

## ECONOMIC CHANGE IN EASTERN EUROPE FROM THE FIRST WORLD WAR TO THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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The East European History Project of St. Antony's College, Oxford and the International Association for South-East European Studies, Bucharest, have sponsored the conference which was held at St. Antony's College Oxford on 22-24 September 1972. As a matter of fact Professor Michael Kaser who knows a lot about the economics of Eastern Europe and is able to speak and read some of the languages spoken in the area and his collaborators, have started some time ago a study on this subject which is not deprived of interest. The area examined includes Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Roumania, Bulgaria and Albania. The common characteristics of these countries are:

first that, they have been, except in the cases of Bulgaria and Albania at least up to a certain degree, incorporated in the Austro-Hungarian Empire until it ended in 1918,

second, that they have suffered a lot during both World Wars,

third, that they have become after World War II countries under communistic government,

fourth, that they have adopted programs of economic development very much influenced by the ideas prevailing in the Soviet Union giving priority to industrialization even if the latter affects unfavorably the living conditions of their people,

fifth, that present rulers do despise a lot all efforts undertaken in the interwar period in order to solve at least gradually the complicated problems which arose following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the annexation of its lands either to new states as Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland or to states which already existed before World War I.

In view of these considerations and in view of the origin of the paper writers independently of the fact that some of them are living permanently in the West it was not astonishing that usually they were not sympathetic to the developments of the interwar period whilst at least some of them are not dissatisfied with the achievements of the new rulers of the countries involved.

The discussion centered on

- 1) industrial concentration of the area examined,
- 2) agriculture,
- 3) economic development,
- 4) the impact of the world depression,
- 5) the impact of World War II and particularly of Germanys'both military and economic domination.

The paper writers did not hide their feelings but were able to present well written papers which gave rise to interesting discussions both during sessions and during the many opportunities offered to participants to get acquainted with each other in the very agreeable surroundings offered by St. Antony's College with its successful blending of tradition and modern tastes. Of course those participating in the project knew each other but those who participated as observers, guests and experts had the possibility to create new and useful contacts without being deprived of the opportunity to enrich the paper writers with new ideas and with their own points of view based of their knowledge, on their experience and on their reactions in view of the fact that some of them are living outside the area whose economic changes and developments were examined during the session. Particular stress was laid on the special problems which arose through the severance of all commercial links with the Soviet Union until the second half of the fourties, the disappearance of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the world depression, the upsurge of protectionism, military tensions, last but not least World War II and communistic governments keen to apply methods which keep low the living conditions of the inhabitants of the Soviet Union and even more of those of the countries of the area not having the wealth nor the size of the Soviet Union.

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