

Vuković's book is a useful source of information for the folk customs and beliefs of the Serbs. Its use is somewhat hampered by the lack of an index and even of a table of contents.

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SOCIAL CHANGE IN A PERIPHERAL SOCIETY: THE CREATION OF A BALKAN COLONY. By *Daniel Chirot*. New York: Academic Press, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976. xx, 178 pp. Tables. \$12.50. £7.25.

This is a solid if undramatic analysis of the political economy of Wallachia from 1250 to 1917, tracing its evolution from pastoral/agricultural communalism with a distinct transit trade, on which the first political structure was based, through its emergence as an essentially colonial exporting economy (and, very incidentally, a politically independent nation) by the late nineteenth century. Professor Chirot is not sure that his subject is terribly important. Wallachia interests him, but he grants that it was small, unlucky, and negligible on any large scale. The subject of a peripheral society, incapable of autonomous development because it is attached to a larger power system, interests him more. Wallachia here serves to illustrate a kind of society that became common with nineteenth-century imperialism, for it was preconditioned by subordination to the Ottoman system before it became a neocolony of West European capitalism. The peripheral society is itself interesting as a type, and a good bit of attention is devoted to relevant typology into which Wallachian history fits, but it is also interesting because it refutes any idea of grand, overweening laws or stages governing social evolution.

All this is developed a bit apologetically, though firmly, because Professor Chirot seems a bit uncertain, as a sociologist, about what could possibly be as important as the search, illusory though it has proved, for a grand scheme. The slightly defensive tone—Here it is but I wish it were more sweeping—may annoy some readers. It does lead to undue rhetoric and, particularly in the introduction, to the search for a large number of organizing subjects, as if quantity can replace a convincing single justification. Some topics (for example, the attempt to show why Western capitalism proved so much more vital than world systems such as the Ottoman), are virtually stillborn, for the real subject of the book does not permit an answer. But the book is to a substantial extent justified by the author's intellectual honesty, his desire to explain what aspects of his study are important and why.

Clearly written and based on extensive secondary sources, comparative as well as Rumanian, the book outlines the main structural features of Wallachian history. Periodization is based on changes in economic form and class control of the economy, which were guided, because Wallachia was a peripheral society, by the relationship to outside powers. Demographic and political patterns are merely sketched, and there are only a few dips into narrative history. The structural approach, plus extensive reliance on Rumanian social historians such as Henri Stahl, allows Professor Chirot to deal incisively with a number of historiographical controversies and confusions, notably the recurrent effort to place Rumanian society into a misleading feudal/manorial context. Comparative references, for example, to the Sudan, usefully startle a more conventional reader. Treatment of Wallachia in terms of ideal types, such as that of a colonial society, are serviceable, if sometimes wordy and repetitious, but rarely exciting.

This is a barebones approach. The essentials of a society rest in economic relationships, captured in the Wallachian case primarily through the rise and evolution of the *boieri*, and more broadly in a society fits into the relevant international economic structure. The book does well what it sets out to do. Wallachian history and a modest theory about peripheral societies are both related in an informative manner.

One can wonder if a bit of flesh might profitably be added. Rumanian culture is not discussed nor placed into an international cultural context; hence, in the modern period, relationships with Britain (economic) are perceptively analyzed but those with France (cultural) are not. The Rumanian masses suffer inertly, rebelling periodically of course but without impact. The stuff of life beyond bread alone figures not at all. A vast amount of Wallachian history, and not merely narrative, is thus omitted, and the theory of the nature of a peripheral society is left incomplete as well. Professor Chirot writes without dialectic and without Marx, save as a foil, but his history is unabashedly materialist.

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PEASANTS IN POWER: ALEXANDER STAMBOLISKI AND THE BULGARIAN AGRARIAN NATIONAL UNION, 1899–1923. By *John D. Bell*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977. xiv, 271 pp. \$16.50.

The peasant is the forgotten man of history. Most historians share Marx's belief that modernization "rescues a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life." Scholars tend to presume that peasant society remained relatively unchanged from the Neolithic Age to the present. Historians, only recently, have attempted to explore the character of peasant life and history by shedding the blinders of past prejudices and preconceptions. Bell's *Peasants in Power* is such an attempt. Bell focuses on the most powerful peasant political movement in Europe between World War I and World War II, the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU), and on its most important leader, Alexander Stamboliski. It is one of the few books in English to treat this phenomenon sympathetically.

Bell has carefully combed most of the available sources in Western languages, Bulgarian, and Russian, and the result is a comprehensive scholarly analysis of the great experiment, that is, the first, and probably the last, peasant government in Europe. He pays special attention to agrarian ideology and its implementation when the agrarian government was in power from 1919 to 1923, and he provides a valuable counterbalance to the only other extensive account in English, a rather negative one, appearing in Joseph Rothschild's *The Communist Party of Bulgaria*.

Bell dispels some of the misconceptions apparent in Western and Communist works. Stamboliski was not a clumsy peasant fanatic who was doomed to failure from the outset. His agrarian ideology had some substance. Nor was he animated by an intense hostility toward the city and industrialization. Finally, Bell argues, it was neither Stamboliski's friendly attitude toward the Soviet Union nor his political naïveté that caused his downfall, but rather his failure to purge the conservative officer corps.

Stamboliski seems strikingly original for his time. The notion that agrarianism offered a third path toward modernization, other than capitalism or communism, is tantalizing. Stamboliski was the prime mover in the creation of a Green International to unite the peasant political movements of all nations. When in power, Stamboliski introduced a number of original ideas, such as the agrarian reforms based upon "labor property," universal and compulsory labor service, and the elimination of lawyers from many local courts.

What is disappointing in Bell's book is his unwillingness to move very far beyond Bulgaria and conventional political history to some of the broader implications of the Bulgarian experiment. Stamboliski was bolder than his biographer when he said there were only two original social experiments in Europe, his and Lenin's. Was that claim true? How much of Stamboliski's program was original? How much derivative? Stamboliski's notion of labor property is very similar to the Russian Socialist