

*Walters, Garrison E.: The Other Europe. Eastern Europe to 1945.*

Syracuse, New York 1988, 430 S.

E. Garrison Walters, whose speciality is Slavic languages and literature has produced a rather ambitious textbook covering Eastern Europe to 1945. It is refreshing to see someone crossing demarcation lines to bring different perspectives to another discipline.

*The Other Europe* begins conventionally enough with an introduction defining Eastern Europe. Walters considers this to include present-day Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania. The first chapter examines the geography of Eastern Europe in a country-by-country survey. It is at this point that an enormous discrepancy appears. The description of each country are essentially of the states as they exist today. Indeed Walters writes in the section on Poland that "this text is concerned with the contemporary state, only those lands that are now part of Poland ..." (p.2). The book, according to its title, covers Eastern Europe *to* 1945. It

seems highly incongruous that the geography section should concentrate on the post-1945 states.

After the geography chapter follow three others concerning the history of the region to 1800, 1800–1848, and 1848–1914. Each of these chapters adheres to a similar pattern: either a country-by-country or a people-by-people breakdown with the Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian Empires receiving only peripheral treatment. Each of the country/people sections is somewhat superficial and certainly ahistorical when one reads the twelve lines devoted to Czechoslovakia or the eleven lines devoted to Yugoslavia in the pre 1800 chapter.

The fifth chapter is one of the most interesting in the book. Walters concerns himself with the question of why there is an Eastern Europe. Drawing in his expertise in literature, he skillfully unites history and literature in exploring this highly pertinent question. This issue could well have been examined much earlier in the book.

Chapters six and seven deal with the First World War and interwar Eastern Europe respectively. Departing from the country-by-country approach, these chapters instead provide an overview of the periods covered. Chapters eight to fourteen are each devoted to one of the East European states in the interwar period beginning with Poland and ending with Albania. Chapter fifteen examines Eastern Europe during the Second World War while the next chapter concerns the history of the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1945. Chapter seventeen looks at the East European communist parties before 1945. The final section of the book is an afterword on Eastern in 1945. The book contains an appendix filled with very good reference maps, notes on the chapters and suggestions for further reading.

The chronological period specified in the title of the book is rather misleading. *The Other Europe* is largely a book about interwar Eastern Europe. The discussion of the pre-1918 era is sparse. This is a distinct limitation particularly for the purposes of using the book as a text.

Another disadvantage is that important segments seem more relevant to the post 1945 period. The geography chapter is the most blatant example. The chapter covering the communist parties of interwar Eastern Europe is most useful for understanding postwar political developments. The same can be said for the chapter on the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1945.

For someone seeking a general introduction to East European history much valuable information can undoubtedly be garnered from *The Other Europe*. Any book of this kind is necessarily a compromise between theme and chronology. The compromise adopted in *The Other Europe*, however, introduces the reader to interwar Eastern Europe and only a little more.