

Review Article

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A Balkan History Learning Curve

L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, London, Hurst, 2000 (first published 1958); xxxvi + 790 pp.; 1850655502, £45 (hbk); 1850655510, £19.50 (pbk)

Misha Glenny, *The Balkans 1804–1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers*, London, Granta, 1999; xxvi + 726 pp.; 1862070504, £25

Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *A History of the Balkans, 1804–1945*, London and New York, Longman, 1999; viii + 375 pp.; 0582045851, £50 (hbk); 058245843, £16.99 (pbk)

Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948–1965*, London, Hurst, 1999; xiii + 351 pp.; 1850653860, £45

James Pettifer (ed.), *The New Macedonian Question*, London, Macmillan, 1999; xxxvi + 311 pp.; 0312222408, £50

Z. Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right: The 1930s*, Boulder, East European Monographs (Distributed by Columbia University Press, New York), 1999; x + 437 pp.; 0880334304, £37

In the wake of the 1999 Kosovo conflict, books attempting to explore the historical evolution of the Balkan peninsula have started to appear with greater frequency than ever before.

The politics of ethnicity and the economics of dependence are the paradigms through which the modern Balkans are normally viewed, but the three large histories recently published in London also emphasize the international dimension, showing how local disputes have acquired their intensity and longevity from unfavourable international pressures consistently applied to the region.

In what appears to be a *mea culpa*, Misha Glenny writes that ‘I began my own journey through the Balkans equipped with much of the prejudicial baggage that other outsiders carry’ (xxv). In the early

1990s, his reports for the BBC World Service were influential in reviving images of a benighted region in which authoritarian elites and atavistic populations were incapable of good government and reasonable conduct. British politicians frequently cited his reportage as sound evidence for keeping out of the region, beyond tendering humanitarian assistance, and allowing its 'ancient ethnic hatreds' to burn themselves out as in times past. But the message of his book appears to be that '[The] Balkans were not the powder keg, as is so often believed . . . They were merely the powder trail that the great powers themselves had laid. The powder keg was Europe' (243).

In the nineteenth century, the Balkans became the arena for the rivalries of the great powers as they split over the Eastern Question: how to manage and divide the Balkan territories of the crumbling Ottoman Empire. In 1800, writes Glenny, 'national consciousness was probably weaker on the Balkan peninsula than anywhere else in Europe' (xxvi). But starting with the Serbs and the Greeks and culminating with the Albanians and the Christian Slavs of Bosnia before the First World War, the creation of a single nation-state was felt to be the only way of obtaining security and collective fulfilment in an insecure neighbourhood, at least among the educated city-dwellers who would manage to dominate politics during the era of small states.

Lately, the London publisher Hurst has published numerous works, often of the highest quality of scholarship, on the contemporary history and politics of Southeast Europe which make throwaway judgements about the region and its political characteristics and potentialities increasingly less excusable. Stavrianos's *The Balkans since 1453* is a welcome reprint of a classic text first published in 1958. One aim was 'to synthesize and to make more generally available the great amount of monographic and periodical literature' that had appeared since 1914. The other, also shared by Glenny and by Stevan Pavlowitch in *A History of the Balkans, 1804-1945*, is to explain Balkan developments 'in terms of the impact of the dynamic, industrial western society upon the static, agrarian Balkan' one.

Geography, in particular the mountainous topography of much of the Balkans, has 'profoundly influenced its political development' (Stavrianos: 4). The lack of a natural centre around which a great state might evolve meant that it was outsiders who united the peninsula and extracted its mineral wealth. But a terrain conducive for micro-cultures and sub-national groupings created a unique feature of Balkan ethnic evolution: 'virtually all the races that have actually settled there in the past, as distinguished from those who have marched through, have been able to preserve their identity to the present' (Stavrianos: 13). Before the Ottoman Turks imposed their

hegemony, transient Christian kingdoms 'were not interested in ethnicity' (Pavlowitch: 5), which to Serb nationalists will seem an inexplicable claim, but wished instead to supplant the polyethnic Byzantine empire.

In 1453 the Turks were more lenient than the Crusaders who had sacked Constantinople in 1204. Mehmed II, the city's conqueror (who had a Serb mother), respected the civilization he had subdued and wished to ensure a contented Christian population. Stavrianos finds his Greek nationality no impediment in providing a dispassionate account of over four centuries of Ottoman rule. Centuries of 'unrelieved tyranny and oppression' did not ensue; Balkan peasants enjoyed better conditions than their West European counterparts. But the Ottomans failed to comprehend the new times inaugurated by the revolution in ideas, political organization and economics emanating from the West in the eighteenth century. The breakdown of order created localized revolts in Serbia and Greece which initially had modest aims but became full-blown movements for national independence under the influence of West European radicalism.

But long after the creation of a Greek state in 1830, much of Southeastern Europe remained 'a conglomerate — Hellenic, Slav, Romance, Turkish, Albanian — of people of ambivalent identity with a floating consciousness' (Pavlowitch: 13). The peasantry remained localist in outlook, mistrusting the towns and the state apparatus which benefited mainly towns. 'If we take Bosnia, that won't make my field any bigger,' commented one peasant deputy in the Serbian parliament in 1876; according to Glenny, the great loser in independent Serbia was the peasantry: Prince 'Obrenovic . . . was more systematic in his economic exploitation of the Serbs than the Ottomans had ever been' (21). Urban-rural tensions persisted after independence and exist to this day: in twenty-first-century Kosovo, under the veneer of Albanian solidarity, contempt for the peasant and his backward ways, along with an emphasis on higher education as a ladder of escape from the prosaic rural world, come as a surprise to outsiders but perhaps shouldn't do.

Educated and ambitious agitators promoted the nationality principle as a means of politically organizing humanity. However, Ottoman multiculturalism had allowed distinct religious and ethnic groups to co-exist in multinational territories and these populations were lured into mutually hostile 'imagined communities' as the decline of the Empire gathered pace.¹ The attitude not just of the peasants but more especially the great powers was profoundly frustrating for national zealots who wished to create a national monopoly on ethnically mixed territory. Britain usually wished to prop up the Ottoman Empire in order to prevent Russia establishing

itself in Constantinople and on the Mediterranean. Russia had no consistent policy towards the region. But when they faced reverses elsewhere (Austria–Hungary in Italy and Central Europe in the 1860s; Russia in the Far East after 1906) both the powers whose territory bordered the Balkans showed a propensity to meddle in the region in order to revive their prestige.

Each of the authors cited agrees that in 1878 the Balkan peoples paid dearly when a conference was held in Berlin to restore peace among the powers who had nearly gone to war over respective spheres of influence in the region. The goal of the pre-eminent European land power was to execute a carve-up that would maintain a balance of power and block the formation of an anti-German alliance. Geographic and strategic considerations were to take precedence over the wishes of local inhabitants even if they were in agreement about which jurisdiction they should fall under. Vienna was given a protectorate in Bosnia. This redirected Serbian territorial ambitions southwards, fuelling intra-Balkan rivalry. Greek–Slav rivalry could eclipse hostility to the Muslim Turk or converted Slavs as was the case in Bulgaria for much of the nineteenth century.

Glenny effectively shows that the 1885 Serbian–Bulgarian war far from being another Ruritanian dispute, was a surrogate one between the powers, the first but certainly not the last, to be fought in the Balkans. Although Serbia lost, there was no diminution in the martial nationalist spirit of an elite which believed it ‘would be the ideologue and executor of the unification process to which all other South Slavs must defer’ (Glenny: 256). The militarization of several Balkan states quickly ensued. ‘Nations were defined in opposition to others near at hand, or in imitation of others far away’; intellectuals constructed grand narratives of ‘a country once free, culturally elevated, and usually egalitarian’ until ‘delivered to the greed of foreign conquerors’ (Pavlowitch: 160–1). Nicolae Iorga, the Romanian historian, was rare in stressing a common consciousness in Balkan Europe. Pavlowitch is surprisingly sanguine about the achievements of independent Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Romania. ‘Institutions had been introduced, ideals accepted, standards set’ (158). But representative government was being attempted in countries unprepared for self-rule with borders that had been carved out arbitrarily by the great powers, under monarchs of widely fluctuating abilities and morals loaned out by the leading royal houses. A middle class, strongly entrenched in commerce and with a vested interest in promoting broadly based freedoms and the rule of law in order to safeguard its own interests and advance the common good, was almost everywhere absent. The peasantry were numerous but politically uninfluential.

To a great extent Balkan diplomacy after 1878 revolved around how Macedonia should be divided. Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece each coveted this ethnically highly varied as well as strategic territory. Macedonia commands a corridor which extends from Central Europe to the Mediterranean along the Morava and Vardar valleys. It is a route which has enabled successive invaders, Roman, Goth, Slav and Ottoman, to pass into the Balkans. Glenny describes it as 'Europe's most enduring and complex multicultural region. When the process of fragmentation in the Balkans began, the potential for violence . . . was greater than anywhere else' (157). The passions still generated by the Macedonian question in Greece and elsewhere suggest to Glenny that nationalism and national identity in the region are built on fragile foundations. Throughout the region, and especially in contested territories

. . . identities do not remain stable. They change over a few generations; they mutate during the course of a war; they are reinvented following the breakup of a large empire or state; and they emerge anew during the construction of new states. Balkan nationalism evokes such ferocious passion because, paradoxically, it is so labile. (Glenny: 158)

The passion of Romanian nationalists to retain firm control of the Romanian-majority province of Transylvania, Hungarian-ruled for centuries until 1918, springs partly from similar deep-seated anxieties about the staying-power of nationalism. Bucharest editors frankly complain that hundreds of thousands of Romanians are ready to adopt Hungarian nationality if it will enable them to obtain the work permit that is a passport to a better life first in Hungary and then in Western Europe.

The terrible bloodshed that engulfed Macedonia in the 1900s might have been avoided if fewer impediments had been put in the way of a large Slavic state in 1878. Events would consistently show that fears of any South Slav state becoming a pawn of the Russians were wildly overblown. Bulgaria had economic and cultural features that even with territorial insecurity enabled it to make greater progress in state-building than its neighbours. A large Bulgaria enjoying material progress could have become a magnet for Serbia and a South Slav state might have emerged gradually in the last decades of the nineteenth century. But the approval of the powers was vital, and instead Balkan union met with implacable hostility, not least from Vienna.

Glenny is eloquent in describing those communities that stubbornly defy easy nationalist classification. The most important one is nineteenth-century Bosnia. Peasant economic grievances and the resistance of the elite to imperial centralization first in Constan-

tinople, then Vienna were the main causes of unrest, not nationalism. Albania also postponed its national awakening until the Ottoman Empire was almost on its death-bed, preferring to see itself as 'a special homeland' within a general Ottoman homeland. Both the Albanians and the Bosnian Muslims enjoyed a contractual relationship with the Sultan not unlike that which Ulster Protestants had with the British Crown or Saxon settlers in Eastern Europe enjoyed with various dynastic rulers. They would be loyal subjects as long as the religious and landholding customs which defined their communities were respected by the distant emperors.² Bosnian Muslims defended Ottoman frontiers and provided soldiers for the Sultan's wars. Like the Ulster Protestants who provided a disproportionate number of military commanders in the British Empire, the Balkan Muslims were prepared to turn into rebels if their local customs and rights were encroached upon. Like them their privileged position in a sprawling empire defined by religion as much as by anything else meant that for a long time they would remain rare Europeans partly stuck in the age of pre-nationalism.

A vivid portrait of Salonika and its races, with the Sephardic Jews commercially to the fore, flows from Glenny's pen. The city was the scene of remarkable displays of religious fraternity upon the overthrow of the reactionary Sultan Abdulhamid II by the Young Turks in 1908. In Istanbul Muslims joined Armenians to attend requiem services for the victims of the 1896 massacres. But Austria-Hungary took advantage of the power vacuum to annex Bosnia formally. Serbia fumed at being denied what it saw as its historic birthright. The Kaiser, discarding Bismarck's carefully constructed alliance system, backed his Habsburg allies with the Tsar lining up on the side of Serbia. The powder-keg was indeed not the Balkans but a Europe intoxicated by nationalism and blind to the consequences of emotional dependence on such a fatal narcotic.

Before the end of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman elite was already beginning to identify with the Turkish ethnic population. After 1908 the predatory actions of the Christian powers pushed the Young Turks in a nationalist direction, creating a regime whose brutality, by 1911, exceeded that of the deposed Sultan.

Pavlowitch is good on Balkan economic developments and the cultural context while devoting overmuch space to individual ministries and ephemeral political chiefs. It is largely left to Glenny and Stavrianos to describe the countdown to war as the Balkans became the arena for irreconcilable great-power rivalries. A new element after 1908 was the refusal of well-armed Balkan states to bow to the requirements of the great powers. Glenny is at home in describing conspiracies and military operations as two Balkan wars

in 1912–13 drove Turkey almost entirely from Europe before the victors settled accounts among themselves. The scramble for territory led to warfare of the utmost brutality, often directed at the civil population in Macedonia. After a century of relative peace the rest of Europe was scandalized by the despatches from its war correspondents. But the frenzied efforts to create ethnically homogeneous states which was at the root of much of the organized violence, fitted in well with developments in Western Europe over a much longer historical time-frame. Western Europe was no stranger to the organized violence which had led to the creation of relatively compact states and which was yet to run its course as the holocaust of the Jews would make clear. Glenny argues that the general war which erupted after the Sarajevo murders of 28 June 1914 almost occurred at the end of 1912 as Austria and Russia squared up over the distribution of Albanian-speaking lands, an uneasy compromise resulting in the creation of an independent Albania being brokered by Britain. Conflict seemed unavoidable with numerous flashpoints, not all in the Balkans, ready to substitute for Sarajevo.

Stavrianos and Glenny emphasize the pitfalls of the peace which created a post-imperial Europe of national states in which more than one-quarter of the population of Eastern Europe still remained national minorities. As in 1878 the ascendant powers redrew boundaries on strategic rather than ethnic considerations despite the Wilsonian rhetoric about self-determination. But unlike the Congress of Berlin, the Allies wished to create large states, rather than small dependent ones, which could act as effective buffers against the menace of a revived Germany or a predatory bolshevik Russia.

Pavlowitch accentuates the positive, pointing out that three times as many people in 1920 were freed from alien rule as were now subject to it, and reminding readers that none of the Balkan states went to war with one another until great-power intervention in 1940. However, solidarity and co-operation among the Allied powers was necessary if the Versailles system was to underwrite a stable Europe, but insular British leaders quickly lost interest in the need to maintain European stability and quarrelled with their erstwhile French allies about points of detail.

As a substitute for giving Southeastern Europe high-level attention because of its sensitive geographical position and abundance of problems, the West has had a longstanding tendency to promote a pet Balkan country or an admired leader in an uncritical fashion. It is not just leaders and diplomats but advocates on the left and right of politics who have backed a 'virtuous' country or a personality as the internationalization of the Yugoslav conflict has shown after

1991. The lionizing of the Greek leader Eleftherios Venizelos was one of the first instances of the external powers backing a local Balkan leader to an imprudent extent because he seemed to embody 'Western' qualities that were in short supply locally as well as being a reliable guardian of Western interests. The British premier Lloyd George urged Venizelos to fall upon Asia Minor, hoping that Greece would be a reliable upholder of British interests in the Middle East. Greek arms were no match against Turkish determination to defend the Anatolian heartland of their nation. Glennly describes the scenes of utmost horror in 1922 as Greeks and Armenians crammed in their thousands on the quayside of the burning city of Smyrna with nearby Allied warships under orders not to pick-up refugees as it might contravene their by-now neutral status. (Parallels with the siege of the city of Sarajevo in the 1990s which NATO could have ended within hours if it was so minded are unavoidable.) Greece returned empty-handed when it requested a loan from the allies to feed 1,300,000 refugees: the powers were indifferent to the plight of the refugees they had done so much to create.

Lloyd George would be the first of a succession of European leaders — Hitler in wartime Yugoslavia and Stalin in postwar Yugoslavia spring to mind immediately — who would get their fingers burned by pursuing high-risk policies in Southeast Europe that were ultimately beyond their capacity to enforce. Britain and France soon placed little restraint on the new or enlarged victor states of Eastern Europe employing much the same tactics as the fallen empires in their treatment of minorities. The deportation of peoples as a means of halting the Greek-Turkish conflict of the early 1920s was actually overseen by the Allies who showed growing reluctance to allow their own creation, the League of Nations, to honour its own provisions concerning minority rights. The crass Balkan record of the major interwar democracies is skated over by Glennly but he offers a neglected vignette of early appeasement which has echoes of British policy towards the region during the Major premiership of the 1990s.

In 1926, Sir Austen Chamberlain, the British Foreign Secretary, was entertained by Mussolini and persuaded to rein in an energetic British consul in Tirana who was warning of Italy's growing military presence in Albania. Chamberlain agreed with the Italian dictator that Rome should be allowed to represent Albania's interests (without consulting the Albanians). Chamberlain, recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize,

. . . approved of Mussolini's authoritarian political programme as a bulwark against bolshevism . . . After several pleasant days together, Mussolini waved goodbye to his visitors. He noted with especial pleasure that Chamberlain's

wife and son were sporting the fascist insignia they had received as gifts. As their boat pulled out of the harbour, they raised their arms in the fascist salute. Mussolini had made some influential friends and been given a free hand in Albania by the British. (420)

Glenny's emphasis on a particular episode can dramatically illuminate a policy or a prejudice, but his tendency to concentrate on profiles of authoritarian leaders and descriptions of dramatic episodes, such as a peasant rebellion in Tito's Yugoslavia, weakens the analytical focus of the closing chapters of his book. His fellow Balkan historians give more weight to economic developments in the interwar period. Pavlowitch judges land reform to have been 'one of the most remarkable successes of Balkan states in the interwar period' (267). However, Stavrianos points out that agriculture ministries were starved of funds and peasants bore the brunt of taxes to finance urban- and military-spending priorities.

Democracy was largely extinguished in the wake of the 1929 economic crash which saw the prices of raw materials plunge far more steeply than for manufactured goods. The barriers against emigration raised by the USA and the British dominions and protective tariffs in Western Europe, excluding Balkan cereals and fruits, were already worsening agricultural distress, exemplified by a soaring rural population. But excepting Romania, the Balkan states were stony ground for extremism of either the right or the left. Zigmund Ornea, a distinguished Romanian cultural historian, has produced a valuable study exploring the appeal of indigenous values in the 1930s for an intellectual elite until then often regarded as thoroughly Western in its value system. He shows that the desire to orientate the country on an Orthodox and specifically Romanian path always had influential adherents from the 1880s onwards, men who distrusted French culture because it sought to remould the foreigner's culture in its own image. The disenchantment with democracy experienced by nationalistic and usually anti-semitic graduates, often unable to obtain secure positions in the public service or the legal profession, was the launching pad for the Iron Guard, the only extreme right-wing movement with a mass base to emerge in interwar Eastern Europe. Profiles are provided of the leading figures in the cultural counter-revolution who made respectable irrational, extremist and mystical ideas: the charismatic and manipulative philosopher Nae Ionescu; Nichifor Crainic, the Orthodox ideologue committed to establishing 'an ethnic power state' which for Ornea would have been a forerunner of the ayatollahs' Iran on the banks of the Danube; Mihail Manoilescu, the chief promoter of fascist economic ideas in Romania; and Emil Cioran and Mircea Eliade, philosophers later of global renown. Archives, correspondence, memoirs and diaries, as

well as the burgeoning periodical literature of the 1930s, are mined to chart the ascendancy of the extreme right. Ornea does not overlook the writers who retained a liberal and rationalist perspective, and he draws a distinction between Cioran who afterwards was prepared to disassociate himself from his 1930s affiliations and Eliade who never made such a public disavowal. Unfortunately, the undoubted merit of this work is badly compromised by appalling proofreading with missing and misspelt words too numerous to list and a careless translation strewn with elementary errors on virtually every page and, unlike the Romanian original, there is no index. Such a sloppy approach has been a feature of other books in the East European Monographs series but none surpasses this one in its elementary deficiencies. More careful editing is required if an otherwise fine series, bringing important works on Eastern Europe to a world audience, is not to lose its credibility.

What is surprising about the interwar Balkans is that the totalitarian new order proclaimed in Berlin and Rome was not more of a magnet for social groups lacking bright future prospects. In Bulgaria, both during the 1930s and after the fall of communism, extremist ideologies lacked the resonance they enjoyed in both periods for their north Danube neighbour. More comparative research definitely needs to be done on the receptivity of national intellectual communities in the Balkans to a range of foreign ideas.

In the 1930s, without undue prompting from the Western powers, the Balkan states took measures to contain or settle some of their most pressing differences and prevent the region being destabilized by the aggressive revisionist states, Italy and Germany. Forward-looking thinking based on an appreciation of common threats did not fit the Balkan stereotype; nor would the efforts of states in the region to refrain from being used as pawns by the Axis states before and in the early stages of the Second World War. But it is worth noting the statesmanlike behaviour of Balkan states in the 1930s when it was in short supply in most other parts of Europe.

Stavrianos deals well with a forgotten episode when the Balkans was briefly known as Europe's 'peace peninsula', but he is right to say that 'the decisive aspects of inter-war Balkan diplomacy were the Balkan policies of the great powers rather than the relations among the Balkan states' (733). Franco-British appeasement of the revisionist powers undermined the fragile security of the Balkans. Pavlowitch shows how these states preferred to sweep under the carpet the assassination of Yugoslavia's King Alexander in 1934 rather than jeopardize their links with Fascist Italy where the assassins enjoyed refuge. The viewpoint evident in the 1990s among Western, and particularly British, policymakers, namely that since

the Balkans seemed incapable of civilized forms of political behaviour the rules of modern conduct which applied to the rest of Europe need not be followed in their case, was already on display fifty years earlier.

Pavlowitch is upbeat about the achievements of interwar Yugoslavia in the areas of postwar reconstruction, agrarian reform, a unified free market and gradual industrialization. But he recognizes elsewhere that in Romania, as well as Yugoslavia, where large territories had been acquired in unexpected circumstances, the 'massive incorporation of newcomers into what had been a rather closed system posed a great challenge to institutions' (238). The appalling ill-treatment of the Albanians of Kosovo is skated over by Glenny and Pavlowitch as are the reactions of minorities to policies of implacable centralization.

In fact, most minorities used non-violent means to try to obtain the group rights in the cultural and educational spheres seen as necessary to preserve their identity and hand it on to the next generation. The Bosnian Muslims in Yugoslavia and the Hungarians in Romania were represented in parliament by their own parties. Sometimes they collaborated with majority interests if they held the balance of power, but the gains extracted were often meagre. Italy courted disaffected Croats, and Berlin paid close attention to the German minorities in the Balkans, but Glenny convincingly argues that the Balkans did not form part of Germany's designated *lebensraum*. The region's 'allotted role was to be Germany's mineral bank and agricultural hinterland' (457).

In contrast to their behaviour at the start of the First World War, the Balkan states refused to be drawn into hostilities after 1939. Mussolini failed to reach an agreement with Yugoslavia and Bulgaria for the partitioning of Greece in 1940. These countries had no desire to be surrounded on all sides by Axis countries with a record of treachery and double dealing that surpassed anything seen in the Balkans. Mussolini's overtures were rejected and Athens was given warning of what was in store. Glenny believes that but for Italy's invasion of Greece in October 1940 and its failure rapidly to subjugate the Greeks, 'the Balkans (with the exception of Greece) would probably have remained an island of peace for most of the war' (467-8).

In early 1941, Sir Alexander Cadogan, the head of the British Foreign Office, confided to his diary that 'All these Balkan peoples are trash.'³ Hitler had used the same word (*Gerümpel*) in *Mein Kampf* about the Balkan peoples. In the life and death struggle between Britain and Germany, later expanded to include the USA and Russia, there is no shortage of evidence which suggests that the

Balkan peoples were seen as expendable. No effort had been made by the British after 1918 to encourage leaders like Bulgaria's Stamboliski and Venizelos, sometimes prepared to move beyond narrow national interest to embrace a Balkan-wide vision for the development of the region's peoples.⁴ Decisions would shortly be taken about the future of the Balkans by external leaders who, seeing the region in terms of comic-opera kings, benighted peasants or racially flawed peoples, would not enable it to escape easily from the cycle of tyranny and instability to which it had been subjected ever since the age of nationalism and foreign intervention had begun over a century earlier. Glenny indulges the reader a little by emphasizing the cupidity of royal dictators like Carol II of Romania and Albania's Zog, but he also describes the neglected Boris III as a model statesman who did much to shelter his country from war and had an honourable record in saving Bulgaria's Jews.

Stavrianos's monumental study ends with communism installed everywhere in the Balkans except Greece. He sees Hitler's role in the Balkans as a revolutionary one because his actions paved the way for the demolition of existing institutions, awakening the peasants, changing the traditional relationship of the sexes, and discrediting traditional political leaders. At the time he was writing, in the mid-1950s, communism might have seemed a transforming creed as the social engineering which swept over the Balkans created urbanized, literate and industrial societies. But from a longer perspective, these changes seem less fundamental and would surely have occurred in a more rational and enduring way if most of the Balkan peninsula had followed the path of postwar development enjoyed by other agrarian and traditional societies such as Spain, Greece and Portugal.

Soviet overlordship, and then the national Stalinist backlash against it in Albania and Romania, placed much of the region on the path of underdevelopment. Low-grade heavy industrial economies were installed under which warped ideological goals replaced normal developmental ones with disastrous effects that will be felt long into the new millennium. In a pioneering study which makes extensive use of intelligence archives in Romania, Dennis Deletant provides a history of the apparatus of terror in Romania. He shows how an unrepresentative political sect catapulted into power by the Red Army in the mid-1940s used terror to crush the old order and settle differences in its own ranks. The creation of an omnipotent secret police and the establishment of a vast Romanian Gulag are described and the extent of armed resistance is chronicled in English for the first time. Deletant thus explodes the stereotype that the inhabitants of the Balkans had gone from being violent nationalist firebrands to pliant automata under communist rule.

Glenny's post-1945 narrative concentrates on the *folie de grandeur* of the various communist pashas in charge of the Balkan communist states. The most penetrating analysis is reserved for Yugoslavia. Josip Broz Tito's achievements in establishing 'a kind of harmony' among communities emerging from the bloodletting of 1941–5 Yugoslavia made his personality cult less synthetic than anywhere else in the communist world. Tito's achievements are listed but Glenny's verdict on him is ultimately negative. He argues that Tito (and his acolyte Edvard Kardelj) played off Serb against Croat, 'stirring up animosities in order to consolidate their own authority'. There is a reminder that Serbia was the chief citadel of liberalism in Yugoslavia until Tito's disastrous decision to replace the liberal leadership of the Serbian communist party with drab apparatchiks from whose ranks Slobodan Milošević emerged in the 1980s determined to recentralize Yugoslavia around Serbia on a neo-Stalinist basis.

Glenny's study comes full circle in describing the break-up of Yugoslavia and its consequences in a short but comprehensive conclusion. There is an emphasis on the urban–rural tensions which for centuries have been an important but neglected source of violence in the Balkans. Milošević and indeed his Croatian counterpart, Franjo Tuđman, mobilized rural elements ill-at-ease with the ethnic cosmopolitanism of the cities and resenting their prosperity. The Yugoslav army was Milošević's most pliant weapon, Ivan Stambolic offering a telling explanation for why this happened:

... the senior leadership and the officer corps were dominated by men from 'impoverished peasant families', who moved 'from city to city throughout their career, spending most of their time in barracks. They lived in cities but were never part of them, feeling isolated, rejected. They grew to hate cities and the people who lived in them.' (629)

Glenny concedes that in the 1990s the 'atrocities perpetrated by Serbs against Muslim civilians had an immense impact on Western public opinion and policy. For the first time in Balkan history, the question of external intervention in the region revolved less around perceived strategic or economic issues than around humanitarian ones' (638–9). But, writing in the wake of NATO's intervention in Kosovo, he warns that unless the powers accept responsibility for the difficulties the region has suffered as a result of a century of 'miscalculation and indifference' towards it, 'there will be little to distinguish NATO's actions from any of its great power predecessors'.

Macedonia, the poorest of the Yugoslav republics and the one, after Bosnia, with the most ethnically variegated population, is particularly dependent on disinterested external statecraft if its pre-

carious experiment with statehood is to endure. James Pettifer's *The New Macedonian Question* is a timely and well-produced volume which examines ethnographic, historical and international aspects of Macedonia. A combination of local scholars, along with Western and Russian commentators and experts, seek to provide an unbiased and low-key examination of the challenges and prospects facing the only Yugoslav republic that managed to disassociate itself from Serb-dominated Yugoslavia without war. The biggest impediment to Macedonia's survival as a multi-ethnic state with meagre economic prospects in a troubled neighbourhood turned out not to be Serbia but Greece. President Kiro Gligorov, the architect of Macedonian independence, as a member of the old Yugoslav *nomenklatura*, was able to neutralize any ill-intent which Slobodan Milošević harboured towards his fragile state by his ability to read the mind and motives of a fellow nomenklaturist who had opted for neo-Stalinism instead of liberal democracy. However, the European Union failed to show the same mixture of firmness and sensitivity in restraining Greece which, when the Skopje-based state adopted a name, flag and other symbols that were construed as irredentist claims on northern Greece, tried during the first half of the 1990s to isolate Macedonia internationally and cripple it economically. Countries like Portugal and Denmark were out of their depth when the issue overshadowed their Presidencies of the EU, and, along with bigger players like Britain, appeared to have forgotten the post-nationalist objectives of the founders of the Union. Evengelos Kofos offers a lucid and insightful analysis of the role the Macedonian question played in Greek politics and of how a more pragmatic approach, surely more beneficial to Greek state interests, gradually emerged. Other chapters of similar merit make this collaboration a welcome corrective to the vast literature on the question in which nationalist polemics have too often been substituted for serious scholarship. One hopes that this important book is read by those members of transnational organizations who are struggling to carry out a mandate meant to prevent a new Macedonian question returning to haunt Europe.

These books, by historians from the region or with profound knowledge of it, and journalists who also know important facets of it intimately, offer measured analyses of different aspects of Southeast European history that help to explain why it has diverged from the rest of Europe in important respects. In the future, there is scope for published research that builds on their efforts. In particular, there is a need for a critical examination of the debates concerning why the Balkans is such a negative paradigm in international relations and politics. The impact of nationalism and communism on Balkan economic development and political culture, and interaction between

the two collective doctrines, also await detailed study. So do the following large questions: are the structural problems of the Balkans internally driven or externally generated? What are the positive as well as negative features that comprise a composite 'Balkan' identity? And is there a collision in the region between what might be described as the forces of traditionalism and modernity?

To escape from the academic ghetto in which it has found itself, Balkan historical studies will need to avoid outwardly disinterested works of scholarship which are really concerned with fighting contemporary political battles about NATO or Milošević's role in the region. There is therefore an important responsibility on publishers and indeed state funding bodies in Britain and elsewhere to encourage and promote publications and research on the region that contribute to long-term understanding of it instead of scoring short-term political points. Ignorance in high-places has resulted in avoidable catastrophes in the region and it is time for research to get under way which ceases to paint the Balkans in lurid terms, while exploring continuities and discontinuities with the rest of Europe.

Notes

1. P.M. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of South-eastern Europe* (London 1994), 185.
2. David Miller, *Queens Rebels: Ulster Unionism in Historical Perspective* (Dublin 1978), 214–21.
3. Mark Wheeler, 'Not so Black as It's Painted: The Balkan Political Heritage', in F.W. Carter and H.T. Norris eds, *The Changing Shape of the Balkans* (London 1995), 245.
4. This theme is discussed in Chapter 2 of my book, *Outcast Europe: The Balkans until 1989* (London 2000).

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