

planning and economic management in anything like its extent and detail. The theoretical material is intelligently and clearly presented by this team of German economists and cyberneticians; it is then systematically applied to the analysis of the Soviet and East German reforms of the 1960s. The least one can say for this original approach is that it provides a logical framework for organizing the complex and often confusing reforms and counterreforms that have taken place in the last ten years. The theory also generates hypotheses and conjectures that lead the authors to ask highly pertinent questions about the sensitivity to exogenous and endogenous disturbances of each of the organizational structures that were actually put into practice and about their potential ability to cope with disturbances once they occurred ("flexibility").

As is often the case with books that attempt to impose an original way of looking at familiar phenomena, the present work presents what may be an incomplete and perhaps even a lopsided picture of its subject. The authors' description of reforms in the USSR and particularly in the GDR relies heavily on official documents: on how system rules should work rather than on the informal behavior of the decision-makers in the system. After reading this book, I took another look at Michael Keren's excellent paper (so far unpublished), "The New Economic System in the GDR: An Obituary." This paper was written only a few months after Messrs. Kade, Zubrod, and Hujer completed their work. Yet it gives a strikingly different impression of the malfunctions of the GDR's New Economy System, which finally compelled the authorities to reimpose controls on the inputs and outputs of enterprises and VVB that had been removed in the mid-1960s and to reduce substantially the autonomy of decision-makers in the lower levels of the administrative hierarchy. Whatever may have been the faults in the *design* of the NES, it certainly could not cope effectively with the "adventurist" investment *policies* that were rammed through this delicate economic machinery by the political authorities. The formal approach to the analysis of organizational networks cannot provide a satisfactory understanding of the complex interdependence between policies and organizational structures. Nevertheless, the present book shows that it can give us valuable tools for tackling some of the problems raised by system reforms.

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COMECON: CHALLENGE TO THE WEST. By *Roy E. H. Mellor*. Searchlight Book, no. 48. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1971. vii, 152 pp. \$3.50, paper.

The purpose of this book—one learns from the preface—is to provide "the lay-reader and those . . . commercially involved in dealing with Comecon countries" with "a fund of basic information" about this Soviet bloc institution. This raises a moot question: what does the layman or a businessman want to know about Comecon? Professor Mellor clearly believes that his prospective readers are primarily interested in the economic geography and political history of the region. Nearly half of this slender volume is devoted to a detailed, country-by-country account of the economic development patterns and the present industrial potential of the individual Comecon members. The Soviet Union, "the core of Comecon,"

gets the most space in this longish survey, but the fact-seeking reader will also find all the information he may want to absorb about the economic history and geography of Albania, which was formally ousted from Comecon in October 1961, as well as China, North Korea, and North Vietnam, which never really belonged to the community and have kept aloof from it for nearly a decade.

Political developments in Eastern Europe since 1945, particularly the events which led to the gradual establishment of the Soviet economic dominance over this area, are discussed at length. The reader is also given a fair and intelligible account of the main differences in the development patterns between the European Economic Community and Comecon. In contrast, even the most essential issues in Comecon's attempt at economic integration of the Soviet bloc—such as the still unsolved controversy over mutual trade prices, the major dispute about the establishment of supranational institutions, the perennial clash between national and community interests, the problem of the majority vote, or the thorny issue of regional specialization, to name only a few—are dealt with in a couple of sentences or, at best, in a short paragraph.

This obvious lack of balance between the plethora of facts and information in the sphere of economic geography and political and economic history and the paucity of bona fide economic analysis of the very real problems of this institution, which, after all, was created primarily as an instrument for the economic integration of the Soviet bloc, might—of course—be quite deliberate. One could well argue that all the issues I have just mentioned are far too complex and technical to be of interest to the general reader or average businessman. I do not agree with such an approach, but this might be a *déformation professionnelle* on my part. I would also say that the author dwells too much on the past at the expense of recent developments.

Yet despite its definite geographical bias, Mellor's book contains quite a lot of information, which could be of interest not only to a general reader or businessman but also to more serious students of economic relations in Eastern Europe.

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THE COMMUNIST STATES IN DISARRAY, 1965–1971. Edited by *Adam Bromke* and *Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone*. The Carleton Series in Soviet and East European Studies. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972. ix, 363 pp. \$13.50, cloth. \$4.95, paper.

The focus of this work is not entirely clear. Formally it is devoted to the impact of the Sino-Soviet conflict on the world community of socialist states, together with the spread of nationalism and polycentrism. But the major concentration is on Eastern Europe—of the sixteen chapters, eight of the eleven on countries are devoted to particular East European countries and three of the other five concern the overall problems of this area. Within this framework a general accounting of developments since the fall of Khrushchev is undertaken. The work is one in a series on Soviet and East European affairs produced by Carleton University, which perhaps explains the omission of a separate contribution on the USSR in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

The principal weakness of the volume as a general survey of developments in