

Zitierhinweis

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Dimitris LIVANIOS, *The Macedonian Question. Britain and the Southern Balkans 1939-1949*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press 2008 (Oxford Historical Monographs). 280 S., ISBN 978-0-19-923768-5, £ 58,-

Livanios's book is yet another contribution to the heavily populated field of international involvement in Balkan politics with the special accent on Macedonia. This is partly understandable as Macedonia was one of the last Balkan regions under the Ottoman rule, which among other issues caused a considerable delay in nation and state building and made it more susceptible to both neighbour states' and big powers' interference. The title of this book is however somewhat misleading as it deals mostly with what was known as Yugoslav (or Vardar) Macedonia. Its subtitle is more accurate and accounts not only for its content but also for the perspective as it will be elaborated below.

Making extensive use of Britain's FO archives Livanios investigates and assesses British views and status quo policy towards interwar Yugoslav Macedonia. He then proceeds to elaborate more extensively on the British wartime planning concerning the future of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, namely, Britain's efforts to prevent a federation of the South Slavs. This in turn intensified in the immediate aftermath of the war as the whole issue gained a degree of feasibility until Tito-Stalin split put it finally ad acta. In addition Livanios offers his perspective on the emergence of the Macedonian unit within Tito's federal Yugoslavia, and on the endeavours to create a functioning Macedonian national ideology. Meticulously researched the book is also valuable in its attempt not only to synthesize, evaluate and reconcile a vast body of mostly English language secondary literature on the subject but also to incorporate Greek, Bulgarian and Yugoslav views.

While British perspective and involvement is indeed at the heart of author's interest it is regrettable that the material of British provenance is not subjected to the rigorous criticism the author employs elsewhere. Instead FO reports, memoranda, opinions, etc. are too often taken at the face value or neutral. How else to explain why is the Serbian/Yugoslav and Bulgarian literature often castigated as partial whereas no similar warnings are issued when it comes to the Greek or British authors? In addition, rendering Yugoslav literature is fraught with problems of factuality, translation and transliteration. Finally, despite obvious attempts at bias free approach, sentences smacking of prejudice occasionally slip in such as: "What is not open to doubt is a tendency of many Slavs to have church services in their language (sic)" (10).

Moving to content analysis it needs to be stressed that the study contains a very useful introduction to the history and politics prior to the interwar period but almost no discussion of sources or terminology or possible theoretical approaches. Without any announcement or explanation during the narrative Slav peasants turn into Slav Macedonians and finally into Macedonians. It never becomes clear when Macedonia is referred to in territorial and when in ethnic terms. More confusion is added when Macedonian Serbs are mentioned. The Soviet Union is throughout the book referred to as Russia which again is not a neutral choice, especially when not properly explained. Author's selectiveness is even more troublesome than the lack of terminological clarity. This is especially evident in Livanios's treatment of the Macedonian national identity. Notwithstanding that the evidence of Macedonian

national consciousness prior to 1945 is scarce and grossly overblown by Yugoslav/Macedonian historiography and propaganda, Livanios makes no effort to account for whatever little activity or attempts there were. Similarly, he does not explain the emergence or display of Macedonian consciousness in Greece (Slavomakedonski Naroden Osvoboditeln Front SNOF) and Bulgaria (Pirin census of 1947) which is mentioned. On the more positive side, Livanios is to be credited for pointing out the difference between the official position of Yugoslavia as expressed by the central and party authorities in Belgrade and that of the local authorities and the Communist Party of Macedonia. Livanios rightly views the later as the prime mover in the nation building operation. Yet pointing to widespread anti-Serbianism as a result of interwar Yugoslav Serbianization and disillusionment with Bulgaria after almost four years wartime occupation Livanios portrays the Macedonian identity as exclusively negative. Suggesting that "Macedonianism" emanated from the internal dynamics of the Yugoslav-Macedonian area (206), Livanios disassociates himself from the Bulgarian and Greek critics who view this ideology as 'fictitious' but contributes little to its better understanding.

The chief vulnerability of Livanios's book is its reliance on the methodology and genre of political and diplomatic history. Let us address this vulnerability starting from its concrete methodological shortcomings before we turn to a more general criticism. His positivist approach inclines Livanios to the use of statistical figures. Yet only some statistics are critically evaluated while others are taken for granted. Furthermore, taken out of context statistics mean nothing. Thus, for instance, the leading role in Macedonian nation building played by the Communist party of (Yugoslav) Macedonia is explained in terms of the sharp rise of membership in post-war years without considering the sharper rise of Communist party membership in other regions. Finally, Livanios admits the problem of interpretation when the key Soviet sources are missing which leaves him to speculate or as he says to suggest what is plausible.

More generally, the above mentioned downplaying of Macedonian or Bulgarian consciousness becomes problematic as no parallels to Greek one or any other identity building process for that matter are made. The only time the key works of Anderson and Hobsbawm are mentioned is to help characterize Macedonianist propaganda of the Communist government in Yugoslav Macedonia as an example of "inventing the nation." This only illustrates too well the whole problem of an under-theorized political/diplomatic history that does not grapple with the implications of recent theorizing on nations and nation building. One result is that there is no comparative imperative; yet Macedonian nation building is eminently comparable to Bulgarian and Greek, while the similarities and differences in circumstances might help explain the different twists and turns in the identities of Slavs in these states. In addition, the exclusive source provenance and focus also result in cultural, economic and other issues being only glossed over. Finally, the underlying assumption that British perspective is objective and thus might teach the quarrelsome Balkan historiographies is troubling. As a result, the traditional approach of political and diplomatic history in this book does little to eradicate stereotypes of Balkanness, leaving the creative adaptations achieved in the region and by its inhabitants invisible on the one hand, and contributing little to a better understanding of the region's non-political, non-ethnicized past on the

other. A greater commitment to local agency and other avenues of life beyond politics seems much more promising avenue of future research in the Balkans, just as it does elsewhere.

London

Bojan Aleksov

Tvrtko P. SOJČIĆ, Die „Lösung“ der kroatischen Frage zwischen 1939 und 1945. Kalküle und Illusionen. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2008. 476 S., ISBN 978-3-515-09261-6, € 78,-

Tvrtko Sojčić lehrt im Fachbereich Erziehungswissenschaften an der Ruhr-Universität Bochum. Das vorliegende Werk ist seine erste einschlägige Publikation zur südosteuropäischen Geschichte und widmet sich dem Unabhängigen Staat Kroatien (USK). Der Titel deutet auf eine Betrachtung des Gegenstandes im Zusammenhang mit dem historischen Prozess kroatischer Nationalstaatsbildung hin; der Untertitel verrät eine thematische Fokussierung auf die Strategien relevanter Akteure und verortet sie im Kontext des historischen Scheiterns des Staatsbildungsprojektes. Das Ziel der Studie ist die Aufarbeitung des Forschungsstandes. Dazu werden die historischen Fakten ereignisorientiert in chronologischer Vorgehensweise rekonstruiert und erklärt (17). In einer Symbiose aus Außenpolitik-, Diplomatie- und Militärgeschichte beruht die Analyse auf Sichtung deutscher, englischer, kroatischer, serbischer wie auch französischer Forschungsliteratur. Weiters werden v. a. deutschsprachige Archivdokumente und Presse aus der betrachteten Zeit herangezogen.

In den Kapiteln 2 (19-60) und 3 (61-115) wird eine thematische Heranführung an die Zeit des Bestehens des USK unternommen. Zunächst erfolgt die Darstellung des sich verstärkenden Aufbegehrens kroatischer Autonomie im von nationalen Spannungen geprägten Königreich Jugoslawien. Die inhaltliche Konzentration liegt bei den Mitgliedern der kroatischen und international bedeutenden politischen Führungseliten und ihrer Interaktion im Bereich der Außenpolitik. Daran schließt sich die Schilderung der politischen Ereignisse und Aktivitäten, die mit dem Ausbruch des 2. Weltkrieges zur deutsch-italienischen Zerschlagung und Besetzung des jugoslawischen Territoriums führte. Zur Rolle der volksdeutschen Minderheit und den historischen Folgen ihrer Vertreibung nach dem Krieg liegt ein knapper Exkurs vor (103-115). Die sich der Existenzzeit des USK widmenden Kapitel 4 bis 7 (117-360) gliedern diese in die Gründungsphase im Spannungsverhältnis der Machtansprüche Hitlers und Mussolinis, die Phase der Etablierung des totalitären Regimes, der blutrünstigen Schreckensherrschaft der Ustascha unter der besonderen Berücksichtigung der Rolle und Orientierung des kroatischen Klerus sowie letztlich dem komplizierten Kriegsverlauf auf dem Gebiet des USK und der Nachbarregime. Hierbei stehen Militärstrategien und -operationen der Ustascha, Tschetniks, Partisanen und der Besatzungsmächte im Vordergrund. Das achte Kapitel (361-399) stellt einen Exkurs über das umstrittene Thema der Kriegsoferdiskussionen dar. Sojčić arbeitet diesbezügliche Positionen der Forschungsliteratur systematisch auf und unterzieht sie einer kritischen