

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

recapitulates the stages and facets of the connection between comics and nation in Poland. The first chapter deals with the development of comics between the wars and the outbreak of World War II, followed by an outline of the debates in the 1950s about US influence on Polish culture, in which comics were caught between the fronts. The third chapter is devoted to the “golden age” (86) of Polish comics in the period of cultural opening in the 1970s; in the fourth part the author describes the situation after the fall of the Iron Curtain, while the fifth chapter briefly outlines selected trends of the 2000s.

A great merit of the book is its concise compilation of the central tendencies and premises that are crucial for the connection between comics and nation in Poland. Stańczyk is adept at illuminating the Polish tradition of pictorial history as a competing and complementary form to the comics imported from the west, and she establishes interesting parallels, for example, between the design of comic characters of the Silesian protagonist Froncek and the Belgian Tintin. Such iconic figures as Superman are found in Polish comic productions; counterparts to Astérix and Obélix (in Polish *Kajko i Kokosz* by Janusz Christa, 90) and Lucky Luke (*Binio Bill* by Jerzy Wróblewski, 90) are also mentioned. The author makes references to the situation of comics in other east European countries—especially the USSR, Czech Republic and Hungary—which, as well as relations with Scandinavian countries, contextualize the development of comics in Poland. The media contextualization turns out to be just as exciting and informative, since Stańczyk provides much background on media competition: the press, film, and television. The development of manga in Poland is briefly and lucidly outlined against the background of French resistance to the Japanese comic form.

A major advantage is the view from the outside, which allows the author to escape what is still a weakness of Polish comics research, namely the excessively one-sided focus on phenomena within the Polish comics landscape. The publication is well researched and draws on both US and Polish sources. Small gaps are evident. For example, the satirical magazine “*Szpilki*” is missing from the account of the press landscape of the 1950s and 60s, while the magazine “*Fantastyka*,” which was important for Polish SF comics of the 1980s, is mentioned only in a footnote. The fourth chapter on the opening of the book market in the 1990s hardly contains any comics analyses, although the independent comic magazines of the late 1990s and the early 2000s provide considerable material for examining the social consequences of the transformation and the representation of the new political system in Poland.

In the last chapter I missed a larger picture of contemporary comic productions from Poland. Here, besides the mentioned autobiographical-feminist perspective of Wanda Hagedorn and Jacek Fraś, as well as the abundance of historical comics, a few important trends should be named, such as the regional comic, the queer comic, and the new wave of independent historical comics. Especially in view of the main theme of the book, the absence of these aspects, which testify to the political commitment of Polish comic authors, is surprising.

A further drawback of the book is the sparse amount of illustrations: the reader does not have the opportunity to get acquainted with the aesthetics of the mentioned comics. The aesthetics—the use of color, relation between image and text, drawing styles, formats—remain rarely mentioned.

It is to be hoped that the book will act as a stimulus for comics scholarship, deepening and further exploring the tendencies that are sometimes only hinted at here.

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