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James Mark, Paul Betts, Alena Alamgir, Péter Apor, Eric Burton, Bogdan C. Iacob, Steffi Marung, and Radina Vučetić, *Socialism Goes Global: The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonization*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022; vi + 367pp.; £75 hbk; ISBN 9780192848857.

This engaging book represents the culmination of the ‘Socialism Goes Global’ project, coordinated by Paul Betts and James Mark. Over several years, its participants have asked historians to reconsider the place of communist-era Eastern Europe in twentieth-century global history. It has dispensed with the overarching framework of the Cold War – which, even in its current ‘global’ historiographic phase, remains anchored in the notion of superpower rivalry – to foreground the idea of ‘socialist globalization’. Working at the juncture of socialist state-making and anticolonial internationalism, the project has resurrected a transcontinental archipelago built on unstable ideological and political solidarities.

Socialism Goes Global provides both an introduction to this lost world and an interpretation of its rise and fall. Neither a standard monograph nor a collection of individual essays, it is all the stronger for its creative structure. Each chapter is structured around a key theme: development, culture, rights, race, health, and so on. Each is written by a single author or small team of authors, but acknowledges the input of other project members in sharing source material. By pooling their knowledge, the authors synthesize an astonishing range of historiography in Eastern European languages. Fresh insights from the region’s archives also pepper the text.

The book’s eschewal of conventional Cold War chronologies and critical approach to normative conceptions of ‘decolonization’ generate its most rewarding analytical interventions. A chapter on ‘origins’ situates the global relationships of the communist regimes within a deeper history of colonialism and marginalization in Eastern Europe. While the Bolsheviks set about constructing a

communist state, the book shows how some interwar Eastern European elites pursued the idea of obtaining colonies, in order to address what they regarded as their own peripheral and precarious position within Europe. The experience which Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians accumulated in developing business ties with Africa and Asia during this time meant that they, rather than the Soviet Union, often led the way in engaging with the decolonizing world. This older history casts as long a shadow over socialism's global story as the October Revolution.

Unsurprisingly, racist views about Africa and Asia were not swept away by communist revolutions. Rather, the book demonstrates how they pervaded responses to decolonization. Eastern Europeans presented themselves as a 'better kind of white' (p.221) in the Third World. But jarring aesthetics – picture Tito, in Africa, in safari hunter's attire – pointed towards the limits of such ideas. That is not to say that anticolonial solidarities were necessarily superficial: the book clearly shows the meaningful and extensive support for liberation causes in Eastern Europe, particularly at the grassroots level. While the book takes Eastern Europe as its focus, it also reminds that Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans were active rather than passive participants in this socialist world.

The book identifies the global financial revolution of the 1970s as a key turning point in these relationships. As Eastern Europe's communist regimes fell into debt traps, obtaining hard currency became an overriding concern in their stance towards the Third World. But the authors also demonstrate that Eastern Europe's socialists were not simply at the mercy of structural changes beyond their own control. Generational shifts transformed the outlook of decision-makers. Memories of partisan struggles against fascism, which influenced earlier communists' support for revolutionary struggles in the Third World, gave way to the less idealistic motivations of a new technocratic class. In hindsight, the window in which Eastern European anticolonial solidarity

received both popular support and adequate state resources appears strikingly narrow – perhaps little more than a decade spanning the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s.

Above all, the book emphasizes the importance of the nation-state and national identities in structuring socialism's global connections. The authors show that these overwhelmingly took place on bilateral grounds, rather than through multilateral institutions like Comecon. This often fuelled competition among socialist states for influence, rather than cooperation. Parallel relationships rather than the stronger tissue created by multilateralism then proved more brittle in times of economic crisis. Yet amid these reminders that self-interested pragmatism often won out over hazier anticolonial imaginaries, the book does not lose sight of the broader ideological constructs that shaped Eastern Europe's engagement with the world. For example, socialist governments framed migration for work or education as a mechanism for collective development rather than an end in itself – an idea lost by the liberal focus on individual human rights. There was a similar story in the field of medicine, where communist governments argued that public health was inseparable from socioeconomic conditions and so could not be resolved by the panaceas of Western science.

The book's ambitious scope means that it is understandably far from comprehensive. While non-aligned Yugoslavia receives extensive treatment, only passing mention is made of Albania. Some will remain unconvinced of the merits of an alternative 'socialist globalization'. Here, rather than critique the teleological pitfalls of the received globalization story, it may have been more productive to explore the geographic worldviews of Eastern European's socialists themselves. But ultimately this is an important book. Its collaborative and comparative nature helps push beyond the 'solidarity with tensions' conclusions often reached by narrower case studies. Rich in evidence and imaginative in conception, it is a testament to the value of collective scholarship in the writing of global history.

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