

**Mitteleuropa: History and Prospects***Edited by Peter Stirk*

Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, Scotland. 1995

The disintegration of the Cold War division of Europe and the reunification of Germany have given new significance to the debate about the political, economic and cultural structure at the heart of Europe. This pivotal topic is examined and attempts made to analyze the conflicts in the area and to understand the forces that shaped this key region through history. The various chapters investigate the issues set to determine the kind of future Central Europe can expect in the years to come, providing detailed critical and historical assessment of the role of Germany; the social, political and economic distinctiveness of the region; and the attitude of the states outside the area.

Editor Stirk explains the historic growth of the concept of "middle Europe", which has historical as well as spatial reality. Geographically it is not an easily defined region, the main physical features, the Danube, the Vistula and the Carpathians serving to divide rather than delineate the region. However, German intrusion into the area, and the growth of the German "eastern Reich," which repelled the Turkish invasion and freed and incorporated the Slovene, Croatian and Bosnian areas into the Austro-Hungarian empire, as well as Czechoslovakia and Hungary, territories which had acquired much of German culture, made Mitteleuropa a political and quasi-cultural supra-national territory. This was reinforced by an active Jewish population, which generally welcomed the supra-national concept, having found themselves often treated as aliens in Europe's nationalist states. The Jewish element also often supported the supremacy of the Germanic component, largely controlling the German-language press, and saw the German component as the force which maintained the sense of supra-national unity which held together the diverse peoples incorporated within the Austro-Hungarian empire.

The defeat of the Austro-Hungarian empire and its dismantling after World War I tended to disrupt this sense of unity, and the *anschluss* with Germany and German domination during World War II failed to reconstruct the sense of supra-national unity of "middle Europe." Soviet domination of most of middle Europe following the defeat of Germany in 1945 further destroyed what remained of any

sense of cultural and national unity, and although at one point Slovenia sought to merge with Austria after acquiring its freedom from Marxist controlled Yugoslavia, this was rejected by Austria.

A final chapter traces the impact of the nationalist 1989 "revolution" which brought freedom from the Soviet Union, but regrettably fails to discuss the future of middle Europe in a continent increasingly dominated by the concept of European union. Nevertheless, well supported by historical maps, the volume provides a very useful historical background to an area which has had a vital and important past, but whose future still remains murky and hard to predict, situated as it is between two unpredictable giants – the still tottering and infant European Union of western Europe, and the tottering but still-existing Russian giant which remains a dominant military power overshadowing eastern Europe.

**Tibet: Endurance of the National Idea**

*Stephen R. Bowers & Eva M. Neterowicz*

Council for Social and Economic Studies, Washington D.C. 1995

A thoroughly up-to-date history of the fate of Tibet since the Chinese invasion in 1950. Totally unable to prevent a Chinese military takeover of their country, the small and outdated Tibetan army initially put up a valiant resistance, which did little to even delay the Chinese army influx. Historic monastic treasure houses of Tibetan culture, of great historical value since the country had never been subjugated to external rule (other than mild Chinese suzerainty in past centuries), were levelled by modern artillery fire, monks as the intelligentsia of this peaceful Buddhist nation were executed whenever they sought to resist the conversion of their national culture into that of an alien Marxist regime, while the outside world, including even India, was too intimidated by the Chinese goliath to intervene.

Of particular interest is the chapter entitled "Tibet in the post-Maoist Era." More recently, Beijing has attempted to seduce the Tibetan Buddhist intelligentsia to support its own creed of political philosophy by rebuilding a limited number of monasteries for the limited number of monks who are willing to sell their intellectual freedom for economic survival. These new monasteries are not

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