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intention to preserve Austria-Hungary in some form after the war. However, Allied aid of 100 cannons arrived in October 1917. Ungari points out that Bissolati, Sonnino, Cadorna and Victor Emmanuel III were four key figures who, despite the lack of parliamentary support for their plans, pushed Italy further into the war.

In the last chapter, „Dal Piave a Versailles”, the author studies the background of the Italian defeat at Caporetto, and the connection between the 1917 Inter-Allied Conference in Rome and the aftermath of Cadorna's removal. Ungari shows that there were changes in the relationship between the Government and the Supreme Command after Cadorna was relieved of his duty. The appointment of Armando Diaz as Chief of Staff did not mean calming tensions. For example, after the victory at the Battle of Vittorio Veneto in 1918, Orlando and Sonnino demanded a lightning offensive against Austria-Hungary. Their decision, consequentially, required a new royal intervention in calming down “passions”. Ungari points out that the king's role was to maintain the balance of power in a complicated historical situation. He also writes

about the character of Sonnino's foreign policy underlying the fact that the king was not acquainted with many of his decisions. Thus, Sonnino demanded that the territorial aspirations of the Allies at the expense of the Austria-Hungary be reduced, while defending the territorial clauses of the London Agreement. Fearing secret agreements between the Allies and Austria-Hungary at the expense of Italy, Victor Emmanuel III advocated a conciliatory policy towards the South Slavs, even though, as diplomatic documents show, he counted on separating Croatia and Slovenia from Serbia. He also protested against the handover of the city of Smyrna to Greece, since it was initially promised to Italy. He perceptively foresaw the strengthening of the Catholic and Socialist movements in the country after 1918, but he remained dissatisfied with the treatment of Italy at the Versailles Peace Conference. At the same time, as an opponent of a radical change in the election law for the Senate, the king agreed to extending voting rights to women. All these changes, concludes Ungari, would accelerate the post-war rise of fascism.

STEFAN GUŽVICA, *BEFORE TITO. THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF YUGOSLAVIA DURING THE GREAT PURGE (1936–1940)*. TALLINN: TLU PRESS, 2020, 224 p.

*Reviewed by Rastko Lompar**

The Stalinist purges in the Soviet Union remain an important yet controversial topic in historiography. Seemingly limited to a single country – the Soviet Union, they in fact are an important transnational phenomenon, both due to the fact that the NKVD bullets took the lives of many foreign communists, and that scant news of the purges rippled over the world stoking fears in the hearts of communists and anti-communists alike. Just like during the later Soviet interventions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1956 and 1968 respectively, the news of

the purges spread quickly and caused an international uproar. The grinning commissar standing over mass graves with a still smoking Mosin-Nagant revolver became the poster child for anticommunism in the late 30s. However, those that perished were relegated to oblivion, and only after the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956 were some rehabilitated.

The book by Stefan Gužvica deals precisely with this important topic, as the

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author researches the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) during the Great Purge (1936–1940). He writes about a small party, forced into exile and still recovering from the police crackdown in Yugoslavia, engulfed in power struggles and plagued by the tutorship of the Comintern. The Purge left a lasting mark on the CPY, taking the lives of its many members and the secretary general Josip Čizinski/Milan Gorkić in 1937. What followed was an interregnum of sorts during which, as per Gužvica, four groups fought and schemed in order to reach the top position in the party. Eventually the future dictator of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, prevailed. Although the life and times of Tito are by no means under-researched, the author rightly concludes that there still is room for improvement. In fact, due to the importance Josip Broz acquired later, party history during the Great Purge has often been interpreted teleologically. The author identifies two currents within the “heroic” narrative of Tito’s ascension to power: one, championed by socialist historians, downplayed the roles of other contenders and described his path to party leadership as linear, whereas the other, championed by contemporary critics of Yugoslav communism, sees Tito as a devious mastermind who schemed his way to the top. Gužvica therefore attempts to decentralize the narrative by highlighting various formal and informal actors and groups which fought over Gorkić’s legacy. He also ascribes agency to Tito’s opponents such as Labud Kusovac, Kamilo Horvatin and Petko Miletić and does not use them merely as a backdrop to his rise. This approach constitutes both the major heuristic and interpretative result of the book, as the author expands on the initial archival work of N. Bondarev and others, whilst drawing attention to the transnational aspect of the internal struggle within the CPY. Drawing on intimate knowledge of the literature about international communism, Gužvica was able to place groups and “factions” within the CPY in the framework of the

so-called left and right wings of the communist movement. Therefore, he significantly improved the understanding of the concept of factions within the CPY and helped the readers navigate through the rather confusing theoretical maze of conflicting ideas and strategies.

However, whilst being aware of the two currents of the teleological narrative, Gužvica remains very close to the former, and the book sometimes reads more like a defence of Tito than an impartial study. Gužvica convincingly proves that the role Tito’s denunciations played in the demise of many Yugoslav communists was exaggerated in the works of Pero Simić, as sometimes years passed before the Soviet authorities acted on them. However, the author attempts to defend and clear Tito of any wrongdoing at every turn, without giving the same benefit of the doubt to his adversaries. A great example of the double standard can be found in the description of the denunciations Yugoslav communists wrote against each other. Rather than describing them as a morally repugnant, yet obligatory part of the life of professional revolutionaries, who were forced to spy on their colleagues, the author attempts to prove (mostly in the case of Tito) that the denunciations were a genuine and valiant attempt at forging party unity. So, when describing “innocent reports” written by Tito in 1935 and 1936, he rejects the term denunciation outright; when writing about Kamilo Horvatin’s negative reports on Tito, however, he correctly defines them as denunciations (cf. pp. 112–113 and 133). Similar examples are found throughout the book. Although one could agree that Tito was not the all-powerful string puller behind the scenes, but rather an intelligent man adept at reading the warning signs during the Purge, that does not free him from responsibility for the ill fate of many of his comrades. Tito’s rise to power was by no means a product of an immaculate conception.

The book is based on extensive research in Serbian and Russian archives and a vast body of literature. The fact that the book is exclusively based on sources from the communist parties, although understandable, has on few occasions led the author astray. Had he consulted sources from the Yugoslav police, he could have avoided taking Stalinist paranoia about police agents and spies within the party ranks for granted (cf. pp. 47–50). The Yugoslav kingdom was limited in the sphere of foreign political espionage, and therefore usually relied on the initiative and capabilities of diplomatic personnel abroad. In the light of police and security service practices in interwar Yugoslavia, the notion that several Yugoslav communists were turned into double agents and sent to the USSR (without an embassy to oversee their activities) to spy on the Soviet government in 1929 seems quite improbable at best. It is quite questionable whether there were paid double agents abroad at all. The most thoroughly analysed Yugoslav foreign espionage network organized in Berlin in

the late 1930s by the military attaché V. Vauhnik did not include a single paid operative. Despite a thorough bibliography, some key works about the interwar Yugoslav communist party are missing. Most notably the official party history (*Istorija saveza komunista Jugoslavije*), but also other important work by B. Gligorijević, K. Nikolić, B. Petranović, S. Cvetković and others.

In conclusion, the book is well written and easy to follow. It is both thorough in narration and unencumbered by unnecessary examples. The readers are drawn into a world of conflicting agendas and characters, as they follow the main protagonists who battle over a party in crisis. The ominous shadow of Stalin and his NKVD looms over them, threatening not only their positions within the party but also their very lives. Overall, the book is a well-researched and well-conceived attempt at shedding light on an often overlooked, yet quite important part of the history of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.

CATHERINE HOREL, *L'AMIRAL HORTHY. RÉGENT DE HONGRIE*. PARIS: PERRIN EDITIONS, 2014, 467 p.

Reviewed by Andjelija Miladinović Radonjić*

The contrasted history of Hungary in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is embodied in the controversial figure of Admiral Miklós Horthy, the hero of the book by Catherine Horel, a renowned French specialist of the history of countries that were a part of Habsbourg Empire. In the foreword, Horel deals with specific issues of Hungarian historiography such as available archives and biographical tradition. She points out that Hungarian history has often been instrumentalized and that the biographical genre has only recently experienced some changes. The dominant narrative on the nineteenth-century Hungary is focused on

the differences between István Széchenyi and Lajos Kossuth. Horel uses the river Danube as a vivid metaphor: just like the country is divided physically by the river, so is Hungarian historical consciousness divided between the *labanc* – allies of Austria personified by Széchenyi, generally Catholic, and the *kuruc* – rebels, generally Protestants, foes of Austria such as Kossuth. Since the end of the seventeenth century, this distinction has grown stronger, becoming ever powerful

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