

*Tomaszewski, Jerzy: The Socialist Regimes of East Central Europe: Their establishment and consolidation 1944-67. Translated by Jolanta Krauze.*

Routledge, London-New York 1989, 305 S.

In his account of the political history of East Central Europe from 1944 to 1967, Jerzy Tomaszewski traces changes in the countries of this region under the impact of both their own internal struggles and the influence of the Great Powers. Following the introduction and description of the prerequisites for social and political transformation, the author examines the situations of the individual countries at the end of the Second World War, focusing on the formation of the so-called people's democracies between 1944 and 1948. He then moves on to a discussion of the process of Stalinization and the establishment of a centralized system of power in East Central Europe after 1948. Lastly, Tomaszewski looks at the consequences of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, particularly the upheavals in Hungary and Poland during that year, and concludes with a discussion of the limited political reforms that took place from 1960 to 1967 in East Central Europe.

Although Tomaszewski primarily focuses on events in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia, he also examines East Germany, Finland, Greece, and Albania. To facilitate comparisons of developments in the different countries, the book has been arranged chronologically as well as topically, with discussion of the differing situations in each country.

The author is at his best when analyzing events in his areas of expertise, Bulgaria and Poland. While postwar Poland has been the topic of many studies in English and German, this is not the case with Bulgaria. Thus, Tomaszewski's contribution is particularly welcome.

Tomaszewski devotes the most attention to Czechoslovakia during the period from 1944 to 1956. His narrative of the events leading to the formation of a socialist government there begins with the Slovak national uprising in 1944, the liberation of both the Czech lands and Slovakia, and the formation of the National Front. He moves on to a discussion of social and economic reforms during the immediate postwar period, the Communist defeat of the opposition parties in 1948, and the Communist consolidation of power by the early 1950s. Perhaps because fewer economic and political reforms were enacted in Czechoslovakia in the wake of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union than elsewhere, there is less mention of Czechoslovakia in the last portion of the book than of other countries in the region.

The employment of a wider range of primary sources (the author's use of archival materials appears to be limited to the Public Record Office in London) might have enriched the study. However, the major flaw in this book lies outside the control of the author: a lack of editorial attention, most importantly the failure to render the translation from the Polish into idiomatic English. Thus, word usage is sometimes archaic, sometimes awkward, and sometimes confusing. Moreover, due to the method of citation – the author's name and the date of publication, but no page number – the book is not as useful as it could have been.