

Zitierhinweis

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BOOK REVIEWS

Aleksandar Pavković / Christopher Kelen:
Anthems and the Making of Nation States. Identity and Nationalism in the Balkans, London et al.: I. B. Tauris 2016 (International Library of Twentieth Century History, vol. 82). 254 pp., ISBN 978-1-78453-126-3, £ 15.99

Let me begin with a suggestion to all those interested in the topic of national anthems. This book is well worth reading even if its title is rather confusing, for the main focus is on only the—more or less—‘Yugoslavian’ anthems. But even with that narrower focus, Pavković and Kelen provide the reader with a detailed and deep look at the use of patriotic music in support of the idea of nationalism as well as national states in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Aleksandar Pavković, Associate Professor of Politics at Macquarie University in Sydney and author of several studies about the formation of national states,¹ and Christopher Kelen—an Australian poet and visual artist as well as Professor of English at the University of Macau and author of a recently published study about national anthems²—have worked together on a number of occasions to consider the question of national anthems and their role in the history of South-Slavic people.³ Now, they have pooled their knowledge in this study which combines Pavković’s interest in states and how they come into existence with Kelen’s mastery of the wide field of patriotic writings. As they put it, ‘This book is about the lyrics of national anthems’ (VI) and that is therefore the beginning of the short ‘Preface’ (VI-VII) of

the study. And that statement must always be kept in mind while perusing the book, as the reader will find no detailed analysis of the music. On the one hand that is consistent and to advantage, for the aim here is not a history of the anthems just for their own sake, for it is brimming with alternative texts of anthems, contemporary statements and fancy details. On the other hand, the music is as crucial to a national anthem as are the lyrics, so the authors lose certain additional elements that might have helped their arguments. The section dealing with the Kosovar anthem from 2008 is particularly short—there is no text, and no interpretation.

The first part, sub-titled ‘National Anthems: Their Themes and Origins’ (1-32) provides a general overview of anthems—where they come from, how they emerge, and what kinds of anthems can be distinguished. The different functions of anthems are discussed, from their use on official ceremonial occasions to sporting competitions, and a basic classification of anthems is given. Pavković and Kelen distinguish between ‘Self-congratulatory anthems’ (with Denmark’s ‘Der er et yndigt land’ as an example), the ‘Prayer for the ruler’s safety’ (referring here to the UK’s ‘God save the King’ particularly) and the ‘Original marching/fighting anthem’ (citing ‘La Marseillaise’) (19-21).⁴

There then follows a second part, called ‘Creating Nation States and National Anthems in Southeast Europe’ (33-220). And the title is well chosen, for Pavković and Kelen manage to show in those eight chapters of that second part that almost none of

the anthems of Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro or Macedonia is sung in the version written in the years between 1834 and 2008. As for the states with all their changing borders, glittering self-definitions and unclear ethnic compositions, their anthems were composed in long processes in which the initial creation was just the first step. It is impossible to discuss here all the data given, all the stories told in this study, so I shall offer three examples of the kind of insight the reader will obtain from Pavković and Kelen's book.

Of all countries which came into being after the breakup of Yugoslavia Croatia is the only one that had no significant discussion about its national anthem. In December 1990 'Lijepa naša domovino' from deep in the 19th century was proclaimed as the official state anthem of Croatia, when a national flag and coat of arms were chosen too. The newly-chosen anthem was respected even among the Serbs of Osijek or Krajina even if 'their anthem' was actually 'Bože pravde'. The Croatian anthem mentions plains, mountains, rivers and the wide blue sea and has a very peaceful, completely unmilitaristic tune; indeed only in the third stanza does it even mention the Croats themselves. As a result, it was adopted without problems and has remained uncontested (85f.).

Slovenia's rather bizarre discussion about its national anthem came about because the anthem has both Slovene and pan-Slav-centred passages as well as more cosmopolitan ones. 'Zdravljica', actually a toast, dates from 1844 and was adopted in the Spring of 1990. This anthem, with its melody made for a choir and with an upbeat or even joyful text, is not truly contested but the lack of any mention of Slovenia itself or the Slovenes in the officially sung stanza led to attempts to change the text to give a clear focus on Slovenia (97f.).

Bosnia and Herzegovina's anthem 'Intermezzo' is an example of how problematic the artificial introduction of a national anthem can turn out to be. First of all the tune was composed with the clear intention of avoiding any element that could be recognised as part of Serb or Croatian or Bosniak musical culture. The resulting melody was somewhat tedious, a 'western-sounding' piece of music with a resemblance to a certain song from a Monty Python film.⁵ In fact, in 2009 the anthem was found too to bear a resemblance to the score of 'Animal House', a Hollywood film from 1978 (181f.). Just like the music, the text avoids any mention of anything that could be seen as a specific element of one or other of the ethnic groups in the country so is really nothing more than a list of platitudes like 'You are the light of the soul' (183). Text and music alike have been denigrated everywhere, with the highest rate of disregard in the Republika Srpska (181).

The book has a broad bibliography (236-244) that contains not only material in English but also an enormous amount of literature from the countries themselves. The bibliography proves that Pavković and Kelen constructed their definitions and drew their conclusions not, as so often in the area of 'anthem studies', on hearsay nor superficial overviews but on the basis of deep knowledge of the anthems' texts and a quite superb overview of the scholarly literature.

Is there anything to criticise? Only trivial things like the book's rather annoying title (why not state clearly that it is about Yugoslavia and its constituent states?) or the fact that sometimes the role of the tune is too much ignored. But that cannot change this reviewer's opinion — 'Anthems and the Making of Nation States' is a formidable study full of colourful details and deep analysis, which adds to the large topic of

'how states are made' and spotlights some of the propagandistic use of lyrics and music.

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¹ The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia. Nationalism and War in the Balkans, Basingstoke 2000; Creating New States. Theory and Practice of Secession, Aldershot 2007.

² Anthem Quality. National Songs: A Theoretical Survey, Bristol 2014.

³ Resurrection. A Tale of Two Anthems Sung by Serbs, *Nations and Nationalism* 16 (2010), no. 3, 442-461; Of Love and National Borders. The Croatian Anthem 'Our Beautiful Homeland', *Nations and Nationalism* 18 (2012), no. 2, 247-266; 'Zdravljica' – Toast to a Cosmopolitan Nation Anthem Quality in the Slovenian Context, *Nationalities Papers* 42 (2014), no. 5, 828-847.

⁴ While generally agreeing with Pavković and Kelen's information, I must disagree utterly with the description of the Danish Royal anthem 'Kong Christian'. That anthem is *not* a 'marching song' (20), but part of the overture to an opera!

⁵ To be precise, this refers to the song 'Every Sperm is Sacred' from 'The Meaning of Life' (1983). It is even possible to sing the main verse of the film's song on the tune of 'Intermezzo'.

Valeska Bopp-Filimonov, *Erinnerungen an die 'Nicht-Zeit'. Das sozialistische Rumänien im biographisch-zeitgeschichtlichen Gedächtnis der Nachwendzeit (1989-2007)*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2014, (Balkanologische Veröffentlichungen, 61). 350 pp., ISBN 978-3-447-10142-4, €54.00

As much as previous generations of historians have consolidated the account of the actual processes and events of national history, current generations are preoccupied with the memory of the same events

and processes. Inspired by Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora and Jan and Aleida Assmann, they explore the interaction between personal memories or traumas and state strategies intended to legitimize commemoration. In this expanding field of study, researchers have moved beyond juxtapositions of distorted and instrumental official views versus authentic personal memories. In Valeska Bopp-Filimonov's PhD thesis (Leipzig University) too, the starting point is the mutual influencing of collective and individual memories and identities rather than a regime imposing its views on society.

For reasons that are yet to be fully understood, Romania is something of an exception among post-communist East European polities in dealing with its national past. More often than not the communist era has by now been depoliticized and relegated to the domain of academic historians. In Romania, however, not only does the December Revolution of 1989 remain highly contested, but so does the entire communist era, for both are imbued with questions of political legitimacy. Contemporary historians who prefer to keep their distance from today's political trench warfare often choose to research the authoritarian and fascist regimes of the 1930s and 1940s rather than the communist decades.

Faced with an insurmountable pile of possible sources Bopp-Filimonov has competently and courageously selected four key moments in Romania's post-1989 history: the immediate post-revolution years, the era of excessive nationalism in the mid-1990s, the rule of the Democratic Convention and Ion Iliescu's second presidency. The historical and political controversies of those four moments focused on, respectively: Nicolae Ceaușescu, Ion Antonescu, the Securitate and the Holocaust. Bopp-Filimonov also identifies