SEESAW: CULTURAL LIFE IN EASTERN EUROPE. By *Yorick Blumenfeld.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968. 276 pp. $5.95.

The title of this book, in a metaphorical, and the subtitle, in a descriptive way, suggestively convey its content. It shows how the cultural activity in the Communist-dominated part of the European continent is in constant motion: toward total subservience by the governing political power, toward freedom of artistic and intellectual self-examination, self-discovery, and self-expression on the part of the creators, the consumers, and the whole culturally aware intelligentsia.

This dramatic, tense situation is discussed by an American of Dutch origin, a journalist with a good scholarly training in the humanities and in economics, acquired at Harvard University and the University of London respectively. Blumenfeld's spectrum is wide—encompassing literature, all the visual arts, music (including opera), theater, film, mass media (radio and television), as well as philosophy, at least "applied" or "practical" philosophy. The geographical scope is equally imposing; it embraces all countries belonging to the so-called socialist bloc, not excluding Yugoslavia and Albania. The author knows them and their cultural life *de visu,* from more or less close personal contact, careful observation, and intelligent comparison. However, the book does not pretend to be an exhaustive, systematic survey with scholarly apparatus, bibliography, and so forth. It is a combination of reportage and interview, of analysis and rather cautious generalization. The procedure is deepened by the study of primary material and secondary sources, by verification of direct impressions and observed facts.

A twofold method has been applied throughout the twelve chapters of the book. Some of them have a "monographic" character—they deal with one item, medium, or form of activity in one country (e.g., a fascinating discussion concerning the very influential, in the Communist sphere, Yugoslav theoretical review *Praxis,* or another on contemporary music in Poland). Some other chapters present a cross section of the Communist world as seen from a certain angle, such as through the architecture or the politically controlled television ("Red in Black and White"). This two-way handling of the material has many advantages, besides stimulating the interest of the reader. It highlights the most arresting endeavors, achievements, and failures of the particular "socialist democracies." On the other hand, thanks to the comparative approach, it lends remarkable coherence to the whole picture.

Two synthetic chapters, the introductory and the closing ones, act as a compositional clasp by providing a statement of the problem and some precisely formulated conclusions.

Blumenfeld has a well-defined point of view and criteria of evaluation, but his aesthetic sensitivity and intellectual integrity, his sympathy with the artists and artistic trends discussed, and his good will in understanding and judging them are beyond doubt. In the chapter dealing with Hungarian poetry he reveals himself to be a successful cotranslator; in another (one of the best), devoted to the Czech "theater of protest," he gives proof of a thorough knowledge of texts, illustrating his presentation of the phenomenon with precise summaries and substantial quotations from the plays of Havel, Topol, Plichta, and others. The perfect clarity of Blumenfeld's style is highlighted in some striking formulations—for example, "Poland is a mistress whose soul yearns for the West and whose body is tied to the Soviet Union" (p. 177).

In sum, *Seesaw*—together with the earlier, more specialized, collaborative work *New Writing of East Europe,* edited by George Gömöri and Charles Newman

https://doi.org/10.2307/2493300 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(Chicago, 1968)—makes good supplementary reading for any student of Slavic literatures and civilizations. It may be of great service as an antidote to narrow specialization, to taking official propaganda stuff at its face value, and to treating uncritically such blurred, ambiguous, and restrictive notions as "socialist realism."

TYMON TERLECKI
University of Chicago

THE DANUBE SWABIANS: GERMAN POPULATIONS IN HUNGARY, RUMANIA AND YUGOSLAVIA AND HITLER'S IMPACT ON THEIR PATTERNS. By *G. C. Paikert.* Studies in Social Life, vol. 10. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967. xiv, 324 pp. 40 Dutch guilders.

This comprehensive study of the Danube Swabians deals with the ethnically German population in Hungary, Rumania, and Yugoslavia and offers an analysis of their patterns of behavior from their original colonization to the final resettlement. The group numbered one million and a half in 1939. Despite the author's intent to provide an objective and thorough analysis, the study seems stronger in reasoning than in documentation, more explanatory than penetrating; it is aimed primarily at providing some rationale for the apparently inconsistent behavior of the German ethnic group. The author, who observed the Swabians in Hungary at first hand during the 1934–44 period when he headed the department of schooling of national minorities in the Hungarian Ministry of Education, understandably focuses his study on the Hungarian Swabians, only outlining the Yugoslav and Rumanian cases. The Germans in Yugoslavia have been treated recently in the excellent study by Dušan Biber, *Nacizem in Nemci v Jugoslaviji, 1933–1941* (Ljubljana, 1966), which draws on sources not used by Paikert.

The book does not include the German minorities in Dobrudja, Slovenia, Bosnia, and Croatia south of the Sava River. Nonetheless, the task of providing a comprehensive study of a national minority spread over three countries during the last three centuries is too great for one scholar.

The German settlements in the Danubian areas are part of the large-scale colonization that followed the peace of Karlowitz in 1699; the Serbians, Rumanians, and colonists from the Austrian Empire were encouraged to settle the lands along the Turkish border where frequently devastated areas were to become a solid zone with a politically reliable and economically stabilized population. Irrigation, drainage, a network of roads, and later railroads, bridges, and central services, brought the Danubian Lowlands within the political and economic domain of Central Europe, where the reliable German population was supposed to serve as a guarantee and a watchdog.

World War I and the boundary setting which followed dissected the previously contiguous Swabian territory by allocating its portions to reduced Trianon Hungary, to expanded Rumania, and to the newly created Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

Between 1918 and 1933, after the initial disorientation, Swabians retreated to their basic loyalties to Germandom, identified first with the loosely defined German nation, and after 1933 with the increasingly more domineering Great Germany. Lip service was paid to regional loyalties, but the basic ties of the Swabians were to the German local community and to the German nation (p. 82). In the pre-1918 era the pro-Austrian orientation of the Volksdeutsche coincided with laudable patrio-

https://doi.org/10.2307/2493300 Published online by Cambridge University Press