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Aachen

Armin Heinen

„Mitteleuropa“ und „Südosteuropa“ als Planungsraum. Wirtschafts- und kulturpolitische Expertisen im Zeitalter der Weltkriege. Hg. Carola SACHSE. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag 2010 (Diktaturen und ihre Überwindung im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert, 4). 430 S., ISBN 978-3-8353-0490-1, € 34,90

Throughout interwar Europe, planning became a widely accepted ideology. As recent historical literature has shown, a belief in the rational ordering of things – society, the economy, nature – gained a wide following on both the left and right at that time.¹ This collected volume, edited by Carola Sachse, shows that the eastern parts of Europe were no exception. German, Austrian and regional experts perceived of Central and Southeastern Europe as a new planning space after World War I.

One of the most significant actors in this respect was the *Mitteuropäischer Wirtschaftstag* (MWT). Comprised of representatives of commerce and industry, this international network was founded in Vienna in 1925. Geared towards promoting foreign trade, its main objective was to create a self-sufficient *Großraumwirtschaft* that included Central and Southeastern Europe. Initially, the network's members held a variety of views regarding the organization of a continental economic sphere. The Hungarian economist Elemér Hantos, a proclaimed supporter of the Pan-Europa movement, favored a *Mitteleuropa* that would act as a counterbalance to a strong Germany. The Austrian jurist Richard Riedl, on the other hand, was a proponent of an economic organization dominated by Germany.

By the beginning of the 1930s, the Berlin-based *Deutsche Gruppe*, and thus the *völkisch* view that favored German hegemonic power, had gained prominence within the MWT. From that time onward, the lobby organization actively worked to find markets for German industrial products in exchange for agricultural produce from countries like Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. During the National Socialist era, the network was increasingly co-opted by the regime. Exploitation replaced exchange as the overriding objective of German foreign trade policy.

Dissent exists among historians regarding the precise role of the MWT and the influence it managed to exert on decision-makers. A team of historians based at Vienna University

and headed by Sachse have set out to gain a deeper understanding of this organization by analyzing the conceptions of space that it deployed, the interplay between its ideas and its practice, and the transnational and institutional contexts in which it operated.

The book is the outcome of a conference that was organized in 2008, half-way through the Vienna-based group's research project. The authors form a diverse group of international historians who cover a wide range of topics. Some of these are more strongly related to the MWT than others.

The volume's contributions are organized into 3 sections. The first section addresses the institutional actors engaged in promoting a closer relationship with Central and Southeastern Europe and their different conceptions of the region. The institutions and actors reviewed in this section include the *Mitteleuropa-Institut* in Dresden (by STEPHEN GROSS), its Austrian counterpart founded by Hantos (NILS MÜLLER), the Vienna-based *Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft* and, of course, the MWT itself (CARL FREYTAG). Sachse argues that conceptions of the region did not describe it as a neatly defined geographical entity. Instead, they were discursive constructs strongly imbued with gender bias. Gross and Freytag show that within the MWT and its affiliated institutions, support existed for the gradual industrialization and improvement of the economic situation in Southeastern Europe. As war overtook the region at the end of the 1930s, this long-term perspective was cast aside. From 1939 onward, the MWT adopted an outright anti-Semitic stance and conformed itself to the ruling regime.

The second section of this volume approaches the MWT from the perspective of the media. It focuses on the journal *Volk und Reich*, which between 1928 and 1934 offered leading members of the MWT a platform to discuss their ideas and strategies (ULRICH PREHN). It also looks at the press review *Presse- und Kulturberichte Südosteuropas*, as well as German cultural foreign policy (Tim Kirk) and the contributions to Yugoslav and German newspapers written by economic experts from both countries (MILAN RISTOVIĆ). A third section considers the role and involvement of several specialists of the region, such as the Croatian demographers Otto Frangeš and Rudolf Bičanić (IAN INNERHOFER), the diplomat Hermann Neubacher (THOMAS MAYER) and the influential cultural geographer Hugo Hassinger (PETRA SVATEK). Neither one of the two Austrian specialists endorsed National Socialist beliefs in their most extreme form. Nevertheless, as Mayer and Svatek show, the Nazi regime offered ample opportunity to further their ambitions. They continued to do so even when they were forced to subordinate their agendas to Nazi war aims.

The last part of this volume presents a shift away from the drawing board to a more practical level. It discusses the formation of an elite of scientific experts from a cohort of German students involved in exchange activities and *Volkstumsarbeit* in Southeastern Europe in the 1930s (ELIZABETH HARVEY). It also looks at the collaboration between the MWT and the Vienna-based *Hochschule für Welthandel*, which was explicitly aimed at recruiting and preparing a new elite that could replace Jewish experts and staff in the region. The remaining two articles are written by TAMARA SCHEER and MARKUS WIEN. They focus on Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian occupation policies in Serbia and the building of model villages in Bulgaria, respectively. These contributions convincingly demonstrate that an overriding focus on German policies and decision-makers carries with it the risk of over-

looking important aspects of planning. They reveal interesting continuities in practice and the essential input provided by local actors.

As the wide array of topics in this volume reveals, it is the explicit aim of its editors to approach the MWT by focusing on the (transnational) contexts in which the group operated. What follows is an extensive overview of the different institutional actors and planning experts active in Central and Southeastern Europe, and the variety of views they held with regard to the region's economy. One of the main assets of this book is the fact that this overview includes the perspectives of local specialists and policy-makers. This is the case, for example, in the contributions by Innerhofer, Wien and Ristović. The result of this broad approach is a rich and multifaceted volume, even if the exact relationship of some of the articles' topics to the MWT remains unspecified.

One shortcoming of this volume is linked to its title. In describing Central and South-eastern Europe as a planning space, the title suggests (to this reader, at least) an engagement with recent discussions on the history of planning. This, unfortunately, is not the case within the volume. A range of questions in this vein remain unaddressed. To what extent did the First World War usher in a new era of policy-making and state involvement in this region? Did conceptions of space change accordingly? Did regional experts share the strong belief in planning that their colleagues in other parts of Europe held? The answers to these questions would make for a valuable contribution to the literature on European (high) modernity.

As Sachse announces in the introduction, a definitive assessment of the role and importance of the MWT cannot be made on the basis of this collection of articles. Since the conference at which these papers were given was held half-way through this research project, however, it is quite understandable that final assessments remain unavailable. This book succeeds in arousing great interest in the final and comprehensive results of this research project.

Nijmegen

Liesbeth van de Grift

¹ E.g. James C. SCOTT, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, London 1998; see also the special edition of *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 34 (2008), no. 3, "Planung im 20. Jahrhundert", and Thomas ETZEMÜLLER (ed.), *Die Ordnung der Moderne. Social Engineering im 20. Jahrhundert*. Bielefeld 2009.

Robert A. LANIER, *The Prisoner of Durazzo. Being a History of Six Months in a Phantom Kingdom and of Armageddon Postponed*. Memphis/TN: Zenda Press 2010. XL, 471 S., Fototafeln, ISBN 978-0-615-32523-1, US-\$ 29,95

2014 wird sich das kurze Intermezzo der Herrschaft des deutschen Prinzen Wilhelm zu Wied als Fürst von Albanien zum 100. Mal jähren. Das dürfte in Albanien, aber auch in Deutschland zu einer verstärkten medialen Aufmerksamkeit führen.

Die Literatur über die Balkankriege, in deren Folge der albanische Staat 1912 proklamiert und 1913 international anerkannt wurde, ist kaum noch überschaubar, aber es gab bis heute