

threat posed by Latvia's large Russian-speaking population. Today, such parties are more likely to "... concentrate their ire on visible minorities and refugees. . . as well as focus on conservative versus liberal values" (223), putting them more in line with similar parties across Europe.

Auers and Mathew Kott both show how radical right parties have merged into the mainstream of Latvia's party system. For Auers, pro-Russophone parties pose a greater threat to democracy in the eyes of most Latvians, while Kott examines the same topic in the context of "entryism," whereby a marginal group gains control over mainstream actors. While all of the chapters are informative and thoroughly researched, a more comprehensive view of Latvian national identity would require additional chapters on topics such as the Soviet takeover and communist oppression, the liberal dimension of Latvia's struggle for independence, and the emergence of pro-EU parties in the post-Soviet period.

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The Slovak Question: A Transatlantic Perspective 1914–1948. By Michael R. Cude. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022. x, 288 pp. Bibliography. Notes. Index. \$50.00, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.299

Sizeable émigré groups tend to have political leverage in both their adoptive state and their country of origin. Slovak immigrant communities in the United States were less fortunate. Although they succeeded in forging transatlantic ties with their compatriots in central Europe, they were outmaneuvered at home and abroad by the founders of Czechoslovakia. Consequently, in America the Slovaks failed to garner any official backing for their national cause.

By the early twentieth century "between a quarter and a third" of the Slovak nation—some 650,000 people—had settled in the United States, principally in "the northern industrial belt stretching from New York through Wisconsin" (9), forming large communities in Pittsburgh and Cleveland. The level of their "publications, organization, and lobbying" on each side of the Atlantic is judged by Michael R. Cude to be "astounding" (199). He makes a compelling case that "Slovak national identity formation was a transatlantic phenomenon," which is insufficiently appreciated in the "tenuous, and tedious," specialist works (3–4). Be that as it may, it is clear from this study that the marginalized Slovak American community held significantly less sway over US foreign policy than the historically more diminutive Czech migrant group. Czechoslovak publicists were highly effective at casting Slovak autonomists as "an irrelevant, cranky minority working for the Hungarians" (52). State Department officials dealing with central European affairs duly bought into the idea that the Slovaks "needed the Czechs for their survival" (27). Thus, the Slovak Americans "remained on the margins" (37), not only during the building of the Czechoslovak state, but up until the early Cold War.

Through their political league and cultural organizations, the Slovaks proved more adept at advocating American values to their European counterparts than at shaping American perceptions of the regime in Prague. Admittedly, in 1939 the US Ambassador in Paris, William Bullitt, described the exiled president of Czechoslovakia, Edvard Beneš, as "an utterly selfish and small person who, through his cheap smartness in little things and his complete lack of wisdom in large things, permitted the disintegration of his country" (123). Nevertheless, most American

representatives continued to endorse Beneš's vision for the reconstituted Republic, even after his inauspicious return to power in 1945. For much of the twentieth century, the State Department and American officialdom regarded the "Slovak question" (3) as subsidiary to the survival of the Czechoslovak state.

Cude laments "a missed opportunity" (91) to include Slovak American autonomists in the political process. This immigrant group, he contends, was more open to democratic and federal ideals than its ethnonationalist kin in the old country, putting it in a better position to negotiate a lasting settlement with the Czechs. In his conclusion he claims that the US government could have facilitated an agreement between the two antagonistic ethnic groups. Still, the author fully accepts that Slovak Americans came to exercise "a disruptive influence" on Czechoslovak politics, undermining efforts "to create a unified Czechoslovak identity" (198). Inevitably, transatlantic links with Jozef Tiso's wartime Slovak state provided plenty of additional ammunition for hostile Czech propaganda. Autonomists in America "saw Tiso from afar, cut off by the war from the uglier realities of the Slovak Republic" (179). As Cude rightly acknowledges, the memory of fascism discredited the advocates of independence, while seriously weakening the country's resilience to communism.

The reader may be inclined to concur that the United States should have played a more active role in supporting Slovak political autonomy. However, the questionable hypothesis that some form of American-sponsored federal arrangement could have resulted in postwar neutrality for Czechoslovakia is likely to rankle with diplomatic historians. The academic reader may also be irked by the presence in the text of a few minor errors involving personal names: Francis Dubosh, a Slovak autonomist, is once surnamed "Dobush" (161); after the first mention of David Lloyd George, the British prime minister is called "George" (56, 279); and Robert William Seton-Watson, a Scottish historian, is assigned the middle name "Wilson" (16). Otherwise, this volume gives a reliable, thorough, and original account of Slovak cultural and political life in America, as well as a brief outline of the diplomatic dimensions of the Slovak fight for independence. As such, the monograph could be recommended as a useful source for students of American foreign affairs and central European history.

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Comics and Nation: Power, Pop Culture, and Political Transformation in Poland.

By Ewa Stańczyk. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2022. vii, 211 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. \$34.95, paperback.

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To mark the centennial of Polish comics (2019), the first comprehensive compendia appeared in French and German (Wojciech Birek, Piotr Machłajewski, Adam Rusek, and Jerzy Szyłak, eds., *Histoire de la Bande Dessinée Polonaise*, 2019; Kalina Kupczyńska, and Renata Makarska, *Handbuch Polnische Comickulturen nach 1989*, 2021). Ewa Stańczyk's book, published in Ohio State University Press' Studies in Comics and Cartoon series, now joins them. The author is no stranger to comics research: for nearly a decade now she has been researching feminist aspects and the Holocaust in Polish comics, among other topics; this book conveys her familiarity with the subject.

The title announces a socio-historical perspective on the history of the comics medium in Poland, and it delivers: in five chronologically ordered chapters, Stańczyk