interests, but also—a lone among the "reptile" newspapers—as an expression as well of
certain Polish interests.

Other issues also deserved closer inspection. For example, although the monograph
notes that the collaborationist press regularly contained anti-Semitic articles (pp. 85, 119-
20), these articles are not analyzed and their tropes not identified. To say simply that they
were anti-Semitic is to paint with too broad a brush. As good as this monograph is, it
should still not be considered the last word on its subject. There is more work to be done
on the periodical press of Poland and neighboring countries under the Nazi occupation,
and it is to be hoped that the publication of this monograph in English translation by a
major university press will encourage it along.

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Ivan T. Berend. Central and Eastern Europe, 1944-1993: Detour from the Periphery to the

Anyone who ever had to place a telephone call in a hurry in any of the states of the
former Communist bloc experienced first-hand the sort of economic lag that Ivan Berend
says helped bring down the socialist regimes between 1989 and 1991. Few things could
be more frustrating to someone reared west of the Iron Curtain than the clicks, whirs, dis-
connections, wrong numbers and unhelpful operators which seemed to multiply the
more urgent the call. Unused to the luxury of almost instant and clear connections, the av-
erage citizen of the region typically accepted bad telephone service with a shrug and a
half-smile. After all, what could be done?

According to Berend, the antiquated telephone system was just one of the most obvi-
ous examples of the growing economic crisis that gripped the region beginning in the
early 1970s. Lacking the capital to upgrade their outdated technological base, state-run
economies from Poland to Albania fell further and further behind the rest of Europe. By
the mid-1980s the governments of the Central and East European states were faced with a
situation analogous to attempting to adjust to the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution
without having railroads. (p. 227) Unable to move forward rapidly enough to resurrect
their popularity with the average citizen, and unwilling to make the sorts of ideological
compromises necessary to introduce market reforms into their economies, the regimes
essentially forced themselves further and further out onto the periphery of the continental
economy until at last they imploded one after another in stunning succession. It turned
out that there was a limit to what the average citizen would tolerate after all.

Berend’s thesis is that economic deterioration was the root cause of the regimes’
collapse, and that these economic failings precipitated a crisis of legitimacy for which
leaders across the region could find no solution, or at least any solution they could live
with. That they should fail in this way was ironic because, as Berend points out, the very
success of the socialist regimes in the immediate post-war decade was predicated on their
ability to engineer impressive economic growth and social change. The revolutionary
governments that took power in Central and Eastern Europe between 1944-48 managed to
gain popular support through their seeming ability to wrench the region loose from what
the author describes as its entrenched position on the periphery of Europe and to move it resolutely toward the European core. That such a shift in the region’s position vis-a-vis Western Europe was ultimately impossible was underlined symbolically by the construction of fences and mine fields from the Baltic to the Adriatic and practically by the forced reorientation of the regional economy eastward. In the end, the failure of the regimes to make good on their promises to move the region closer to the European core destroyed their base of support with all but the most dedicated party stalwarts. When the moment of crisis came in 1989, the regimes lacked even a shred of their former legitimacy and so had nothing to fall back on.

Berend deserves praise for his attempt to set the period between the Communist and anti-Communist revolutions in a comparative framework and for providing the reader with the historical perspective lacking in so many studies of the revolutions of 1989-91. Because the author attempts to take in the entire region and to set the post-war developments there in the *longue durée* of the region’s history, this work will prove more useful to students and scholars than the more narrowly political works or those with a single state focus that have appeared over the past ten years. There is a little of something for everyone here—enough political and economic analysis to satisfy the most structurally-minded, but also enlightening, often amusing, and sometimes tragic descriptions of some of the most important figures in this history. For example, the Czechoslovak leader Antonín Novotný was chosen to lead the party after the death of Klement Gottwald because he was “inconsequential enough not to be dangerous,” (p. 136) and the Pole Władysław Gomułka “could harmonize his religious Marxist-Leninist belief with a similarly devout patriotism . . . [and] easily lost his patience in debates because he was convinced he was right.” (p. 111) Because Berend was a leading intellectual in Communist Hungary, he knew a number of the individuals he describes, so his personal recollections enrich the narrative at several points.

However, for the same reasons this work is so valuable, it also will be more controversial than the typical “transition study.” Any attempt to impose order, even in the form of a framework for analysis, on the chaos that is Central and Eastern Europe is bound to run into trouble, and this book is no exception. Among Berend’s arguments that some readers will object to is his notion that the region he calls Central and Eastern Europe constituted some sort of periphery, or as he says, a region “humiliated by economic backwardness and the increasing gap which separated [it] from the Western core.” (p. x). While this description may apply to much of the region, it certainly does not work for the territory that is today Slovenia, the Czech Republic, and southwestern Poland, all of which were firmly in the mainstream of European modernization by the 1890s. These parts of the region were not part of a periphery prior to 1944, and they show no sign of being part of one today. In the same vein, the author hardly mentions developments in the German Democratic Republic which was certainly more a part of Central and Eastern Europe after 1945 than it was part of the so-called core. Some may also find troubling his contention that the socialist regimes were both imposed upon the region and the result of local enthusiasm for socialist-led governments. Not surprisingly given that the author is an economic historian, others may wish to argue with the weight Berend places on economic causes for the decline of the socialist regimes at the expense of a fuller treatment of international factors, or the role of local dissident movements in undermining the legitimacy of the regimes. However, those who wish to find fault with these two latter aspects of Ber-