

the value of the whole. Again, inclusivity comes at the cost of compression, and individual readers will no doubt have their own suggestions as to what omissions seem most regrettable or unexpected: my own list, for example, would include Garin Mikhaylovsky's fictional autobiography *Childhood of Tyoma* (1892) or Sergei Bodrov's film *S.E.R. [Freedom is Paradise]* (1989), in both of which are crystallized points made in the discussion of the periods they respectively reflect. But this is to quibble (just as much as it is to point out that the 'Jerryish' hero of the *Just You Wait!* cartoons is not 'Little Rabbit' (479) but Little Hare).

Catriona Kelly is well aware of the dangers of 'making grand statements' (598) about the rearing of children in Russia, and *Children's World* is cautious in drawing conclusions about the impact of the Soviet upbringing on those whose lives were shaped by it. In coming to terms with so complex a phenomenon as growing up in Russia in the twentieth century, such caution is a strength rather than a weakness. The great achievement of this book is to impart a sense of childhood as it was lived; of few academic studies can it be said so truly that there is not a dull page in it.

John McNair  
The University of Queensland

Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 669 pp.

*A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change* is the first volume of a trilogy intended to provide 'the most comprehensive survey and analysis of political and economic change in the modern Balkans and East Central Europe available in English', as Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries state in the preface (xii). This is a bold aim indeed considering the geographical and temporal range in question. Proceeding on the pragmatic assumption that 'half a loaf is better than none', the authors have chosen to focus on politics and economics and to dispense with a discussion of cultural and intellectual developments. This still leaves the reader with a well-nigh indigestible mass of information drawn from a wide range of sources.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I deals with the Balkan peninsula from the Graeco-Roman period to the First World War. Subsections include

the ascendancy of the Byzantine Empire, the crusades, the rise and fall of the Ottomans, and the establishment of the first national states from 1817 onwards. Part II attempts to do the same for the area described as East Central Europe, i.e. modern-day Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Here the authors take pains to explain the 'parting of the ways' between East Central Europe and the West that occurred at the close of the Middle Ages, the emergence of the Habsburg Empire, the revolutions of 1848, and the spread of capitalism and nationalism. The post-war period, the spread of fascism, and the Holocaust constitute the main topics of Part III. Part IV discusses the establishment of Communist regimes and their sudden collapse in 1989. The last part aptly titled 'post-Communist transformations' covers much of the same ground, albeit in drastically shortened form, examined in the concurrently published companion volume *The Balkans: A Post-Communist History*.

In contrast to the first edition of *A History of Eastern Europe* (1998), this second edition dispenses with much of the coverage of medieval Poland, Hungary and Bohemia, includes new materials on the Byzantine and Ottoman period, and has been updated in keeping with current events. This, in short, is the content of this ambitious book. How should one approach a text claiming to make sense of more than two millennia of history and covering a region that includes more than a dozen modern states? For starters there is the bewildering linguistic plurality, geographic and cultural diversity, and, last but not least, ethnic heterogeneity that pose a stupendous challenge to even the most erudite scholar and that make the study of adequate primary sources virtually impossible. On a more basic level the historian is hampered by the lack of conceptual clarity that has traditionally bedeviled the study of this region. The problem begins with the definition of geographical terms. Which present-day countries do we understand 'Eastern Europe' to encompass? Is there such a geopolitical entity as the Balkans? The challenges, both logistical and intellectual, are indeed immense, which is precisely why one ought to be grateful to writers like Bideleux and Jeffries for having embarked on such a venture. The result of their efforts is a bewildering thicket of facts, names, and dates and a narrative too often interrupted by exhaustive discussions of relevant scholarly debates. At times *A History of Europe* reads like an extended settling of scores between the authors and the larger scholarly community. Rather than hacking their way through the jungle of debates that has variously enriched and complicated the field, Bideleux and Jeffries might have confined these sallies

to an introductory section and then be done with them. More seriously, their eagerness to challenge some commonly held views sometimes leads them to advance somewhat questionable conclusions. They wish to exonerate the Ottomans and to wash them clean of the stain of oppression and stultification. So far so good. But how then to account for the backwardness and chaos that continue to prevail in much of the region? The astonished reader learns that to understand what is happening in East Central Europe today we need to go back to the late Roman Empire. For it was during this troubled period that the 'tenacious and deeply entrenched' vertical power structures responsible for the current mess first appeared on the scene (an argument familiar to readers of the companion volume). Having established that the late Romans are essentially to blame for the despicable actions of a Milošević, the authors then vigorously condemn the 'what went wrong' approach beloved by many recent Western observers like Bernard Lewis, to mention just the most prominent. While it is quite right to protest 'Western complacency, arrogance, presumption and myopia' (96), this criticism is not as astute as it appears at first glance. One cannot start an inquiry such as this one with the assertion that the region is in crisis (which it undoubtedly is, though not uniformly so, as the book's subtitle implies) and then cavalierly dispense with all definitions of what constitutes a state of 'non-crisis'. In other words, to assess anything at all a comparative focus or standard (in this case that of Western Europe where things 'went right') is not only desirable but essential.

This is not to accuse Bideleux and Jeffries of intellectual laziness, far from it. It is merely to suggest that a somewhat more circumscribed and hence less ambitious approach would have enhanced the user-friendliness of this ponderous tome. To simply cram every conceivable and inconceivable thought, belief, and criticism into a narrative intended to clarify some of the very real problems East Central Europe has had and continues to grapple with does little service to the reader wishing for even a modicum of 'enlightenment' on such a thorny topic.

Susan Hillman  
University of California San Diego

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman and the Surrender of Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2006), 382 pp.