

Kagarlitsky, Boris. *Empire of the Periphery: Russia and the World System*. Translated from the Russian by Renfrey Clarke. Pluto Press, London, 2008. 364 pp. Notes. Index. £40.00: \$65.00: €55.00.

BORIS KAGARLITSKY, currently director of the Institute of Globalisation and Social Movements, is a prominent theorist of Russia's democratic left. Several of his books have appeared in English. In this very substantial work he surveys the history of Russia from the ninth to the twenty-first century. It is not primarily a factual account; the reader is assumed already to possess a basic knowledge of Russian history (so it would not be suitable as an introductory text). The aim is, rather, to interpret and explain key developments in terms of underlying economic factors, with special emphasis on trade and economic relations between Russia and other countries. The author draws on a wide range of primary and secondary sources, from medieval chronicles to Soviet state archives, as well as on archaeological evidence.

Kagarlitsky places himself in the tradition of Mikhail Pokrovskii (1868–1932), whose school of Marxian historical scholarship was influential in the 1920s and suppressed by Stalin. This book is, *inter alia*, an effort to revive Pokrovskii's approach to history and bring it to the attention of a new generation. Kagarlitsky also aims to place his analysis within the framework of the 'world systems' theory of Immanuel Wallerstein. This does not prevent him from disagreeing with Pokrovskii or Wallerstein on important points. Other significant influences on the author include Nikolai Kondratiev's theory of 'long cycles' and Peter Kolchin's analysis of serfdom (*Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom*, New Haven, CT, 1987).

Kagarlitsky challenges a number of stereotypes about Russia and the West that underlie both 'Slavophile' and 'Westernizer' historiography. Thus, he does not see Russia as essentially different from Western Europe (that is, different in a deeper sense than that in which West European countries differ from one another). In his estimation, Russia has not been isolated from Western Europe for long stretches of time and for most of its history has not lagged behind Western Europe economically. Indeed, Kievan Rus' was far in advance of contemporaneous Western Europe. True, Russia's development was held back in the early modern period — not, however, because it was isolated from the world economy but because it was integrated into the world economy as a dependent periphery exporting raw materials (furs, wax, ship's timbers, later iron and grain). Under the Soviet regime Russia temporarily established itself as an independent industrial power; it has now returned to its former place in the world system.

The book does have certain weaknesses. In particular, the discussion of the years 1917–21 seems to me inadequate and idiosyncratic: the author ignores specialized studies on 'war Communism' by both Western and Russian researchers. Besides the notes translated from the Russian original, there would ideally have been additional notes designed specifically to assist the general Western reader.

Nevertheless, taken as a whole, this work is an impressive achievement. Unlike all too many writers on Russia, Kagarlitsky is as familiar with world

history as he is with Russian history, and this enables him to portray Russia as part of the world, not as a world apart.

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Štih, Peter, Simoniti, Vasko, and Vodopivec, Peter. *Slowenische Geschichte. Gesellschaft — Politik — Kultur*. Veröffentlichungen der historischen Kommission für Steiermark, 40; Zbirka zgodovinskega časopisa, 34. Leykam, Graz, 2008. 559 pp. Maps. Tables. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. €34.00 (paperback).

MORE surprising than the lack of general histories of Slovenia in English is their paucity in German, for all the relevant specialist monographs and publications of conference papers in the latter language. Thus it is a pleasure to have a weighty volume spanning the history of the Slovenian lands by three leading Slovene scholars in their respective periods, designed to present the fruits of current research on political, socio-economic and cultural history to a wider audience. As such, it eschews traditional polemics and projection of modern national(ist) categories into the past, avoiding anachronistic identification of the early Slav inhabitants as Slovenes and stressing multi-ethnic, multi-cultural aspects of the region as a ‘transport hub’, enriched by its diverse influences. It is a massively informative work, from which the reader could identify, for example, the bulk of post-primary educational institutions, literary periodicals and diocesan border changes up to 1918. In particular, it offers precise statistics on a host of matters from early modern peasant risings, urban populations and Second World War victims to newspaper circulations and post-1991 election results.

Peter Štih’s contribution from pre-historical times till the end of the Middle Ages traces the ethnogenesis of a Karantanian identity from a group of partly heterogenous *Stämme*, the respective spheres of influence of Salzburg and Aquileia archdioceses, the mingling of Slavic and Frankish elements before consolidation into feudalism — a social rather than a Germanizing process — and in particular the emergence of the *Länder* since inhabited by Slovenes. The last theme is in rather heavy detail, though in line with the overall project’s desire to give the ‘alien’ nobility, which was anyway largely bilingual, their due place in Slovene history; perhaps more might be said here on provincial institutions like the Diets. Vasko Simoniti’s coverage of the early modern period highlights the interplay of Turkish wars, peasant risings and religious strife, together with socio-economic developments and finally Joseph II’s reforms; interesting is the great expansion of doctoral candidates in the Counter-Reformation and the failure of the famous spinning schools as a social palliative. In Peter Vodopivec’s richly informative piece on the modern period, which takes up two-thirds of the book, a consistent theme is that the national revival was dogged by inadequate political education or awareness and growing ideological polarization between liberals and clericals and within