

BOOK REVIEWS

Egy elfeledett magyar királyi dinasztia: a Szapolyaiak [A forgotten Hungarian royal dynasty: The Szapolyais]. Edited by Pál Fodor and Szabolcs Varga. Budapest: Research Centre for the Humanities, 2020.

Published within the framework of the Mohács 1526–2026 Reconstruction and Memory project, *Egy elfeledett magyar királyi dinasztia: a Szapolyaiak* [A forgotten Hungarian royal dynasty: The Szapolyais] fills a major gap in the secondary literature and also offers an encouraging springboard for further research. One of the important objectives of the book is to present the history of one of the most important noble, aristocratic, and royal families of the late Middle Ages and the early modern period in a consistent manner, thus addressing a serious lacuna in Hungarian historiography and providing a summary of the most recent findings. The book does this by focusing on a topic and a historical period in which we have come to see very differently as a result of research which has been underway over the course of the past few years and decades. The volume is not a traditional monograph, however. Rather, it is a volume of studies which summarizes knowledge of the subject at the moment, offering presentations of the findings concerning the period by established researchers in a manner that will be engaging and precise to specialists but also accessible to the general readership. The editors may have chosen this form (a collection of studies) precisely because it has enabled the fourteen authors to produce a work which encompasses everything we know about the period and the dynasty, from political history and royal symbols to religious and literary history and material culture. They may also have been motivated to choose this form by the fact that historians are still grappling with many unanswered questions about the history of the sixteenth century, and in some cases, basic research is lacking and only a summary of the findings so far can be provided. However, these questions may well be a source of inspiration for those interested in the period, and the book indicates several exciting possibilities for further research.

The volume contains a total of sixteen studies, the first four of which deal specifically with the history of the family before the Battle of Mohács. Tibor Neumann offers a classical family history and also the various ways in which the dynasty portrayed itself in the various symbolic languages of the time. István Kenyeres provides a history of the family estate and the ways in which it was farmed at a profit. Norbert C. Tóth describes the anti-Ottoman

struggles of voivode János, who later become John I. We also learn about the lives and dramatic careers of the two brothers, Imre Szapolyai, who was more prominent in the financial and administrative fields, and his younger brother István Szapolyai, a soldier to the core, and their close ties to Pozsega County and Bosnia, as well as the use of the Slavic language by members of the family, their construction projects, the good relationship between János Szapolyai and István Bátori in the Middle Ages, the political maneuvers of the Jagiellonian kings, and the ways in which the family perceived and portrayed itself. The wives also play an important role in the history of the Szapolyai family, and the book naturally focuses on Isabella, the wife of King John I, but we also learn about the wife of István Szapolyai, the mother of John I, Princess Hedwig of Cieszyn. Through marriage, the Szapolya family built ties to the Habsburgs and the Jagiellons, as seen in the family's perception of itself as an "almost royal house" and the ways in which the family used the symbols of the time to portray itself. Princess Hedwig also sought to arrange advantageous marriages for her children. She tried to arrange the marriage of János to Princess Anne, daughter of King Vladislaus II, and György to the heir to the Hunyadi estate. Although the schemes eventually came to nothing, György's twin sister, Borbála Szapolyai, eventually became the wife of King Sigismund of Poland, which made János Szapolyai the brother-in-law of King Vladislaus. In addition to the wealth he inherited from his father and his princely lineage on his mother's side of the family, János's popularity among the nobility and his military successes made him a suitable candidate for king.

Most of the studies in the volume deal with the era of the reign of John I and John II, the foundations for which are laid by Pál Fodor and Teréz Oborni, who draw attention to the fact that the transition between the kingdom of the Szapolyai family and the Principality of Transylvania seems clear or predictable only from the perspective of today. The people at the time, however, were striving to avoid the division of the kingdom. The study shows how Sultan Suleiman changed his plans for Hungary along the way and how these changes affected the eastern part of the country. The changes in the administration and politics of Eastern Hungary are also explored from the perspective of one person, Péter Petrovics. Szabolcs Varga offers significant nuance to the frequently negative portraits one finds in the historiography of the ispán of Temes, who remained loyal to the Szapolyai family throughout, and although he adopted a pro-Ottoman policy, by doing so, he managed to preserve the Hungarian world in the region a few years longer. István H. Németh and Emőke Gálfi each write about urban policy

as an important element of domestic politics. They show how Buda and Kassa (today Košice, Slovakia) became Hungarian-majority towns after the fighting and the expulsion of the Germans, how the urban structure of the country was transformed, and why Gyulafehérvár (today Alba Iulia, Romania) did not become a free royal town. Péter Kasza's study shows the constraints King John faced in his foreign policy, and Kasza notes that Szapolyai's "national kingdom" failed with the defeat at Tokaj and Szina (today Seňa, Slovakia), while the accession of the whole country to the Habsburg Monarchy was made impossible by the subsequent failure to prevent Szapolyai's return and by the Vienna campaign of 1529. All this foreshadowed the inevitable partition of the country. János B. Szabó's study also gives us a better understanding of the Szapolyai army, its units, and the way in which it was structured and run.

The third major thematic unit in the volume addresses culture and perceptions. Szabolcs Varga's returns to the question of the ways in which the Szapolyai family portrayed itself. Zoltán Csepregi examines the debates surrounding the Reformation. Pál Ács and Péter Kasza look at literary life. Orsolya Bubryák discusses the treasury of the Szapolyai family. On the basis of these articles, an image of King John emerges as educated and art-loving ruler who claimed to be the political heir to the Hunyadi family. He was surrounded by educated humanists, and Hungarian culture thrived in his court, but the figure of the Muslim Hungarian poet Murad Dragoman is also of particular interest. The concluding study examines the ways in which the dynasty has been remembered, tracing how perceptions of the Szapolyai family have been shaped in the historiography, how negative views were associated with the figure of King John over time, how his person was gradually rescued by historiography, and how he was replaced by György Fráter and Queen Isabella as positive heroes.

The volume of studies presents the age of the Szapolyai family from an array of perspectives and using various methodologies, with a focus on political history, symbolic languages of power, culture, and estate management. It is not simply a dynastic history, but rather offers a contemporary history woven around the Szapolyai family. It is perhaps due to this approach that the focus of the book is on John I and John Sigismund, while the discussions of Imre and István Szapolyai serve more as a kind of prequel to the family history. The book deals with contemporary and later perceptions of the family on several occasions, and it adds important nuance to negative depictions. The reader is presented with a sympathetic, humane King John. The themes of the book are determined in part by the desire to present recent findings and the difficulties caused by the

lack of some basic research on certain issues. For this reason, the volume is both a summary of our knowledge of the subject now and also a springboard for further research in the decades to come.

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A Hunyadiak címereslevelei 1447–1489 [The Hunyadi family grants of arms, 1447–1489]. Edited by Anton Avar. Budapest: National Archives of Hungary, 2018. 320 pp.

A Hunyadiak címereslevelei 1447–1489 [The Hunyadi family grants of arms, 1447–1489] is one of the most ambitious books of recent times in the auxiliary sciences. The purpose of the book is stated clearly by the editor in the introduction. The aim of the volume is to “present the entire corpus of the grants of arms of János and Mátyás Hunyadi in a scholarly manner, in full, with the publication of the complete texts, accompanied by reproductions.” The authors of this volume have fully achieved their aim, and they have produced a work of great importance in the fields of history and art history. Few people could have been better qualified than Anton Avar to produce this work. As a member of the staff of the Hungarian National Archives, he is responsible for the maintenance of the grants of arms database, so neither the period nor the type of source was new to him. As a result, he was able to approach the sources with confidence and to put them in order. He has also managed to bring together the works of various authors to form a single work of scholarship the language of which is consistent and precise. Anton Avar himself has transcribed a considerable number of grants of arms and had written short studies on them, the following collaborators also contributed to the production of the volume: Dávid Faragó, Csaba Farkas, Judit Gál, Éva Gyulai, István Kádas, Dániel Kálmán, Tamás Körmendi, Mihály Kurecskó, Julianna Orsós, György Rácz, Miklós Sölch, and Attila Tuhári.

The book was published in a hardcover edition with a color illustration on the cover capturing the subject, Ambrus Török’s 1481 grant of arms. The table of contents is followed by a short foreword which provides information concerning the various administrative details which were essential to the creation of the book. This is followed by an introductory essay and a study by Árpád Mikó entitled “The Place of Mátyás-period Grants of Arms in the History of Miniature painting.” The introduction provides a more in-depth look at the history of research on the subject since the nineteenth century as well as some discussion of the textual aspects of the present edition. As an example, all seven German-language and 39 Latin-language charters have been printed in letter-for-letter fidelity to the originals, adhering to the distinctive spelling conventions of the period. The reader then comes to the source edition itself, the grants of arms. The structure of the work is as follows for each item: the donor and the

donated party are given as titles. Below this, the place and date of issue and other charter details (original or forged, place of custody, description of status) follow, together with additional informative notes. If the document has already been published, the bibliographical details are also given here. Before the source text, the authors list the most important works in the secondary literature. The authors have published the grants of arms in full, in Latin, in complete transcriptions. In each case, the source is followed by a short essay on the background and content of the issue of the grant of arms. This offers the necessary historical background knowledge and puts the source and the image of the grant of arms in context. Both the studies and the accompanying annotated appendices are valuable resources for scholars of the period and of the subject. The images also add considerably to the value of the work. The transcription in Latin is accompanied by the painted coat-of-arms, and the studies accompanying the source texts are often followed by a high-quality photograph of the grant of arms and/or the seal on it. Below the heraldic images, there is precise documentation which adheres to and makes consistent use of the methodology of the heraldic inscriptions and heraldic terminology.

The publication of the grants of arms for the entire Hunyadi period is a valuable and ambitious undertaking in and of itself, but the pictures add significantly to its merits of this book. After the transcriptions of the texts, there is a brief summary in English of the grants of arms published in the volume as well, followed by the last part of the work, the bibliography, which is divided into a list of the national fonds and holdings to which references are made and the secondary literature which was used. In total, 47 grants of arms have been published, of which 32 were originals and 15 were forgeries. Four of them were from János Hunyadi, one was for János Hunyadi, and 42 were from Mátyás Hunyadi. The volume is an ambitious and major work which constitutes a significant contribution to the field from several perspectives. The inaccuracies in the earlier lists of coats of arms and grants of arms have been corrected, thus providing the reader with a reliable reference work. Furthermore, the authors have made every effort to ensure completeness and have researched all the relevant data. Thus, the book is the product and embodiment of thorough knowledge of the whole corpus of the Hunyadi era, including findings which will be interesting and essential to further research both within Hungary and among the international community of historians. Indeed, it will reveal previously unrecognized connections. A few of the grants of arms worth mention in this context are the 1453 grant of arms to János Hunyadi, the 1459 grant of arms to

Bálint Bakóc, the grant of arms to the town of Késmárk in 1463, and the grant of arms to the town of Sankt Pölten in 1486. In addition to the textual sources, the publication of the pictorial material contributes to the secondary literature on grants of arms as part of the field of art history and philology.

The book will be of use not only to the narrow community of Hungarian scholars of medieval history. It meets the highest international standards of source publications, and thus will certainly win recognition both in Hungary and abroad. The inclusion of explanatory texts in English makes it significantly more accessible to the non-Hungarian readership, and the Latin transcriptions will be of considerable use to members of the international professional community. One might pause to note that it might have added to the value of the book had the authors included at least a short version of the preface in English translation, as this would have made it more easily accessible to the international readership. However, it is unquestionably a major contribution to the Hungarian scholarship on the Middle Ages. One could even hope that it will prompt the creation of a new series on grants of arms.

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Mobilität und Migration in der Frühen Neuzeit. By Márta Fata. Einführungen in die Geschichtswissenschaft. Frühe Neuzeit 1. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020. 248 pp.

Utb-Band, the objective of which is to assist university education, launched a new book series (*Einführungen in die Geschichtswissenschaft*) in cooperation with Göttingen-based publisher Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht with the aim of introducing different topics to university students. The first volume of the series, which has already been published three times, explores migration, one of the most significant social processes of our time and a process which had a profound impact in an already exciting period, the early modern era. The author of the book, Márta Fata, a professor at the University of Tübingen and an associate of the Institut für donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde, summarizes her rich teaching and research experience in this work. An explicit purpose of the volume is to offer the reader an interpretation of migration processes examined over a longer period of time from an adequate distance and with sufficient thoroughness. Firstly, this purpose is well served by the framing of the text: the introduction describes the problems of the 2015 refugee crisis, and the conclusion responds to the processes of the present in their historical context. Secondly, although it openly and self-evidently places emphasis on the Germans of the Holy Roman Empire, the book still examines and discusses forms of mobility on a European and global scale. From a methodological point of view, this is best made possible by the author's choice, after presenting the problematic issues raised by the definition of "migration," to take a clear stand in support of a rather broad and flexible use of the term, the meaning of which is by no means absolute. Consequently, Fata places emphasis on the historical actor's individual decision to migrate. Naturally, this decision entrenched behind arguments can spark controversies over interpretation, but it is an unavoidable conclusion from the point of view of the logic and argumentation of the volume. The role of the individual decision requires a more layered analysis of the economic, social, and cultural factors that influence it. From the point of view of the book, this would seem a difficult choice, because the inquiry must then address all this while staying within the framework of a textbook in its direction and language, which Fata manages to achieve by incorporating colorful, often individual examples and obviously the relevant key literature.

In the first section of the book, entitled "Begriffe, Theorien und Typologien," Fata presents the most important scholarly theories concerning the migration

process, with particular emphasis on the increasingly broad reception of migration in Germany since the 1980s (it took this long not to consider migration as a continuation of the interwar *Ostkolonisation* theory, which has a strong political connotation, but rather as something which should be addressed as part of modernization theories). Fata argues that research on migration in the early modern era is of special importance, since in this era the process of migration underwent a major qualitative change: compared to earlier times, far more people set out on much longer journeys, and in addition to the already more mobile lower and upper groups of society, this also affected the middle classes more strongly, especially serfs, who earlier had been strongly attached to the land.

The fact that for many Germans, the opening of the world was marked by the South American travelogue by Hans Staden, a soldier from Homberg, and his account of gold and silver (but also of cannibalism) is in itself due to several circumstances that bear the distinct marks of the early modern era (“Expansion und Erfahrung der Welt”): the discovery of the New World and the spread of news through printing, as well as the fact that Charles V, the Spanish monarch, was also Holy Roman Emperor. Therefore, the expansion of Europe, which is at the same time the start of Wallerstein’s modern world order, became not only unstoppable but increasingly impulsive, and alongside its positive aspects, this also resulted in the demographic disasters suffered by indigenous populations and the violent persecution and/or Europeanization of their cultural value systems, which was made worse by the atrocities committed against certain groups. This also shows how Fata’s concept prevails in the book, according to which the complexity of migration can only be addressed objectively through a discussion of both its advantages and its disadvantages, and in addition to the presentation of migration as process, this is also reflected in a series of case studies. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the technological developments that facilitated migration, in which, in addition to the improvements in navigation and shipbuilding, the Hungarian invention for passenger transport, the coach, is also presented, as is the stagecoach, which helped speed up the flow of information.

For early modern states, practical mercantilism was the most dominant direction in economic philosophy and economic policy (“Die Bevölkerung als zentrale Kategorie des frühneuzeitlichen Staates”). This also shaped thinking about the growth of the population, to which Fata devotes a separate chapter. The useful and thus growing European population, which could thus pay more taxes and provide more soldiers, also underwent a transformation in its structure as a result of conquests and colonization. As a consequence of emigration, the

population of Europe declined, and this was intensified by the casualties of the Thirty Years' War and the ensuing epidemics, but the resulting wave of refugees also had a structural impact. Furthermore, the seventeenth century witnessed a radical change in the East and Central European region. Turkish rule, which had controlled the Carpathian Basin for 150 years, essentially fell in the last third of the seventeenth century, putting the population policy of the Habsburgs on a new footing. For the monarchs, who thought in terms of practical considerations, the primary goal was to repopulate the extensive areas that had been deserted and completely fallen out of agricultural cultivation under Turkish rule.

The next chapter (“Die Migrationssteuerung”) focuses on the difficulties and administrative labyrinths of the controlled and uncontrolled state of migration. Fata places great emphasis on explaining that there were no uniform migration regulations in the Holy Roman Empire that would apply across the entire empire, but migration was regulated on a provincial level (according to a more or less similar conception of population policy). As a result, a wide variety of practices were in use with regard to support for, control of, and promotion of migration. This also affected recipient countries, since they offered different privileges to new settlers in light of this, while strongly considering the immigrants' social composition and even their sectarian affiliation. In addition to this heterogeneity, however, an important result of the era was the establishment and continuous refinement of the basic system of passports, which recorded not only the identity of the migrants but also their reasons for relocating.

In Fata's discussion of people who traveled for religious reasons, one important focus of the argument is the fact that, alongside sectarian affiliation, economic and social circumstances also played a significant role in decisions to migrate (“Die religiös motivierte Migration”). This finding is not only revelatory in itself, but also gains particular importance if, as a result, we begin to see the religiously persecuted not only as suffering subjects but also as actors making strategic decisions in the hopes of improving their circumstances. In this context, the book also describes the extent to which the socio-economical and socio-cultural characteristics of recipient territories are the legacy of earlier ages and what new transcultural processes were induced by the migrations of the time. Fata also considers the importance of ministers and pastors, who often played important roles in organizing migrations, in particular because of their crucial mediating role between the issuing and receiving territories.

The series of almost innumerable wars in the early modern era is also shown in a different light in the book (“Die militärische und kriegsbedingte Migration”).

Population movement (particularly the movement of people who were refugees) is presented not only a consequence of the wars but also as the result of recruiting efforts and the movement of soldiers, which was a prerequisite to the hostilities. At the same time, the mercenaries who served in the armies that grew continuously during the seventeenth century could and did cross great distances, not only in terms of space but also from the perspective of social mobility. Furthermore, war involved not simply the mobilization of soldiers but also the mobilization of the convoys which followed them, such as adjutants, servants, paramedics, field surgeons, and army chaplains. This is why war became part of field training in several educational programs, for instance in the programs provided for the Lutheran pastoral students at the University of Tübingen.

The next chapter (“Die Siedlungsmigration”) focuses on the settlements dominating the early modern era, the significance of which is still felt today. Fata discusses the approach according to which the main motivations underlying the creation of these kinds of settlements lay not simply in their usefulness but, as one can say after Francis Bacon, also in the fact that these settlements constituted an investment in the future, though there was no actual guarantee of success. From the perspective of the Holy Roman Empire, western destinations meant the British colonies in North America. The religious tolerance and political liberties of Pennsylvania attracted emigrants in large numbers, who left their densely populated homelands in which they struggled to earn a livelihood, settled in this part of the New World, and ran farms. The other direction of emigration pointed towards Brandenburg-Prussia and Hungary. In addition to the settlement policies of the Hohenzollerns and the Habsburgs, Fata also compares the conditions and cultural backgrounds of the settlers. She emphasizes the possible motives which prompted people to settle in this direction, which still have not been exhaustively explored, and she also examines the practice of remigration, which was far from unprecedented and was particularly common if a spouse died on the road or if migrants were disappointed by the circumstances they found when they settled in the lands which they had hoped would be their new homes.

This is followed by a discussion of migrants who were on the road because of their occupations, but whose journey, unlike the previous ones, was circular, i.e., they returned home at least once (“Die Erwerbsmigration”). These migrants included seasonal workers, for example, whose employment was basically determined by the seasonality of their work at home. Itinerant traders are also presented here, who were typically treated with distrust due to their strange appearance and linguistic gaps, especially if they beat local merchants’ prices with

their cheaper goods. Still, they played key roles, as they contributed to the trade of goods among cities and countries. Urban and rural trade relations were also strengthened by Jewish merchants, also classified in this group, who transported the finished goods of the towns to the villages and sold the agricultural surplus of the village at town markets.

Compared to the previous category, those who migrated expressly due to subsistence pressures were in a more socially peripheral position (“Die Subsistenzmigration”). Many kinds of people belong to this category, such as some of the beggars or Roma, as well as deserters. A source dated 1801 lists 22 types among such migrants. Also included in this group were people who set off due to the local effects of the Little Ice Age or confrontations with the authorities. The diversity of this group makes these migrants difficult to grasp at a source level, and individual examples are best able to illustrate the survival strategies used by members of this group. The chapter concludes with a more detailed description of Roma, regarding whom it is worth emphasizing that although for a long time they refused to settle down and adopt the associated farming lifestyle, and their particular socio-cultural traits also contributed to the fact that they were treated as strangers, they still performed military service in groups 300–400-people strong in the Thirty Years’ War, which enabled most of them to join the majority society.

Nearing the end of the book, Fata devotes a separate chapter to peregrinators (“Spielarten der Peregrination”). The discoveries that were made in the sixteenth century, intensifying migration, and the spread of printing significantly broadened knowledge of the world. At the same time, as the common language of educated circles, Latin maintained its position, although by the end of the period, as national languages gained prominence and influence, French also caught up with it. Fata distinguishes between two directions of peregrination, *peregrinatio apostolica*, the actual missionary work, and *peregrinatio academica*, the training of itinerant students. The best examples of the former include the Jesuits’ expansion, their missions in Asia, Africa, and South America (and the accounts of these missions, which were increasingly spreading), while as regards the latter, students visiting the series of German universities that were rapidly growing in number due to the Reformation merit mention. It is important to highlight the regional connections these universities had. For example, for Protestant theology students in Hungary and Transylvania, first Wittenberg and then Heidelberg became the preferred destination. Fata discusses the *Kavalierstour* as a particular form of *peregrinatio academica*, which meant the high-standard travel of the noble youth to see the

world. The purpose of these journeys was not simply to provide the young man with new experience but also to build relationships among the European court elite. The migration of academically trained scholars (“Gelehrtenmigration”) also belongs to this category. Albert Szenczi Molnár, the prominent Hungarian Calvinist pastor, linguist, and literary translator of the period, spent a significant portion of his professional career in the Holy Roman Empire. It was here that he revised the earlier Hungarian translation of the Bible by Gáspár Károli, and it was also here that he translated the Heidelberg Catechism into Hungarian and wrote his Hungarian grammar in Latin.

In the chapter entitled “Dimensionen der Integration,” Fata describes the directions and dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. For example, she points out the pan-European integrative nature of Humanism, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment, while the Reformation, its positive aspects notwithstanding, divided Christianity even further. Towns and cities came to play stronger mediating roles, which also ensured better circulation of knowledge. However, particularly due to language constraints, settlers were not integrated, and this limited the spread of their ingenuity in farming. Thus, all the factors that may have served or may have hindered integration are given emphasis, such as religion, language, culture, and skin color.

As a conclusion to the book, Fata highlights that several factors (such as scientific discoveries, colonization, the Reformation, and the continuous wars) in the early modern era generated continuous movement, and this affected thinking in a broader sense and radically influenced the lives of people at the time. All these factors must be taken into consideration if we want to find our way among the seemingly confusing processes of migration.

The book includes 10 illustrations, and the bibliography indicates primary sources related to each topic by chapters complemented with short descriptions of the content of the sources, either a few words or a sentence. The index of places and names following the list of images likewise makes the book easier to use. Although the volume was primarily written for Bachelor’s and Master’s students in Germany, it is a rich work which will be of interest to a much wider audience, such as German and non-German historians, sociologists, and readers who simply want better to orient themselves in the processes which have shaped and continue to shape the world.

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Crown and Coronation in Hungary 1000–1916 A.D. By János M. Bak and Géza Pálffy. Budapest: Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of History – Hungarian National Museum, 2020. 264 pp.

What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, and what happens in Hungary wontedly stays in Hungary when it comes to academic research, alas. Characteristically, it took until 2020 for an English language volume to finally see the light of day and claim the international academic attention the Holy Crown of Hungary warrants. *Crown and Coronation in Hungary 1000–1916 A.D.*, by János M. Bak, recently deceased professor of Medieval Studies, and Géza Pálffy, head of the Holy Crown Research Group of the Research Centre for the Humanities in Hungary, puts long decades' research results into the pan of the scales held by the international academic community.

The first two chapters offer a breadth of perspective on Hungarian coronations. “The way to the Throne: Right of Blood – Right of the Estates – Right of the House of Austria,” surveys the changes in the customs of succession until primogeniture came to prevail and was ultimately superseded by an electoral principle. The politically-charged legal prerequisites of coronations and the power relations defining them are analyzed in the cases of 51 kings, an already exhaustive list supplemented by the discussion of four leaders of the Magyar tribal alliance from pre-documented times. This analytical survey is complemented by practical aspects of coronations in “Coronations Through Nine Centuries.” The scope now widens to lesser noted details, such as location, timing, and secondary participants, which paint vivid pictures of the ceremonies and narrate how the Holy Crown gained power to legitimate coronations. The volume nonetheless lets the reader wonder whether a heavenly or an earthly attribution granted “holy” status to the Crown: was it the almost overemphasized false attribution to Saint Stephen, the first king of the Christian Hungary (1000–1038), or the almost deemphasized *corona angelica* tradition, according to which the Crown was delivered to the country (and not to a monarch) by an angel?

Both international and Hungarian readers are served particularly well when the same chapter hesitantly taps on national feelings and raises distinctively Hungarian traditions to an international context. Among them, cities and churches chosen as official locations for coronations constitute a variety which is rare by international standards. While the ecclesiastical rites of royal inaugurations followed European patterns and maintained largely consistent standards over time, the secular acts acquired a national flavour and contributed to the nation's

self-identification. While the chapter investigates Hungarian customs with exemplary diligence, a deeper examination of the European patterns would have made the uniqueness of national traditions even more prominent, both for international and Hungarian readers.

The first two chapters indeed presuppose a foreign readership with a rather thorough knowledge of Hungarian history. A bit of basic information concerning the discussed monarchs' legacy would likely please non-Hungarian readers, at least in cases of milestone figures such as Saint Stephen, Saint Ladislas I (1077–1095), Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387–1437), Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490), or Maria Theresa (1740–1780), the only female ruler of both the Habsburg dynasty and Hungary. Milestone historical events, such as the 1526 “disaster” of Mohács (p.41), the 1703–1711 Rákóczi “uprising and war of independence” (p.65 and p.178), and Hungary's frequently referenced Ottoman occupation similarly need little introduction for Hungarians, but their synopsis would likely be welcomed by foreigners. The 1241–1242 Mongol Invasion, the 1514 György Dózsa Rebellion and peasant revolt, and the awakening national identity in the 1800s Reform Era are not spoken of in the volume, even though the challenges they presented to established authority were not without relevance for coronations and power perception. In the want of an intense reckoning with the historical context, the uncompromisingly strict focus on coronations may easily become a double-edged sword as both the biggest strength and greatest weakness of the volume, depending, of course, on the personal interests and background of the individual reader.

A slender but up-to-date summary of historical and art historical research results pertaining to the Holy Crown is left for the concluding chapter “Signs of Power and their Fate,” embedded in the analysis of a list of symbolic ornaments serving the display of majesty at coronations. Their order seems to be rather unaimed as the Crown is preceded by the throne, the copy of the imperial Holy Lance, and the coronation mantle, and followed by the crowns of queens, the sceptre, the orb, swords, the coronation regalia, chests, crosses, paraments, flags, batons, coins, and tokens. The Holy Crown, which “embodies the constitutional continuity of Hungary's statehood” according to the Constitution of Hungary (p.191), is introduced as little more than one item of regalia among many. This rich collection, however, is a solid strength of the book in its rarity, so much so that “Coronation and Insignia” as a title would have directed a more apt spotlight on what is arguably the volume's biggest asset.

The volume convincingly argues that “Crown and Coronation” are inseparable in Hungary, but, still and all, the preponderance of attention is devoted to the historical and social dimensions of coronations as enduring legacies of a not-too-distant past. In accordance with its aim of addressing a “scholarly but popular” audience, as noted on the back cover, the volume omits footnotes and endnotes but attempts to compensate with a thematic bibliography. The scarcity of English language works in the latter is primarily the toll of the ebb and flow of Hungarian scholarship, though the references could have been further embellished with the works of Zsuzsa Lovag and the late Éva Kovács, to whom the volume is dedicated. That said, the authors navigate with grace on a vast ocean of textual and visual sources, enclosing artworks and not disregarding oral traditions either. The volume’s contribution to scholarship is beyond question by the long-awaited international reach-out, which deservedly brings to surface a brilliant tip of Hungarian scholarship’s iceberg.

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Empty Signs, Historical Imaginaries: The Entangled Nationalization of Names and Naming in a Late Habsburg Borderland. By Ágoston Berecz. New York–Oxford: Berghahn, 2020. xiv + 335 pp.

This fascinating monograph provides an exhaustive and remarkably archival-based discussion of the sociocultural history of competing and intertwined nationalizing processes. Although the title of the book leaves the reader wondering for a moment about the precise temporal and geographical framework of its content, the maps, tables, charts, and various meticulously processed indexes included in the body text and as parts of the appendix profusely compensate for the riddle-like title. The latter may well be tied up with the tricky problem of how to refer unambiguously to the diverse regions of the erstwhile Kingdom of Hungary, including an area populated characteristically by Romanians (and, apart from Hungarians, in a more circumscribed way by Transylvanian Saxons). All the same, instead of using the elusive term “late Habsburg borderland,” it might have been more informative to indicate that the book is primarily about the fairly vast eastern borderland of Dualist Hungary, which was populated for the most part by Romanian speakers.

The book admittedly combines three major ambitions by scrutinizing the spontaneous uses and official regulations of proper names pertaining to people and places in the territory indicated above. It addresses first the complicated topic of the so called “nationality question” of Dualist Hungary, i.e., the rivalry of Hungarian state nationalism and the national/ist movements defying it in pervading for the most part prenational masses with symbolic elements of conflicting national high cultures evolving side by side. Secondly, among nationally germane symbolic elements, proper names were and are of vital importance, and yet the study of the trends in their usage and the methods according to which they have been standardized seldom find place even in the writings of cultural historians. Berecz, however, not only focuses on them, but by carefully analysing their capacity for conveying or evading nationalist messages, he decidedly favors the “from below” approach to the study of nationhood.

The book is broken into three sections each of which is further divided into three chapters. The sections are arranged according to a gradual and systematic logic in a chronological and structural sense, focusing first on the ways in which common people traditionally christened themselves and the places where they lived (*Peasants*), then on the intensifying ideologization of the inventory of names by the nationalizing elites (*Nationalisms*), and finally on the state’s intervention

through the official regulation of the usage of first names, family names, and place names (*The State*).

As for given names, there was a highly unequal distribution of typically “national” first names (i.e., historical, pagan, or Latinate in regard to Romanians) between the elite and the peasantry of all three major subpopulations of the area. However, Romanian peasants were noticeably not only susceptible to adapt Hungarian name variants (unlike their Saxon counterparts and the nineteenth-century Romanian and Saxon elites), the dissemination of national (Latinate) names was quite slow among them, even though they were in the ascendent as time passed (Chapter 1). It was only after having taken over the registration of the population from churches in the 1890s that the Hungarian state started to issue decrees on the *official* forms of personal names (Chapter 7). According to Berecz’s thorough investigation in the field, most local officials nevertheless continued writing first names in their vernacular forms and mother-tounge spellings while recording them in their official Hungarian forms in the civil registry. Moreover, resulting evidently from the strong dissimilarity between Western-rite and Byzantine-rite calendars, “a significant minority of Romanian names were either declared untranslatable, subjected to a merely cosmetic Magyarization or outright re-Latinized’ (p.170) by the experts called upon by the Ministry to Magyarize the national onomasticon.

The issue of surnames was much more complicated. Compared to Transylvanian Saxons and Hungarians, family names among Romanians were relatively recent and not meant to be real ethnic markers for long (Chapter 2). Berecz draws a clear distinction between the traditionally high rate of Hungarian-influenced surnames (of various kinds) and the comparatively low number of people who Magyarized family names among the country’s Romanian population (Chapters 4 and 5). This remarkable and at the same time mutually embarrassing phenomenon added up to the inveteracy of two complementary but in effect unfounded myths: the one lamenting the submerged Magyardom of the region at large, and the other about incriminating “all-time” Hungarian elites who had planned the Magyarization of Romanian peasants over the course of centuries. The first topos seemed to be corroborated by the fact that Romanian-populated areas abounded in settlement names of Hungarian origin, while advocates of the latter commonplace implicitly projected the contemporary family-name Magyarization movement (a massive phenomenon after 1880) onto a murky past. Whereas the voluntary Magyarization of surnames remained a typically upper-class social movement (proverbially common among Neolog Jews), it was

nonetheless true that the higher one stood on the social ladder in contemporary Hungary, the less one needed to alter one's inherited name (*viz.* mostly lower-ranking state employees were urged to Magyarize their surnames during the Bánffy Era in the late 1890s). In this respect, noble names indicated the benchmark: even nationally committed Romanian politicians clung to their Magyar surname along with its spelling if it had a venerable pedigree. In addition, the vicissitudes of Romanian orthographical trends certainly did not play into the hands of intellectuals who wanted Romanian surnames to be written "authentically," as their etymological tradition looked back only a few decades of history and became outdated as soon as the ensuing phonemic trend prevailed in spelling from the 1870s onwards (Chapter 8).

In contrast with semantically and ideologically uninterested rural populations (Chapter 3), for nineteenth-century nationalists, the very form of place names asserted symbolic ownership of the respective territory. As Berecz insightfully underlines, "officials and specialists in charge of renaming campaigns [...] validated the principle that place names belong to the entire nation embodied in the state rather than to the people who use them" (p.241). The official Hungarian renaming campaign from 1898 on (amply scrutinized in the book's longest section, found in Chapter 9) was not only among the earliest internationally, but excelled both in elaboration and scope. Yet the new official toponyms pertaining to the area under discussion were introduced only around 1910 (with the exception of two counties in southern Transylvania, which were left out altogether because of the war), so the enforcement of the law on the official names of localities was preceded by its Croatian counterpart in 1907, which put limitations on the public use of Hungarian name variants there. The renaming process coupled Magyarization and simple disambiguation of settlement names, coordinated and supervised by statisticians, archival, and other experts, who consulted local councils and county assemblies alike about their decisions. Nevertheless, most appeals arising from locals were similarly rejected by the National Communal Registry Board as the whimsical name Magyarizing proposals of county assemblies. On the whole, almost 20 percent of the locality names were Magyarized during the campaign in the area, though with enormous regional disparities (the campaign hardly affected Saxon counties and had only a slight effect on the other Transylvanian counties with Romanian majorities, while it had a strong effect on the counties in Banat and the densely Romanian-populated part of eastern Hungary). Although the process was justified as inevitable modernization combined with the restoration of genuine

historical names, less than a third of the newly coined toponyms were actually based on archival data. Furthermore, many of the freshly Magyarized Romanian toponyms took the place of already native exonyms of Hungarian origin; in other words authentic but in appearance distorted variants were re-Magyarized with the use of new fabrications.

In his conclusions, Berecz expounds on the manifold findings with which his book teems. Of these findings, I would mention only the mostly elite character of nineteenth-century nationalism, the slowness and difficulties in nationalizing rural masses, and the non-negligible constraints which Hungarian state nationalism had to face, which were preeminently forceful in Transylvania, where strong church autonomy and ethnic separation had been the rule for centuries, not to mention the contemporary ethno-demographic reality. While it is devoted to a seemingly narrow subject, Berecz's monograph calls attention to the crucial symbolic relevance of the nationalization of proper names. It thus constitutes a major contribution to the study of nationhood and nationalism.

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Inventing the Social in Romania, 1848–1914: Networks and Laboratories of Knowledge. By Călin Cotoi. Leiden: Brill, Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2020. 278 pp.

Inventing the Social in Romania sets out to explore what most historical scholarship has overlooked so far, namely the articulation of the “social question” in modern Romania. Placing the analysis on the Eastern “semi-periphery” of European Empires, this work skillfully goes beyond the “colonizer and colonized” dichotomy and the supposition of the unidirectional flow of Western ideas of modernity, proposing instead a so-called “colonial continuum” and a “top-down and bottom-up” approach. Cotoi deploys an impressive interdisciplinary arsenal, working from perspectives that include social economy, the history of medicine, the history of science, and political history. In doing so, he maps out the staging of the “social question” by focusing on the interplay among numerous historical agencies, bringing together the transnational circulation of ideas and groups such as the “narodniks,” the anarchists, the Marxists, and public health specialists. Based on a mixed neo-Foucauldian methodology, the work follows the political and intellectual biography of individuals who “crisscross chapters and themes, and travel inside the book, mirroring, somehow, their real life intellectual, emotional, and geographical trajectories” (p.11). However, non-human agents of change, such as bacteria, are also central to the argument, and Cotoi also looks at statistics, medical and hygiene diplomas, and national exhibitions in order to understand the main pandemic of the nineteenth century: cholera.

Cotoi’s book is organized in three parts and eight chapters and begins with an analysis of the discursive role played by three important Romanian revolutionaries who debated the significance of the “specter of communism” and its alien character for the social realities of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. One of these voices was the French-trained agronomist Ion Ionescu de la Brad, who, after his involvement in the Tanzimat movement in the Ottoman Empire, became a vocal political figure in the Romanian process of peasant emancipation and land reform. The second and third chapters are built on the “empty signifier of communism” created by the political tensions between 1848 revolutionaries and conservative boyars over the neo-feudal meaning of property and labor. Cotoi then gives voice to what much of the Romanian and Western historiography found difficult to put together: the international networks of exiled Russian narodniks and anarchists. The first to arrive in Romania was the Russian narodnik physician Nicolae Codreanu, a member of the “going to the

people movement,” for which the solution to the “social question” was not only the abolition of private property, but the improvement of rural life through public health and social medicine. After failing to mobilize the local intelligentsia towards social revolution, the work shows how Codreanu’s atheistic funeral was appropriated by liberal elites and Orthodox Church officials to transform him, after his death, into a good Orthodox Romanian. One of his comrades, the “revolutionary globetrotter” Nicolae Russel, who later served as president of the Hawaiian Senate, offers an exemplary illustration of how these figures chose to mobilize locally and, at the same time, to contribute to an “autochtonization and even a nationalization of the social revolution” (p.71). Similarly, Zamfir Arbore, another contrabandist of illegal literature and intimate friend of Michael Bakunin, is identified as the only one who established a connection with the Romanian liberal nation-building elites. He then became the “chief of the municipal statistic service in Bucharest” and a “member of the first sociological research committee that investigated the state of the peasants in Romania” (pp.85–86).

In part two, Cotoi turns to non-human agencies. He argues that cholera was the defining disease of modern Romania, which “became [...] not only deadly but also productive, as midwife of social modernity in the Principalities” (p.235). The narrative highlights the multidirectionality of historical agents, in this case, disease from the East and medical expertise from the West. In chapter four, Cotoi deals with quarantine as a response to the advances of cholera, enforced for the first time in 1831 by the sanitary police led by Iacob Czihac and continued after the unification of the Romanian Principalities by Carol Davila. The fourth wave of cholera brought to the surface a sort of “community based prophylactic system,” put on paper in the sanitary reform treatises authored by Iacob Felix. Distancing himself from “communism,” Felix’s democratic revelation of “health for all” aimed to establish “a post-quarantinst social order” within “almost non-existent state sanitary structures.” The failure of these efforts in the rural regions was no surprise, as the “cameralist science” practiced by Felix did not take into consideration the social and political polarization between urban and rural regions (pp.108–10). Another solution came from Constantin Istrati, a Romanian trained physician who had been acquainted with the anarchist circles. His writings echoed the emerging narratives of racial degeneracy, which increasingly turned into “anti-peasant and orientalisng discourses” as well as “demographically based anti-Semitic arguments” (pp.120–21). Chapter five shifts the discussion to what Cotoi calls, in a Latourian fashion, “the colonization of

society by bacteriological laboratories,” hence following the work carried out by the Vienna trained bacteriologist Victor Babeş. Once established in Romania, Babeş pushed forward a scientifically organized state agenda based on the principle that “individual health could not be separated from the collective one, the health of one social class is conditioned by the other classes and the health of the inferior classes is, socially, the most important” (p.139). Moreover, his conflict with Iacob Felix also shaped the international meetings and medical conferences, still dominated by the debates on the uses and limits of quarantine and other methods of fighting cholera. However, the epidemic was eventually given a final blow by the immunologist Ioan Cantacuzino, after he oversaw a very successful vaccination campaign during the Balkan Wars (1913–1914).

In part three, Cotoi offers a close reading of the socialist “exotic plants” of Romania, further investigating the tensions between Marxism and anarchism, as well as the nationalization of the “social question” through the appearance of the famous poporanist political movement. The first author discussed is Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, who, after distancing himself from anarchism, ended up applying Marxism to the “social question” through party politics. With several peasant uprisings in the background, Gherea put forward one of the most coherent descriptions of the social issue, known as “neoserfdom,” thus highlighting the feudal structures of the Romanian state and Romanian society. Chapter seven examines the disputes between Gherea and the liberal nationalist leader of poporanism, Constantin Stere. Cotoi notes that both individuals aimed to integrate the peasants into political society either “through the development of industrial, capitalist democracy” or through “rural democracy.” Out of this strange relationship, Cotoi argues that the political representation of the peasantry was eventually transferred to the nation, and so the “bicephalous monster emerged through the violent union between the people and the state” (pp.199–201). Finally, the last chapter highlights the role played by statistics within the nation state as the main instrument with which to address and control social problems. It then turns to the antiquarian obsession of registering “national progress,” which was displayed through the general exhibitions orchestrated by Constantin Istrati. Using the Romanian Association for the Advancement and Spread of Science, Istrati attempted to redefine both the national and the social in a self-Orientalizing way. Unsurprisingly, one year after the surge of patriotism was displayed at the General Exhibition in 1906, the largest and bloodiest peasant rebellion in modern Romania broke out, casting serious doubts on these individuals’ dream of progress and modernity. Cotoi’s

discussion ends with the rural monographic sociology established by Dimitrie Gusti during the interwar period, which was coupled with eugenics and served to “solve” issues of Greater Romania’s ethnic heterogeneity.

In terms of shortcomings, the work gives little to no attention to the debates on the abolition of Roma enslavement, which were crucial to debates about social modernization in the emerging Romanian state. At the same time, the framework following the populist political ascent of Constantin Stere gives the impression of a reformist and mediator role to the fin-de-siècle anarchist movement, which was not the case. During this period, the revolutionary narrative of the left was shaped by, among others, Panait Zosîn and Panait Muşoiu, whose printing activity not only challenged the racist sociology of Ludwig Gumplowicz adopted by Stere, but after establishing new transatlantic networks, continued to shelve the nation-state apparatus. Their eclectic writings reclaimed women’s and workers’ emancipation, outlined the horrors of the peasant revolt, and criticized the European expansion of colonialism. Henceforth, we still know little about the connections between Romanian anarchists and the local freethought movement or about the latter’s promotion of Neo-Malthusianism and eugenic discussions about free love, birth control and sexual education. Similarly, more attention could have been given to Romanian socialist feminists who played a crucial role in both Marxist and anarchist debates on the “social” in late nineteenth-century Romania.

Cotoi’s work stands out from the obsessive presentism of current Romanian historical scholarship, offering instead a much-needed new perspective on the social complexity of modern Romania, which served as a kind of laboratory for both Eastern and Western political and scientific ideas.

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Paramilitarism in the Balkans: Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania, 1917–1924. By Dmtitar Tasić. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. 288 pp.

Still hungover from the flurry of recent publications inspired by the centennials of various historical milestones in Balkan and European history, scholars of the region should not get complacent and fail to notice Dmtitar Tasić's first English-language monograph. Taking on the topic of Balkan paramilitarism, vastly under-researched until a decade ago, Tasić provides readers with the first comprehensive comparative study of paramilitarism in the region, offering insights on its nature and development beyond both the three case studies of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania and the temporal framework of 1917–1924. His book, part of the impressive series *The Greater War 1912–1923*, edited by Robert Gerwarth, is a much-needed addition to a growing body of publications on previously uncharted aspects of World War I and its legacy.

Tasić's book fits well within the series' overall framework, which seeks to question the conventional spatial and chronological dimension of the conflict that has far too long been associated primarily if not exclusively with the iconic battlefields at Verdun, the Somme, and Ypres between 1914–1918. In lieu of the soldiers' debilitating experiences in the trenches of Western Europe, Tasić introduces the bizarre story of Balkan paramilitaries, who can be seen as liminal figures, in part relics of the bygone age of Eric Hobsbawm's primitive rebels, in part harbingers of the murderous bureaucrat that Hannah Arendt saw in Eichmann. Perhaps no one exemplifies better this unlikely combination of romantic glory and pragmatic terror than Ivan (Vancho) Mihailov, the interwar leader of the right-wing Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO). Tasić labels him a "revolutionary-bureaucrat," "typical office style suit-up activist with no previous experience in guerrilla warfare," yet posing "in full *komitaji* outfit" to lay claim to the rich heritage of classical Balkan guerrillas from the period of national liberation and nation-building (p.171). The story of figures like Mihailov and the Serb/Yugoslav veteran *chetnik* leader Kosta Pećanac fill the pages of the book, as Tasić sees their life trajectories as indicative of the thorough shift of Balkan societies towards modernity, a shift that was sped up by the experiences of the Great War.

To his credit, Tasić manages to intertwine those stories in a narrative which moves among analyses of events, individuals, organizations, structures, and processes. His book begins at the dawn of Balkan modernity, i.e., the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when national standing armies

had just begun to appear in the recently established Balkan nation states and displace irregulars. Borrowing Robert Gerwarth and John Horne's definition of paramilitaries as "military or quasi-military organizations and practices that either expanded or replaced the activities of conventional military formations" (p.1), Tasić argues that, unlike in most other parts of Europe, the Balkan culture of paramilitarism was not a consequence of the Great War's violence and the brutalization of soldiers, but had a much longer pedigree going back to the Ottoman period. The topic of paramilitarism's origins in the region is further explored in Chapter 1, which takes us through the rise of paramilitaries in the decades of struggle against the declining Ottoman Empire and the subsequent clash of the nation-building projects of its successor states. The formative years of Balkan paramilitaries, as Tasić claims, came in the first two decades of the twentieth century, when Ottoman Macedonia became the battleground of these competing state projects. This borderland region was where irregular units of Serbian *chetniks*, Bulgarian *komitajis*, Greek *andartes*, and, later, Albanian *kachaks* fought the Ottoman army and one another in the so-called Macedonian Struggle and the subsequent Balkan Wars and World War I. The participation of these guerrilla bands alongside the standing armies enshrined their place in the national mythology of the respective states and also ensured that they would continue to play prominent roles in the postbellum.

Chapters 2–5 deal with the inability of participants in almost incessant warfare for around a decade to demobilize and peacefully reintegrate into their societies. The turbulent local and international postwar situation certainly did not help in the process. Political and economic instability, bitter territorial disputes, and revanchism as well as the influx of new paramilitary forces such as the Reds and the Whites in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution left little room for general pacification. On the contrary, the blurred line between soldiers, irregular combatants, and civilians from the war years spread the paramilitary culture of violence beyond its immediate practitioners. Kosovo, Albania, and the cross-border region of Macedonia became hotbeds of paramilitary violence which further destabilized relatively weak states, allowing for drastic political changes, such as the Bulgarian coup d'état of 1923 and repeated political turbulence in Albania. Finally, the last two chapters and the conclusion reveal the life trajectories of various Balkan paramilitary individuals and organizations as well as the long-term legacies of the phenomenon of paramilitarism which, according to Tasić, can be clearly seen as late as the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. Tasić is quick to dispel simplistic arguments which suggest that one can draw a straight line

from the Serbian *chetniks* to the genocidal actions of 1990s paramilitaries such as Arkan's Tigers, but he still concludes that the persistence of paramilitarism in the region "speaks of strong legacies of classic Balkan paramilitarism and of its potential to appear again and again with similar outcomes despite different historical, political and ideological contexts" (p.241).

Naturally, such an ambitious research project, which seeks to encompass three case studies and draw wide-reaching conclusions based on them concerning the nature of paramilitarism in the region, has some shortcomings. Tasić's meticulous research in the Serb/Yugoslav archives and his sufficient command of both primary and secondary sources on the Bulgarian case cannot conceal the fact that Albania and Kosovo are mainly covered on the basis of secondary literature in Serbian and English. On a more conceptual level, Tasić pays some attention to paramilitaries' ability to establish their own kind of social order, most notably in the case of the IMRO's "state within the state" in Pirin, Macedonia, but he would benefit from considering the recent work of Spyros Tsoutsoumpis, who has aptly revealed the extent to which paramilitaries' administering potential might have been crucial to their success within their respective local communities. In a similar vein, Keith Brown and İpek Yosmaoğlu, who have both written on the Macedonian struggle, have explored paramilitary violence from a more socio-anthropological perspective, linking the topic of paramilitarism to the larger field of political violence, as also seen in the work of Stathis Kalyvas. The works of these scholars could further widen Tasić's perspective. Finally, it is a shame that the publisher did not invest more efforts into editing the manuscript. There are a few repetitions. For instance, the background stories of several prominent paramilitaries are given in multiple times in different chapters. Furthermore, the occasional typos and some questionable grammatical and linguistic choices could have been reduced to a minimum had the text, which otherwise reads quite easily, been more carefully checked.

Despite these minor flaws or rather potential further expansions, Tasić's book should unquestionably be considered an achievement. Methodologically and theoretically sound, the book will be a rich source of information and insights for readers with an interest in paramilitarism and/or Balkan military and political history.

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Manual for Survival: A Chernobyl Guide to the Future. By Kate Brown.
New York: WW Norton, 2020. 420 pp.

Over the course of the past decade, Kate Brown has emerged as one of the most respected researchers on the environmental history of the Cold War era. Brown is not only a familiar name among scholars in her field, she is also a historian whose work embarks in a new direction in the secondary literature. In her scholarship, she has developed two historical perspectives and an innovative narrative method on which she builds. In her 2004 monograph *Biography of No Place* and her 2015 *Dispatches from Dystopia*, she made significant contributions to our understandings of changes which were considered familiar on the large scale by treating peripheral situations as dense points of confluence. Her themes include the relationship between the functioning of planned industrial towns and repression of human lives in the first part of the 20th century and the way Cold War regimes were unwilling to recognize the rights of those whose chronic illness was due to toxic materials. Sensitivity to the relationships between landscapes and individual lives is another key characteristic of the case studies she offered. That is how she raises new questions and places processes familiar from textbooks in a new context. Another central element of Brown's perspective is transnational and global thinking, in which she seeks to break down the hierarchy between scientific and non-scientific and Western and non-Western forms of knowledge. In *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters*, which was published in 2013, she demonstrated that the plutonium plants used to develop the nuclear arsenal (the Hanford Site in North America and the Mayak Production Association in the Soviet Union) were sources of environmental damages on a global level that were many times as harmful as the Chernobyl disaster. In other words, over the course of the four decades of the Cold War arms race, the planet suffered heavy radiation pollution. Brown clearly showed in *Plutopia* that the low-level but continuous radiation present in the plants wrecked many human lives and families and shortened the lives of thousands.

Manual for Survival combines Brown's accomplishments in the creation of historical narrative on the local level with her larger interpretive framework for the meanings of the nuclear age, and she takes this further, in the direction of oral history. The book is thoroughly documented and annotated, yet its style is measured and reflective (which is all too rare in works by historians). Brown and her colleagues are also continuously present in the text. They communicate and interact with one another and with their surroundings. However, this openly

assumed epistemological stance does not mean that Brown is tentative about her claims. The first, fourth, and fifth chapters make very plainly clear that there were groups of practicing physicians and research communities in the Soviet Union that had accumulated considerable knowledge (exceeding the knowledge of the subject among contemporary “Western” circles) of the effects of both drastic and sudden exposure (on the one hand) and prolonged exposure (on the other) to radiation and possible ways of treating it. On the subject, the work of Angelina Gulsakova, which was done over the course of several decades, merits particular attention. After the Chernobyl accident, however, this branch of medicine was in constant battle with the position, held first and foremost by physicists, that only the initial dose rates matter in terms of the severity of any potential threat. This latter view allowed central policy to portray the consequences of the accident as finite and definable, making Chernobyl an isolated and isolatable event, rather than treating it as a more comprehensive and chronic problem which has required varying responses over decades. As a cautionary step, the creation of the infamous 30-kilometre evacuation zone was a further consequence of this notion, and this zone does not actually come even close to covering the area within which nothing should have been produced and no one should have had to live for years. Radiation contamination from foodstuffs, from wood used for fuel, and from processed animal hides was continuously on the move and spreading, both in the Ukraine and in Belarus. The rise in chronic thyroid disease, stillbirths, and infant mortality was observed by many researchers and doctors working independently of one another, but their voices were so suppressed by Moscow and even directly by the KGB that the Minister of Health of Ukraine found it difficult to enforce even the few measures he tried to take on behalf of those outside the zone.

Brown also reveals the extent to which those working in the plants in which contaminated materials were processed were aware of the effects of radiation, despite misinformation and cover-ups, and she shows that there were extensive medical data indicating a jump in cases of thyroid and leukemia, data that was deliberately misread in the bureaucratic summaries that were given. Thus, there was a clear grasp of the extent of the disaster, but few and only isolated efforts were made to act on this knowledge before 1989. Brown also shows that 1989 was a turning point in the public history of Chernobyl, in which NGOs were created and previously entrenched party leaders fell from power.

In the short third and the much longer sixth chapters, Brown shares two findings which fit with her earlier work and provide a new framework for

our understanding of Chernobyl. First, she notes that the Pripyat marshes were already contaminated with radioactive pollution well before the reactor exploded. Part of Polesie, lying in the former Polish-Ukrainian border region, was a secret firing range where the Soviet leadership experimented with so-called tactical nuclear bombs. Aleksandr Marei, a Soviet biophysicist, detected the contamination in 1974 (the year in which the decision to build the plant was made), but he assumed (or at least so he contended in what he wrote) that the Caesium-137 had come from US experiments. Marei's team also showed in its research that swampy areas are particularly prone to accumulate radiation contamination.

Fact-finding missions led by international organizations, in particular the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency, also put the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster in a new context. Brown concludes that important reports issued in 1989 and 1990, which were motivated in part by military, industrial, and political interests and in part by the conservatism of the scientific world, claimed, in harmony with the Soviet leadership, that no further evacuations, interventions, or investigations were necessary. According to Brown, this complicity helped contribute to the emergence of an official consensus which leaned towards a few dozen rather than hundreds of thousands of victims, and perhaps more importantly, it also enabled the authorities to avoid evacuating even in 1990 many of the settlements that were uninhabitable. Furthermore, Belarusian doctors were still being tortured in the 1990s for wanting to know more about the effects of Chernobyl and to take action to counter them. These are very serious conclusions. The pivotal moment at which the public realized that it had been misinformed about the Chernobyl disaster contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, but this moment was put in metaphorical parentheses by prominent parts of the international scientific community within a year or two.

Brown's book becomes a critique of the world system when she reveals that even before the fall of the Soviet Union, research had shown quite clearly that radioactive contamination spreads easily through the consumption of forest fruits and that blueberries from the contaminated forests of the Rivne region of Ukraine are still being traded on the global market. Indeed, the European Union increased the limit in 2016 to make it easier for blueberries to reach its markets. Neither decision-makers nor the general public seem to be aware of the devastating effects of radiation pollution. As Brown observes, "The Chernobyl disaster shows that states and international organizations are increasingly failing the people they are supposed to protect" (p.307).

Drawing on decades of experience in the field and broad knowledge of her subject, Kate Brown has offered an engaging book which is both pleasant to read and potentially jarring in its conclusions. It has already gone through several editions in English and hopefully soon will be published in some of the languages spoken in East Central Europe.

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“Mao Ce-tung elvtárs igen behatóan érdeklődött a magyarországi helyzet iránt”: Magyar–kínai kapcsolatok 1949–1989 [“Comrade Mao Zedong took a very close interest in the situation in Hungary”: Sino–Hungarian relations 1949–1989]. By Péter Vámos. Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2021. 878 pp.

With his new book, sinologist-historian Péter Vámos has offered an engaging and detailed contribution which will be of particular interest to readers curious to learn more about the history of East Asia and the history of Hungarian diplomacy. The fruit of decades of research, the book is a compendium of source materials on Sino–Hungarian relations from 1949 to 1989. Published jointly by the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church and L’Harmattan Publishing House, the volume begins with a 180-page study in which Vámos examines four decades of Sino–Hungarian relations, divided into six periods. The first period (1949–1956) shows the development of relations between the two distant countries, from the first tentative steps towards a “Free China” through the establishment of diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level and then the everyday operations of the mission in Beijing. During this period, behind the scenes, relations were characterized by mistrust. Chinese foreign ministry staff were not yet allowed by the Chinese government to maintain private relations with foreigners, and the Chinese negotiating style was utterly unfamiliar to Hungarians. There was also a dearth of Hungarian diplomats with any competence in Chinese, a problem that was only remedied in 1955 with the recruitment of two young men, Endre Galla and Barna Tálás, who had completed their studies in the target language environment. From the perspective of economic relations, Hungarian exports at that time consisted first and foremost of heavy industrial products: one third of the buses on the streets of the Chinese capital were produced in Hungary at the Ikarus plant, but there were other Hungarian exports the quality of which left something to be desired in Chinese opinion. One of the most important bilateral events of the period preceding the 1956 Hungarian Revolution was János Kádár’s participation in the congress of the Chinese Communist Party, which, according to the sources cited by Vámos, had a considerable influence on Kádár’s later career. His participation in the congress could be considered Kádár’s first major international appearance.

The pivotal moment of the second period (1956–1959) is the Hungarian Revolution and the developments which came in its wake. The Chinese press referred to the events in Budapest as both a “peaceful student march” and a

situation that was taken advantage of by “counterrevolutionaries.” As is widely known, on October 30, 1956, the Soviet government issued a declaration concerning the full equality among socialist countries, and this declaration was welcomed by the Chinese, though at the same time, China condemned the Soviet Union’s “great power chauvinism.” This declaration was interpreted by the Hungarian press as a declaration of support for the Hungarian Revolution by the Beijing leadership, but the day before the Soviet intervention on November 4, the Chinese party newspaper *People’s Daily* (*Rénmín Rìbào*) stressed that the Chinese people were firmly on the side of the “Soviet-led socialist camp.” The documents collected by Péter Vámos show that after the Hungarian Revolution, Beijing and Budapest developed deeper cooperation than ever before, beginning with the visit of Premier Zhou Enlai to Budapest in January 1957. The latter event was a major victory from the perspective of the international legitimacy of the Kádár regime, and one of the documents in Vámos’s book reveals the immense efforts made by the organizers (including Béla Biszku, who was in the press a great deal in Hungary over the course of the past decade or so because of his involvement in the repressive measures taken after the defeat of the 1956 Revolution) in preparation for the visit. Zhou Enlai even went so far as to suggest that the leaders of the “counterrevolution” not be executed immediately and that their sentences be reduced if they confessed.

In the late 1950s, however, relations between the Soviet Union and China became permanently strained, and this naturally had an impact on Sino-Hungarian relations as well. Vámos’s research reveals that the Hungarian authorities were already encountering signs of efforts to maintain a level of secrecy on the Chinese side in 1960. Accordingly, the third period of his study (1960–1969) is about the steady deterioration of bilateral relations between the two countries. It is worth noting that, in Kádár’s view, the radical Chinese position was a result of domestic political conditions. China, he felt, needed to maintain a permanent enemy image as a consequence of blunders in economic policy. In November 1960, Ferenc Martin, the Hungarian ambassador in Beijing, made clear in his report that bilateral relations were “on the surface very cordial, but essentially not the same as they once were,” and a year later, Foreign Minister János Péter issued a decree establishing rules for contacts between Hungarian diplomats and Chinese citizens. (I would add a note here and remind my reader that, in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, a little to the east of China, special guard posts were erected at the time in front of the embassies of the Soviet bloc countries to control contacts between Eastern European diplomats and local citizens.)

In the open conflict between the Soviet Union and China, Hungary naturally sided with the Soviet Union, which led to harsh criticism of Hungary from the Chinese side. In 1964, a Hungarian state party delegation went to Beijing, and Zoltán Komócsin, a party functionary, made provocative remarks concerning his experiences after his return home. According to Komócsin, the cult of personality in China was “beyond the imaginable,” and “you can’t talk to anyone without quoting Mao Zedong by the time you reach the third sentence.” Vámos’s study also reveals how the Soviet leadership in the late 1960s sought to unify policy towards China among the countries of the socialist bloc. However, even then, there were Soviet satellite countries (namely North Korea) the leaders of which simply did not attend the Moscow summit in order to avoid taking a clear stand on tensions between the Soviets and the Chinese. Following the Sino-Soviet split, the political committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (MSZMP) and, later, the government adopted four resolutions (in 1965, 1970, 1979, and 1982) establishing the framework for Hungary’s China policy from the mid-1960s until the fall of communism. Vámos has included all four documents (together with an analysis of each), as these resolutions exerted a significant influence on the narrative of the period.

The fourth section of the study (1969–1982) focuses on the slow rapprochement between Hungary and China, the initial phase of which concerned Hungarian reactions to the Sino-Soviet border clashes of 1969. The Hungarian mass media and the aforementioned party functionary Zoltán Komócsin naturally fully aligned themselves with Moscow and condemned the Maoist leadership in the strongest possible terms. Behind the scenes, however, Sino-Hungarian relations slowly began to soften, and the Chinese side made several gestures towards Hungary. The documents of this little-known process are also included in Vámos’s book, and they offer insights into Kádár’s views on the conflict. Kádár offered a statement which provided a very concise summary of the matter. “In essence,” he proclaimed, “what is decisive is how Chinese intentions relate to the Soviet Union. We are just puppets in their eyes.” Party relations between the two distant countries were only restored in the second half of the 1980s.

The fifth section of Vámos’s study (1983–1988) was essentially a period in which relations between Hungary and China were settled in the shifting international environment, when it was possible for the first Chinese restaurant in Budapest to open without the Hungarian authorities seeing this as a potential political risk. During this period, economic relations between the East-Central

European countries and China began to develop rapidly, and it became clear that there was no anti-Soviet intention behind the Chinese measures to establish relations. The Chinese leadership was very interested in Hungary's experience of economic reform, but this heightened interest on both sides was not reflected in bilateral trade. Towards the end of the 1980s, as a prelude to the coming era, the issue of Taiwan became an increasingly pressing question or, more precisely, a source of tension in Sino-Hungarian relations, as the decision-makers of the island, which was regarded as a "rebel province" by the Beijing leadership, were turning with increasing interest towards Hungary. Beginning in late 1987, Chinese diplomacy exerted intense pressure on the Hungarian side to curtail its economic ties with Taiwan. It is worth noting that, during this period, a completely parallel process was taking place a little to the east of China and Taiwan. North Korea sought to prevent Hungary from developing close relations with South Korea. The sixth and final section of Vámos's study (1989) focuses on the end of relations between Hungary and China based on shared ideological orientation, and Vámos offers an engaging discussion of the Chinese assessment of Imre Nagy's role (and the importance of his reburial) and the responses in Hungary to the events in Tiananmen Square.

Vámos's volume contains a total of 180 documents on bilateral relations in the period under discussion which offer a nuanced and precise picture not only of the history of relations between the two countries but also of the history of Hungarian diplomacy. The book is thus a pioneering undertaking which presents the evolution of Hungary's relations with China in the context of the changes in Sino-Soviet relations. Vámos shows that the dynamics of Sino-Hungarian relations closely followed the ups and downs of Sino-Soviet relations, and he also makes clear that, since Hungarian policy was always looking for ways to improve relations when China was also willing to do so, relations between Budapest and Beijing developed more rapidly and more dramatically than relations between Beijing and Moscow, especially in the mid to late 1980s. This book will be of interest to sinologists, historians of recent and contemporary diplomatic history, and even practicing diplomats.

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Planning Labour: Time and the Foundations of Industrial Socialism in Romania. By Alina-Sandra Cucu. *International Studies in Social History* 32. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2019. 266 pp.

The official political discourse of the Soviet Union celebrated workers as the engine of the communist locomotive. According to its leaders, the state and its representatives acted as guardians of the working class, guaranteeing workers' access to and the fair allocation of goods and services. *Planning Labour: Time and the Foundations of Industrial Socialism in Romania* tells a different, often contradictory story of a relationship between workers and the state. According to Cucu's narrative, to assure the rapid industrialization of post-war Romania, the state intentionally starved light industry and agriculture of labor, forcefully relocating workers to urban areas and thus turning them into the urban proletariat. To generate capital and bring the "hidden reserves" into the economic sphere as a way of boosting industrial economy, the state systematically sacrificed the living and working standards of its population by cutting wages and reducing consumption. In other words, before protecting the interests of the working class, socialist planners in Romania had to create it—a process that required plans, factories, and force.

Planning Labour draws attention to the transformation of the industrial city of Cluj in the early period of the communist takeover while appropriately placing its focus on the industrial factory as the terrain of molding not only the material foundation for the socialist economy but also workers' subjectivities to turn them into the "New Soviet Man" (see Stephen Kotkin's *Magnetic Mountain* [1995]). The historical material and analysis that Cucu has compiled into six chapters bring to the forefront the peculiar nature of the socialist industrialization and modernization of Romanian cities and the nation as whole. Romania underwent, between 1944 and 1955, brutal waves of collectivization, nationalization, proletarianization, and the corresponding transformation of the social fabric of the city and the countryside.

As Cucu observes, until 1945, the Communist party in Romania was feeble, but by 1947, its membership had skyrocketed. The political transformation underway further pushed for the centralization of the economic system, established new institutional and administrative branches, and reconfigured property and ownership rights. Moreover, after the communist takeover in 1948, the party initiated massive waves of nationalization which affected factories of national importance, extractive and mining industries, and the financial and transportation infrastructure (Chapter 1).

One of the central notions of the book is the primitive accumulation which characterized this stage in the evolution of industrial socialism. As the examples from the book illustrate, accumulation proceeded by dispossessing the agricultural sector on behalf of the growing state-owned industrial sector and systematically exploiting workers by setting low wages, imposing overtime labor regimes, and speeding up the rhythm of production. The drive for primitive accumulation turned socialist factories into the frontiers of extracting surplus-value from Romanian workers. Furthermore, the nationalization proved chaotic and uneven, leaving ample space for maneuvering by factory owners. Cucu recounts several stories of factories that managed to evade nationalization by deploying various strategies and networks. One of the cases she presents concerns a modest footwear manufacturer specializing in luxury shoes known as Guban Chemicals, which remained in private hands until 1951. Cucu's case study reveals how vague the boundaries between state, society, and market could be. The lack of experience and competence in running state institutions to manage industrial entities and informal networks of private owners and party-state representatives put the emerging governmental entities in challenging situations. As Cucu notes, "[t]he state investing in a privately owned factory and, on top of that, borrowing money from a private owner while controlling the banks, stretched the definition of what the 'socialist economy' was" (p.69).

The book posits working in early socialist Romania first and foremost as a question of wages and time. In the first years of socialist planning, the wages were so low that they hardly covered the basic necessities of workers who had left rural communities to resettle in urban centers and barely earned enough to survive in the industrial cities. This explains the escalating labor turnover rates during the period of the first five-year plan. According to Cucu, since the collective strikes and worker mobilization proved ineffective for raising wages and improving working conditions, frequent job hopping emerged as the central avenue of resistance for scattered workers (Chapter 2). Furthermore, the unsynchronized pace of industrialization and collectivization led to constant labor shortages in industrial production, as the agricultural reforms failed to free up and supply a large enough workforce for the new factories in the city.

Cucu convincingly demonstrates that the problems with industrial production were due to labor scarcity, shortages of raw materials, and broken tools and machinery. As she points out, "workers could see neither the logic of coming to work 'just to stare at the walls for days' nor the logic of working 16 hours a day at the end of the month for very low wages and no benefits" (p.92).

These troubles led to acute production crises and triggered the breakdown of labor regimes on the shopfloor, preventing the spread of skills and knowledge among inexperienced industrial workers and ultimately failing to deliver crucial increases in productivity.

As Cucu's findings show, 1950 was a period of "disastrous effects of rowdiness over production" (p.195), and this became the subject of a political struggle among various actors, including party representatives, factory managers, and ordinary workers. Cucu explores these ambivalent interactions from the bottom-up and illustrates that the actors who were collectively responsible for industrial modernization were, in fact, situated in a conflictual relationship with each other. While the party and state representatives were in search of better ways of guaranteeing the accomplishment of central plans, the cadres responsible for these tasks had no actual power over workers and failed to improve the production process.

At the same time, though the socialist system often sacrificed workers' living and social standards, workers still enjoyed more privileges than peasants, who toiled under constant physical self-exploitation. Party and state cadres, meanwhile, earned higher wages but lived under the constant threat of political destabilization and purges. Workers, in contrast, were relatively immune and resistant to external shocks. This position of relative security also meant that the state could not control workers' mobility, behavior, or general interests, which made it virtually impossible to plan labor.

If one wants to understand the complexities of planning practices within the working class of a socialist state, the particularity of centrally produced plans needs to be taken into consideration. This is the chief strength of Cucu's book. While writing at length about the myriad social and economic aspects of early socialism in Romania, she manages to zoom in with clarity and insight on the daily struggles of ordinary people, including emergent industrial workers, peasants, women, managers, and planners. She thus reconstructs the multivocal landscape of labor in a period of socialist transition. In her reading of centralized plans, they acquire a special kind of "authoritative" power to impose a new labor regime with new ways of managing time and enforcing discipline on the shopfloor. Such plans, however, required detailed, up-to-date ethnographic knowledge of specific factories, which the state did not always have. To theorize these and other main findings about the governance of a socialist state, Cucu draws on James Scott's theories concerning the standardization of schematized data and broadens Scott's theory of stateness as it applies to early socialist

Romania. In doing so, she emphasizes the importance of localized knowledge and contextualized practices when “seeing like a state” and deciding to plan labor productivity, production cycles, and the flow of knowledge and skills. As she concludes, the central fragility of socialist states lies in the inability of the factories “to become nodes of the state/labour/plan discipline logic” (p.178).

While including numerous theoretical approaches and grasping the main leitmotifs of socialist planning in the period between 1944 and 1955, *Planning Labour* offers a coherent narrative in which the topics and issues brought up in one chapter pave the way for an understanding of the complex issues discussed in the next one. Chapter 2, which discusses the chaotic displacement of labor forces and the impossibilities of socialist planning while also offering an impression of unpredictable and uncontrollable factory life is easily comprehensible in light of Chapter 1, which covers historical tensions and the inconsistencies in the process of turning Romania into an industrial socialist state and enforcing the politics of nationalization. Chapter 3 maps the Cluj workforce and attempts to grasp the diversity of the class backgrounds of people who belonged to it. In addition, the same chapter historicizes why it was impossible for early socialist cities to deal with the unprecedented population growth and why cities were unprepared to accommodate the workforce, which was in high demand.

The second part of the book pursues an epistemological analysis. The three chapters in the second part attempt to explain the knowledge infrastructure which existed in early socialist Romania and investigate emerging necessities for new types of knowledge that were required in order to “construct [...] new legibility structures,” turn labor “into an object of scientific and managerial knowledge,” and “transform [...] the state’s agents into skilful ethnographers” (p.148).

However, the book lacks a discussion of the authoritative aspects of socialist regime-formation and the methods and/or practices that they entailed. More specifically, when discussing the strategies that were used to discipline and control workers and the workers’ subsequent resistance to the state apparatus, Cucu seems to overlook the drives that energized people to consider themselves part of the “great causes.” In their exploration of the social bonding methods in Nazism and Stalinism, Sheila Fitzpatrick and Alf Lüdtke focus on the socially inclusive and exclusive practices that were so endemic for these regimes (“Energizing the Everyday” in *Beyond Totalitarianism* [2009]). *Planning Labour* dismisses this layer of social bonding, which also worked as a way of mobilizing workers, increasing their productivity, and enlisting them in the parade towards a better future.

Planning Labour is a thematically expansive book which should not be reduced to its findings, albeit engaging and valuable in their own right, about early socialist Romania. The book is a welcome addition to labor history, as it manages to compile and integrate disparate, narrow discussions, often scattered (as scholars in the field know all too well) across countless articles, books, and monographies. Refreshingly, in this work, socialist accumulation, labor coercion, workers' agency, 'Taylorist and Fordist systems of factory management, and central planning and rhythms of production are explored collectively and with tremendous lucidity. With its thick historical materials, far-reaching findings, and intriguing methodological approach, *Planning Labour* is a great read for students, scholars, and researchers curious to read a bottom-up exploration of workers' everyday histories, an ethnographic study of socialist realism, and an examination of the complex political program of Soviet rule.

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