

#### Zitierhinweis

Varga, Bálint: Rezension über: Sebastian Ramisch-Paul, *Fremde Peripherie – Peripherie der Unsicherheit? Sicherheitsdiskurse über die tschechoslowakische Provinz Podkarpatská Rus (1918–1938)*, Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2021, in: *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung (ZfO)*, 71 (2022), 4, S. 672-673, <https://recensio-stag.lorax.syslab.com/r/3ec9c855bf2e4f46a3b7358002de333b>



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**Sebastian Ramisch-Paul: *Fremde Peripherie – Peripherie der Unsicherheit?*** Sicherheitsdiskurse über die tschechoslowakische Provinz Podkarpatská Rus (1918–1938). (Studien zur Ostmitteleuropaforschung, Bd. 53.) Verlag Herder-Institut. Marburg 2021. X, 279 S., graph. Darst. ISBN 978-3-87969-462-4. (€ 55,–.)

The book by Sebastian Paul-Ramisch aims to understand the integration of Subcarpathian Rus' into interwar Czechoslovakia through a discussion of how Czechoslovak administrators sought knowledge about and framed several political, cultural, social, and economic subjects as questions of national security. The keywords of the book are thus "knowledge" and "security." The author argues that in 1918, when Subcarpathian Rus' unexpectedly became part of the nascent Czechoslovakia, the officials of the new state were completely unaware of the province; hence, they needed to produce relevant knowledge on this region to govern it effectively. This production of knowledge was deeply interlocked with security concerns due to Subcarpathian Rus' peripheral location, the absence of a Czechoslovak population there, potential loyalties of locals to Ukraine, Hungary and even Russia, and last but not least, its drive for autonomy.

The book stems from the author's doctoral thesis at Gießen University, and is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 is a brief methodological introduction in which R.-P. tailors the story of interwar Subcarpathian Rus' to the Copenhagen School of security studies. Chapter 2 provides a lengthy contextual introduction: based mostly on secondary sources, the author recounts how the northeastern part of Hungary landed in Czechoslovakia under the name Subcarpathian Rus', despite there being no antecedents to this move before the stormy autumn of 1918. This was followed by the dual transformation of democratization and the making of the Czechoslovak nation-state. Although this chapter offers no genuine new information, readers, unless well-versed in the history of Subcarpathian Rus', will appreciate R.-P.'s solid guidance through the chaotic transition from Hungary to Czechoslovakia with its emphasis on alternatives to Prague. The same goes with the volatile and ad-hoc decision-making about the region in Czechoslovak politics and in the overseas diaspora.

The core of the book is in the following two chapters. Chapter 3 centers on the modes of Czechoslovak knowledge production in the era. While Subcarpathian Rus' was the subject of intensive, interdisciplinary research before 1918, the products of this scholarship published in German, Hungarian, Ukrainian, and occasionally in Russian were practically unknown in the Czech lands at all. This had to change in late 1918, as the state officials were now in dire need of knowledge on the land they had to govern. The author here changes the perspective, and instead of pure academic knowledge production, he focuses more on civil servants in the service of the Czechoslovak state. The chapter tracks how some patterns of the already existing knowledge in Subcarpathian Rus', mostly from the Germanophone and Ukrainian scholarship, found their way into the Czechoslovak narratives. It is well-known that the justification of Czechoslovak rule rested on two keywords, "civilization" and "democratization." Yet R.-P. is able to show the variations within Czechoslovak knowledge production and thus offers a more nuanced picture of the simplified view of Czechoslovakia bringing civilization, democracy, and Slavic nationalism to Subcarpathian Rus'.

Chapter 4, the longest and best elaborated chapter of the book, explains the major arenas of security policies, from local governance to the League of Nations. This is followed by intriguing case studies that include issues such as the presence of paramilitary groups or the agitation of the Sudeten-German Party among the members of the tiny German-speaking community. While these are obvious cases to be studied as security matters, R.-P. does go further and includes more seemingly harmless and less overtly political and threatening issues, such as the question of the Roma minority, that Czechoslovak authorities could be read through the lens of national security.

The intersections between knowledge, power, and security are probably best shown by the question of language. Did the local Slavonic population speak a dialect of Russian or

Ukrainian, or was their vernacular a distinct language that had not yet been standardized? As before World War I, in interwar Czechoslovakia, each possible answer was highly loaded and had wide political implications. Choosing Russian would question Ukrainian nationhood; opting for Ukrainian challenged Hungarian rule before the war and Czechoslovak rule during the wars; while developing a local idiom would have also challenged the centralized governance of Czechoslovakia and the superiority of Czech culture that rested, among other factors, on the high Czech literary traditions, in contrast to the peasant vernacular used in Subcarpathian Ruthenia. R.-P. shows how central a role security concerns played when individual actors argued for their own linguistic agenda and how these security dilemmas prevented authorities from finally opting for any of the solutions. The final triumph of Ukrainian came only after the incorporation of the region into Soviet Ukraine after World War II.

Another telling example of how a seemingly apolitical issue could be read through the lenses of security is the controversy between the Greek Catholic and the Orthodox churches. As R.-P. explains, during the initial years of the first Czechoslovakia, it was cheaper to belong to an Orthodox church because Greek Catholic parishes levied higher church taxes. What for the flock was a question of church tax, seemed a primary security issue for the authorities due to the Russian and Yugoslav connotations of the Orthodox church and the Hungarian affiliation of the erstwhile high clergy of the Greek Catholic church.

In reading about the case studies that accidentally became charged with security concerns, one is tempted to refer to the interwar Hungarian propaganda that accused Czechoslovakia of the same charges: that Czechoslovakia misgoverned Subcarpathian Ruthenia and harassed its non-Slavonic, in particular Magyar, population by questioning their loyalty at every possible opportunity. *Fremde Peripherie* ironically demonstrates that the Hungarian (and also the German) propaganda indeed had some truth. What *Fremde Peripherie* conveys, however, is more than simply the several flaws of interwar Czechoslovak democracy. This book is more about the longevity of how states operate, irrespective of whether the state is liberal but not democratic, as was the case of prewar Hungary, or national democratic, as was the first Czechoslovakia, or even a dictatorship, as were all regimes in Subcarpathian Rus' during and after World War II. The operations of state bureaucracies are necessarily interwoven with security concerns, so it shall come as no surprise that interwar Czechoslovakia is no exception to this rule.

Having analyzed sources in all relevant languages, R.-P. does transnational history at its best, paired with solid evidence and thorough methods. It should be a suggested reading for students of interwar Czechoslovakia and anyone interested in how state administrations learn about their populace, how the states "see" and through which mechanisms they identify their allies and enemies.

Graz

Bálint Varga

**Hanna Kozińska-Witt: Jüdische Stadtdeputierte in der Zweiten Polnischen Republik. Projekte – Strategien – Dynamiken.** (Polen: Kultur – Geschichte – Gesellschaft, Bd. 6.) Wallstein. Göttingen 2021. 316 S. ISBN 978-3-8353-3380-2. (€ 36,90.)

Die Historikerin Hanna Kozińska-Witt ist seit vielen Jahren eine ausgewiesene Expertin für die Stadt- und Kulturgeschichte Polens seit dem späten 19. Jh. Ihr besonderes Augenmerk liegt dabei auf der Geschichte der jüdischen Bevölkerung. In der Einleitung zu ihrem neuesten Werk stellt sie fest, dass Juden und Jüdinnen in der Zweiten Polnischen Republik zwar kaum im Staatsdienst, aber zahlreich in der Kommunalpolitik aktiv gewesen seien. Daraus resultiert die spannende Frage, inwieweit die Stadtparlamente als „Kontaktzonen“ (S. 14) anzusehen sind oder ob jüdische Deputierte, der These Robert Blobaums zufolge, den politischen Gegnern stets allein gegenüberstanden.

K.-W. benennt drei Untersuchungsachsen für ihre Fallstudien zu Krakau (Kraków), Posen (Poznań) und Warschau (Warszawa): erstens das Fortwirken regionaler Traditionen,