

REVIEW FOR SOUTH SLAV JOURNAL

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DEBATING THE END OF YUGOSLAVIA Edited by Florian Bieber, Armina Galijas and Rory Archer

Ashgate, Aldershot ISBN 9781409467113

THE HOUR OF EUROPE WESTERN POWERS AND THE BREAKUP OF YUGOSLAVIA Josip Glaurdic

Yale University Press, New Haven ISBN 9780300166293

The rapidly growing and very fragmented literature and historiography of the Yugoslav conflicts gives rise to new volumes every year. The edited collection of Florian Bieber and his Graz colleagues is a valuable addition to his material, of which the best known work is by Charles Ingrao and Sabrina.P.Ramet. The most interesting and innovative part of the book is the first section, 'The State of the Debate' in which scholars like Eric Gordy and Sabrina Ramet and Hilde Katrine Haug, all prominent in their own right and authors of significant works, survey the state of knowledge and debate in what is now almost a generation since the beginning of the second Yugoslavia's disintegration. It is a salutary exercise for those of us who were deeply involved in those events to recall them, as often nowadays in the media and academia, the full scale and significance of the most devastating wars in Europe since World War II often seems to be elided.

In a book of this kind the quality of papers is bound to vary but there are outstanding papers from Christian Costamanga on Milosevic's relationship with the communist tradition, Haag on the state of debate about the wars in post-conflict Serbia, and a masterly general update on her existing published work by Sabrina.P.Ramet on 'Disputes about the Dissolution of Yugoslavia and its Wake'. The general impression is that, as always since the mid-1990's, the elites in ex-Yugoslavia had mostly abandoned traditional nationalism but the majority of the peoples still espoused it, with varying degrees of fervour, and the entry of some countries e.g. Croatia, into the European Union has made little real difference to the feelings of that majority.

In his contribution to this book, Josip Glaurdic opens up a number of important issues, with a discussion of the methodological problems facing the historian in trying to write this contemporary history. In his own first volume, 'The Hour of Europe' he explores the disintegration of Yugoslavia from the mid – 1980's onwards. In many ways, he treads on familiar ground and although this is a polished and impressive first book it does not quite provide the authoritative narrative that its author is clearly seeking to create. He depends quite heavily on existing secondary sources, e.g. Sell

and LeBor, for material on the Milosevic seizure of power period, but he is very strong on the real issues of EU diplomacy and the general incompetence and complacency in dealing with the threat of war the break up inevitably involved. There are issues with his assumptions about the EU that are difficult. He appears to adopt the common liberal American position that the EU will inevitably move in a federal direction, and the foreign policy failures of the 1990 period of the Yugoslav breakup can be attributed to this, basically a lack of a strong central foreign ministry that let effective decision making remain with the often less than competent office of individual member states. He does not define what 'Europe' should be, or how it should operate in crisis conditions. There is also little on the smaller Yugoslav components like Former Yugoslav Macedonia, as it was then, and Kosova, although his comments on the problems of both- particular the poor treatment of Macedonian ambitions post the Badinter report are very careful and judicious.

It is nonetheless a very well researched and intelligent book, written with style and confidence, taking what has to be described as the 'Croatian view' on many issues. The individual developments are very well set out and some myths are effectively challenged, e.g. that the German early recognition of Croatia caused the entire conflict. It is weak on the role of some important international actors outside the traditional diplomatic framework e.g. little of substance about the role of the Vatican and the Holy See in the drive to support Croatian independence, and there is little on Russia, China and non-EU major diplomatic actors. As a volume it will appeal to Europhiles, but probably not to Europhobes, telling the story of the elites very well but not casting very much new light on the popular majority involved in the conflict whose activity was little affected by European Union decisions.