

CALIC, MARIE-JANINE. *Sozialgeschichte Serbiens 1815–1941. Der aufhalt-same Fortschritt während der Industrialisierung.* [Südosteuropäische Arbeiten, Band 92.] R. Oldenbourg Verlag, München 1994. 496 pp. Maps. DM 148.00; S 1155.00; S.fr. 148.00.

More often than not, the social history of Serbia has been reduced to the history of the labour and socialist movements. Introductions to numerous such studies published in the former Yugoslavia included the obligatory essential data on population, economic conditions and political developments, but without providing a convincing and meaningful synthesis. Calic's book is important because it lays the foundation for a different approach to socio-historical phenomena without merely reducing them to the history of labour or the history of the Communist Party. In fact, labour history hardly features at all in her book (and rightly so) since there are more urgent and substantial problems to consider: their clarification will provide the framework for the eventual establishment of labour history as an academic discipline.

The most important of those problems is the very nature of Serbian society and how it has developed. Calic's book focuses primarily on the economic history of Serbia and on the basic features of its social structure. Her point of departure is the sound conviction that the patterns of economic and social modernization that claim universal validity do not apply to Serbia. Instead, she investigates the peculiarities of Serbia's development. By identifying the most important hurdles to modernization, her book, though it deals only with the period from 1815–1941, sheds light on the crisis which Serbia has been experiencing for the past twenty years or more. The roots of Serbia's failure to modernize more rapidly run very deep, and recent Serbian nationalists' attempts to blame everything on Croats and Slovenes and the existence of post-World War II Yugoslavia appear, when tested against the arguments of this book, to rest on nothing more than an unwillingness to subject oneself to critical self-examination.

From the very beginning, Calic argues, Serbia's road to modernization was blocked by many subjective and objective obstacles. Some of them derive from the incapacity and unwillingness of the main agents of change, the educated elites, to carry out a comprehensive reform of the institutional system and unleash the forces of radical change. Others are due to the conservatism and limited innovative potential of the emerging tiny entrepreneurial class. On the "objective" side, the circumstances in which Serbia tried to develop were not favourable: population growth, a consequence of almost universal and early marriage, was too high to be absorbed by a stagnant economy. Subsistence farming based on the extended-family farm and the strong propensity of the peasant to obtain a piece of land and remain there at any cost led to a far-reaching subdivision of land and blocked any orientation towards the market economy. The result was very high agrarian overpopulation. All that mattered was surviving, even if that meant extreme poverty and having to rely on family and kinship ties. There was no large-scale proletarianization of Serbia's peasantry since the state itself did much to tie peasants to the land by promulgating a series of laws forbidding the sale of small peasant farms and the animals and implements necessary to support the peasant and his family. Working outside agriculture was the principal way in which the peasant could avoid giving up his family farm, his primary concern and basis of existence.

The impact of the domestic market on industrialization was rudimentary due in part to the paternalistic concern of the state, which feared imported industrial products would corrupt the moral standards of the peasantry and consequently forbade the sale of most such products in the countryside. The state itself, acting as a substitute for the lack of free-market forces, was the chief agent of industrialization. However, its protective industrial policy from the Customs War with Austria (1906–1911) onwards was to a certain extent counterproductive since it prevented Serbia from reaping the benefits of international competition and made domestic products too expensive for the local population. As Calic rightly points out, in order to reach the level of developed nations a developing country has to combine protectionism with the diversification of domestic production.

In contrast to the pattern of development in major industrial nations, Serbia's proto-industrial production was too weak to resist the imported industrial products that threatened to flood the country up to the Customs War and not sufficiently diversified to serve as a powerful stimulus to the country's industrialization. The Serbian industry that did emerge (mainly textiles and food processing) was craft based and as such did not require sophisticated technology. The engineering sector remained relatively marginal, and Serbia largely had to resort to importing foreign-made, and as a rule technologically obsolete, equipment.

Other prerequisites for an industrial take-off were missing too: the lack of domestic capital and an extreme dependence on foreign investors who pursued their own interests, the lack of a geographically mobile and adequately trained labour force (the education system was poorly suited to the task it faced because it neglected elementary education and produced too many philosophy and law graduates), the volume of exports was only modest and the terms of trade unfavourable, the proportion of raw materials processed in Serbia and subsequently exported was also low, the country lacked a modern communications network, and so on.

To those studying Serbian history, Calic's book and the potential offered by pursuing her line of research in adjacent fields (nation building, the development of political institutions in a broad sense, the inclination to populist politics, studies in mentality and the history of ideas) give a sense of finally being on the track of the "material substratum" of something they perceive as it were intuitively. One can only hope it will encourage an unprejudiced and well-informed study of Serbia within Serbia itself.

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MENON, DILIP M. Caste, nationalism and communism in south India. Malabar, 1900–1948. [Cambridge South Asian Studies, 55.] Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [etc.] 1994. xvi, 209 pp. £30.00; \$54.95.

When one of my students was doing fieldwork training in Malabar, south-west India, he reported back home in surprise that the people he had seen passing by in a boisterous Red Flag demonstration early in the morning were marching in a silent religious procession the same evening. His surprise discloses not only the bias of a Western mind, bent on polar analysis, but is also indicative of a