), 'Neoliberalism imposed' (Chapter Four), and 'The Workers' Movement' (Chapter Five).

The overthrow of Milošević's regime in October 2000 was indeed a revolutionary event, and the core movement *Otpor!* (Resistance!) inspired the countries that embarked on the 'Arab Spring'. The authors argue that Serbian workers were 'the most crucial element of the revolution's success' (4). Yet, ten years later, 'things have got worse not better for the majority of ordinary people' (3). The flaw in the 'revolution' seems to have been a failure in aspiration: rather than 'return to the classical socialism of Marx' (9), it sought to embrace 'a turn to the West and its "values" of liberal democracy and prosperity through the market economy' (9).

To my mind, the book provides a vivid lesson in how important it is to pay attention to changes in semantic concepts. The authors struggle with the diachronical dimensions of their terms—the political 'left' and 'right', 'revolution', 'social movement', 'protest', 'class'. They try to apply a semi-Marxist vocabulary in a context where it does not really seem helpful in any explanatory sense. Not least, the reader is left to

wonder who 'the workers'—presented as one solid group throughout the book—actually are. Did they stay the same between Tito's time and Milošević's, and then in the decade that followed?

Devoid of any deconstructive effort, 'the workers' are carried through time, acting like an immutable mirror to all the changes and turmoils of the period. In fact, it was Titoism that instigated the rapid industrialisation causing the very creation of 'the workers' at stake here in the first place. The postsocialist transition brought massive de-industrialisation. So what happened to 'the workers' then? It was, at the latest, during the financial crisis following 2008 that the economic failure of the transition period came to a crunch. And yet 'the workers' seem to persist.

In several ways, it is precisely this struggle with parameters that makes the book an interesting reading. The authors refer to several social science approaches, notably 'social movement theory' and 'neoclassical endogenous growth theory', though without too much interlinking of them. They answer the question why no serious left-wing political alternative developed in Serbia—or elsewhere in the former state socialist countries. Domestically, after state socialism, a strong negative mark remained on anything perceived as 'left'. After the demise of the system, international institutions contributed just as much to this negativity, with claims that, for a 'return to Europe', everything 'communist' had to be rejected while neoliberal market mechanisms were embraced. Trade unions, largely associated with the state authority function they had had under socialism, did not manage to convince the workers that they were now fighting for their cause—especially as they explicitly embraced the neoliberal market economy whose negative effects were soon felt by the 'working poor'.

Thus, all leftist 'agents' were effectively removed from the stage.

While this argument works, other accounts of historical aspects are less convincing. The authors suggest that there were three strikes in Yugoslavia before the 1980s—in the Slovene mining town of Trbovlje (1958); in the dockyard of Rijeka (1969); and in a factory in Belgrade (1973). This leaves out a number of further strikes that took place in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia, as well as more than 2,000 work stoppages that occurred from 1958 on. Only by passing over the fact that social conflict was a constitutive factor of Yugoslavia's self-management system can the authors argue for a massive *increase* in strikes towards the end of the 1980s (32), and that these pointed to the imminent fall.

The book repeatedly maintains that it was Yugoslavia's 'turn to the market' that first corrupted the self-managed economy. This implies, though is never explained, that self-management would have been workable if only it had kept itself at a distance from market forces. Apart from this being a rather peculiar twist of thought, it disregards context. Yugoslavia's position in Cold War Europe after 1948 was bolstered by heavy financial aid from the United States.

More recent situations are explained inaccurately too, down to a misnaming of central processes of EU accession, like the 'Stabilisation and Association Process', here called (and not satirically) the 'Stabilisation and Adjustment Process' (85). Though the authors intend to criticise the EU, they make it abundantly clear that, despite all persisting difficulties, its politics has been a guarantor of security and welfare-enhancement, damping down the devastating nationalism in Serbia (87). In fact, as the authors convincingly argue, a 'problem of labour movements through-

out the region was their complicity in nationalism during the period of the civil wars' (98). This accounts for much of their present disorientation and powerlessness in the face of new, or renewed, challenges.

A peculiarly blind eye is afforded to the devastating wars of dissolution that were waged in Yugoslavia as it disintegrated between 1992 and 1999. To be sure, these are mentioned, but their effects on people and on the economy are not taken properly into account. It seems downright cynical to claim that the workers at the weapons factory in Kragujevac only had reason to go on strike after their well of fortune, the wars, began to empty with the Dayton Peace Agreement of 1995 (33). In macroeconomic explanations, which fill more than half of the book, the wars are confirmed as having happened, but without any substantial assessment of their impact. The authors include phrases that betray a Serbian perspective, such as: 'The civil wars deeply traumatised the regional economy. This was particularly the case in Serbia' (52). But the war was largely fought in Bosnia and Croatia; and Serbia held the main responsibility for triggering it in the first place. To the authors, the years 1992–1995 were essentially the period of international economic sanctions against Serbia (53), with an aftermath of having to integrate close to a quarter million refugees and internally displaced persons (60). How many 'workers' were among these refugees, and what kinds of human capital did they bring with them?

The authors disregard the literature that records how working people with a memory of socialist Yugoslavia remember how they were better off in the past (the works of Nina Vodopivec and Chiara Bonfiglioli, for example). Instead, they focus on interviewees who look critically on the experience of self-management (109).

These interviews were conducted between 2003 and 2010, and the two tables of percentage figures showing the opinions of trade union activists and managers asked about self-management reveal a mixed picture. Maybe the most striking feature is the high number of 'Don't know' answers given by managers, who obviously had little clue about what self-management actually meant, or were hesitant to reveal their thoughts (110–111).

On the whole, the spotlight is shone comparatively little on the workers themselves, much as they are praised in the beginning and closing sections. The reader has to wait until page 89 before the workers come on stage for the remaining 40 pages. The book closes with a plea for establishing social dialogue, whether 'social democratic' or in some other mode. Yet the authors' focus on economic transition and political structures (primarily trade unionist ones) prevents them from really considering how such dialogue could effectively be (re-)established. In their story, the workers are the heroes of the Serbian October (2000) revolution, but nothing much more.

One single quotation effectively sums up the story—but to scarce analytical avail in this book. This comes from an open protest letter written in January 2008: 'Most of the factories that Zrenjaninian workers *built* during socialism and *lived off for decades are closed today*' (123, the italics are mine). That would have been the story to tell; and, within it, the workers' role in October 2000 could have been reflected. The war economy would have needed a more serious inclusion too. The authors' wishful thinking that the approach of E.P. Thompson, the old British Marxist, can bring illumination to present social movements in Serbia and elsewhere does ring sympathetic. Social movements, their plea reads, need to be concerned once more with

'broader categories of the human condition embracing social and political justice' (126), and with solidarity and 'the restoration of social ownership' (128). The authors refer to voices advocating the resurrection of a 'Yugosphere', to the hope of moving towards 'post-neo-liberalism' and more 'revolutionary transformation' (129). Indeed, social, political, and ideological categories, shaky as they have become, are in need of (semantic) (re-)invention, to provide new repertoires of action.

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