

Zitierhinweis

Naimark, Norman M.: review of: Arnold Suppan, Hitler - Beneš - Tito. Konflikt, Krieg und Völkermord in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa, Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014, in: Südost-Forschungen, 73 (2014), p. 631-633, <https://recensio-stag.lorax.syslab.com/r/b986b8160a6d4e40b1203bc224aedb01>



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ARNOLD SUPPAN, Hitler – Beneš – Tito. Konflikt, Krieg und Völkermord in Ostmittele- und Südosteuropa. 3 Bde. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 2014. 2047 S., 140 Abb., 13 Karten, ISBN 978-3-7001-7309-0, € 148,–

Historians can be immensely grateful for this mammoth history of East Central and Southeastern Europe between the end of the Habsburg Empire and the coming of the Cold War in 1947/1948. First of all, its author is the erudite and experienced Vienna University historian, Arnold Suppan, most recently Vice President of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Second, no effort or expense has been spared in providing the reader with complete footnotes (3,598 altogether!), an evocative set of colored maps, almost seventy pages of well-chosen photographs from the entire period, some of them little known, and a complete bibliography and place and name indices, which take up almost the entire final volume. Third, the research in the book is exhaustive, ranging from numerous and diverse archival collections in a half dozen countries or more to a wealth of documentary collections and secondary sources in the relevant scholarly languages. Finally, and most importantly, although encyclopedic in reach and resembling the mostly Germanic ideal of a “Handbuch” (handbook), Suppan’s volumes make for remarkably lively reading. The discrete episodes in the painful history of the region are rendered in engaging and efficient prose, punctuated by sometimes lengthy and colorful quotes and evocative details. These are volumes that both senior and junior historians of Europe, and especially of this particular part of Europe, are going to want to have on their bookshelves, or at the very least in their libraries for ready access.

Suppan frames his study by using three well-known personalities and political leaders from the region, Adolf Hitler, Edvard Beneš, and Josip Broz Tito, as historical avatars for his narrative. This unlikely trio shares a remarkable number of biographical data points in common. All three were born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire into Roman Catholic families of modest means. (Hitler was born in 1889; Beneš in 1884, and Tito in 1892.) While Hitler absorbed the anti-Slavic (and anti-Semitic) attitudes of his Austrian milieu, Beneš and Tito held deep-seated anti-German attitudes, which were increasingly harbored by many Slavic populations of the empire. All three leaders were educated in Austria, and all three spoke fluent German in 1914. While Beneš became a sociology instructor and could be considered a member of the middle class, Hitler was a simple painter and Tito a machinist. During World War I, Beneš joined the emigration in France and England, while Tito fought with a Croat regiment on the Carpathian front, and Hitler with a Bavarian unit on the Western front. All three experienced the First World War as young men, and were deeply marked by its traumas. They survived to clash again in the Second World War, with Tito and Beneš emerging as victors against Hitler, Tito pretty much on his own and Beneš with considerable help from the Allies. Certainly Hitler was responsible for the greatest violence among the three, but both Beneš and Tito also oversaw fearsome campaigns of retribution and ethnic cleansing at the end of the war and beginning of the peace.

This generation of political leaders in East Central and Southeastern Europe participated in and eventually contributed to monumental changes in the political geography of the region: from traditional empires on the eve of World War I to the independent multinational states of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, among others, in the interwar period. They were

involved in the destruction of the interwar order by the Nazis, and shaped the period of occupation and resistance to the Third Reich's colonialist ambitions in the region during World War II. At the end of the war, Beneš and Tito oversaw campaigns of expropriation, forced deportation, incarceration, and even mass killing, primarily of Germans and Hungarians in the former case, and of Germans, Hungarians, Croats, Italians, Serbs (Četniks), and Slovenes in the latter.

Suppan describes the period from 1938 to 1948 as the most catastrophic in the history of the peoples of what he calls "südöstliches Mitteleuropa". Germans and Austrians on the one hand stood deeply divided from the Slavs on the other. "At no time previously in the over one thousand years of history of relations between the peoples on the Elbe, Moldau, Oder, March, Donau, Mur, Drau and Save had there been such a low point", writes Suppan (7). At the end of World War I, borders were drastically redrawn and new political entities created. At the end of World War II, borders remained more or less intact; what changed was the ethnic composition of the respective states, especially of their urban centers. The Jews were gone, victims of Hitler's murderous racial madness and the thoroughness of his anti-Semitic collaborators in the region. "Völkermord" – genocide – is a crucial vector in Suppan's study. At the same time, Beneš and Tito saw to it that the Germans were driven from the area and that their former presence was obliterated from the towns and villages where they lived. Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were to emerge as Slav-dominated states, and, at least initially, with national-Slav ideologies.

Not surprisingly, but also fully justifiably, Suppan attributes an important role in the story of the destruction and reconstitution of the region over the first five decades of the twentieth century to the Austrians, both as perpetrators and as victims. They were responsible in good measure for the internal conflicts that helped to bring down the Austro-Hungarian Empire and participated in the successor states as officials and the business elites. Former Austrian citizens took part in the destruction and conquering of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and were heavily represented in the Nazi occupation of these countries and the fearsome crimes committed against their citizens. The Austrians were also deeply involved in the forced deportations after the war. Many German "old-Austrians" were themselves victims of expropriation and expulsion, while Austria itself was a destination for many expellees, and not just the "old-Austrians" among them. The Austrian government dealt with (and, as Suppan notes, still deals with) the governments of Prague and Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Belgrade about the expulsions. Historians tend to forget the important Austrian dimension of the "Vertreibungskomplex".

Suppan's book has many important attributes, only a few of which can be mentioned here. The chapters on the "Beneš Decrees", which served as the juridical bases for the expropriation and expulsion of Germans (and Hungarians) from Czechoslovakia, and the "AVNOJ Decisions", which provided a similar set of principles on which the Germans (and others) were interned in and deported from Yugoslavia, are extremely useful in understanding the dynamics of the violence that followed. Suppan also excels in relating the histories of the smaller peoples of the region, who have been frequently passed by in sweeping accounts of the Second World War in East Central and Southeastern Europe. For example, the fate of the smaller German-speaking peoples, the Gottscheer in Slovenia and the Donauschwa-

ben in the Vojvodina, is rendered in great depth and with considerable sympathy. Suppan carefully reconstructs the history of the internment of the Donauschwaben in a variety of notorious “death camps”. According to Suppan’s data, some 50,000 Donauschwaben died in these camps out of a total of 135,000, making this in his view an obvious case of “genocide” (1334). Suppan also provides the reader with hair-raising descriptions of the massacres carried out by Yugoslav partisans and their police detachments against Slovenes and Italians both after the Italian defeat and at the end of the war. The numbers of bodies, alive and dead, which were thrown into the ravines (foibe) of the limestone karst, must number in the thousands, perhaps even tens of thousands.

Suppan concludes his impressive study with a long and careful consideration of the problems of history and memory, especially as they related (and relate today) to the killing, the suffering, and retribution during the period 1938-1948. In fact, the entire book is infused with the importance of history and history writing for righting the balance of social memory of World War II in the region and its deeply political consequences. By historicising the development of memory politics in Italy, Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, Suppan makes an important contribution to the creation of a healthy “memory culture” in contemporary Europe. Like most good history, Suppan’s work is as much about the present and future, as it is about the past.

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Eleonore LAPPIN-EPPLE, Ungarisch-jüdische Zwangsarbeiter und Zwangsarbeiterinnen in Österreich 1944/45. Arbeitseinsatz, Todesmärsche, Folgen. Münster: LIT Verlag 2010 (Austria. Forschung und Wissenschaft Geschichte, 3). 544 S., ISBN 978-3-643-50195-0, € 39,90

Gegen Ende des 2. Weltkriegs versuchte das Deutsche Reich, den Vormarsch der Roten Armee durch den Bau von Verteidigungsanlagen im ehemals österreichisch-ungarischen Grenzgebiet zu stoppen. Eine der letzten Arbeitskraftreserven war der Arbeitsdienst der ungarischen Armee, in dessen Bataillonen sich Mitte 1944 ca. 80 000 jüdische Männer befanden, die auf diese Weise vorerst vor den Deportationen nach Auschwitz geschützt waren. Erst als sich Mitte Oktober 1944 die faschistische Pfeilkreuzler-Bewegung an die Macht putschte, lieferte sie die jüdischen Arbeitsdienstler an das Deutsche Reich aus. Die Deutschen setzten im Herbst und Winter 1944/1945 etwa 35 000 jüdische Zwangsarbeiter und Zwangsarbeiterinnen im heute ostösterreichischen und 18 000 im heute westungarischen Gebiet unter unmenschlichen Bedingungen ein, vorwiegend zu kräftezehrenden Schanzarbeiten. In den Gauen Groß-Wien und Niederdonau arbeiteten zu diesem Zeitpunkt bereits etwa 15 000 jüdische Männer und Frauen, die im Juni 1944 dorthin deportiert worden waren.

Das Schicksal dieser insgesamt etwa 50 000 in Österreich eingesetzten ungarischen Juden ist Gegenstand des Buches. Basierend auf Dokumenten des Public Record Office