Soviet teacher reports, "conversations with many pupils from different classes and schools [reveal] that pupils nowadays consider Russian literature one of the most boring subjects." The teacher's discovery is corroborated by much additional data, both direct and indirect. Reasons for this state of affairs are not based simply on overly traditional and unimaginative teaching. As N. N. Shneidman's book demonstrates, much, if not most, of the blame rests with the stubborn persistence with which Soviet educators—professional descendants, as it were, of Chekhov's "Man in the Case,"—attempt to utilize literature as a tool of political indoctrination, both in the direct meaning of the term and also in a broader sense, as a device for promoting the socialization of the young. In the process, boys and girls are taught to classify literary characters into positive heroes to be emulated and villains to be condemned, and are then tested on their ability to extract evidence of the decay of old Russia's aristocracy and the greed of her bourgeoisie from various literary masterpieces. All these are, of course, weighty matters, but hardly conducive to awakening in the young a feeling of fascination with the magic of verse or the allure of great prose.

N. N. Shneidman's very competent study traces the methods whereby literature is employed for politically didactic purposes in the Soviet educational network. The seventy pages of Mr. Shneidman's discussion are followed by nearly three times as many pages of appendixes. These include detailed descriptions of literature curricula at various levels, reading lists, samples of examinations, and suggested subjects for term papers. Those of us who care about literature must derive comfort from the fact that millions of young Soviet people still emerge from such trials with their love for good writing unimpaired, just as some of our own youngsters discover the existence of great novels, even though one would hardly detect this existence from their textbooks.

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POWSTANIE PAŃSTW NARODOWYCH W EUROPIE ŚRODKOWO-WSCHODNIEJ. By *Wiesław Balcerak*. Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1974. 503 pp. 56 zł., paper.

Born in 1934, Wiesław Balcerak is one of the most prolific of the post-Stalinist generation of young Polish historians. His previous book-length studies have dealt with interwar diplomatic history, but in the present book he demonstrates his versatility with a tightly-organized analysis of political history.

As its title indicates, the volume offers an examination of the establishment of the national states of East Central Europe at the close of, and as an outcome of, the First World War. The sweeping opening chapter traces the development of national liberation movements throughout the area, from the end of the revolutions of 1848 to the eve of World War I. Chapters two and three deal with the diplomatic competition between the opposing sides in that war, and their attempt either to neutralize or to win the national movements to their respective sides. In addition, these chapters treat the impact of the Russian Revolution on the entire matter. Chapters four through ten trace the political travails of the restored, enlarged, or truncated states of Poland, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria, from the closing weeks of World War I to the early or mid-1920s, when a suitable denouement—a point of relative stabilization (differing for each state)—was achieved. The three Baltic states, Albania, and Greece are

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omitted. The final chapter presents the author's speculations and reflections on the causal and contextual interplay of the various aspects of the drama which he has analyzed.

Balcerak attributes the establishment of independent states in East Central Europe to: (a) the strength of nationalism and its reciprocal interaction with the waning of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires, (b) the Russian Revolution, and (c) the military defeat of Germany by the Western Powers. Although he cosmetically uses the term "October Revolution" in his table of contents, the author's substantive analysis shows that he is very much aware of the powerful, primary impact of Russia's February Revolution in galvanizing the demands for political independence by the national movements of East Central Europe. The October Revolution, on the other hand, is interpreted as catalytically facilitating the realization of these demands, by accelerating the socioeconomic disintegration of the Habsburg Empire through bread riots, mutinies, desertions, and so forth. In happy contrast to the exclusive beating of the Leninist drum—which mars so much Communist historiography of these events—Balcerak gives due credit to the exhilarating (if problematical) ideological and moral impact of Wilsonianism on East Central Europe during the closing stages of World War I and its immediate aftermath. Even more significant, he rejects the demonological interpretation of Allied wartime diplomatic hesitations over the issue of either supporting the independence movements or of trying, instead, to detach the Habsburg Empire from the German Empire through a separate, generous peace. Balcerak—using the published American diplomatic papers and memoirs—concedes implicitly that these hesitations were not the expression of a malevolent "bourgeois-imperialistic" craving to deny the peoples of East Central Europe their due and proper independence, but, rather, reflected an authentic dilemma of choosing among alternative wartime political strategies.

As is perhaps inevitable—or at least understandable—in a book of such extensive geographical and chronological scope, Balcerak relies heavily on published monographic and memoir literature, and only rarely do his footnotes indicate primary archival research. The world of scholarship, like that of commodity production, is, after all, also structured by a division of labor. It is more important for the selection of secondary sources to be appropriate and professional, as, indeed, is the case in this volume. Balcerak's utilization of the best scholarship of his compatriots and other East European scholars is complemented by his reliance, where necessary, on Western academic scholarship—the works of Fritz Fischer, Wandycz, Mamatey, Zöllner, Perman, Francis Deák, Haumant, Jelavich, Lederer, and so forth. He also cites serious publications of émigré scholars politically exiled or self-exiled from Eastern Europe, such as Kukiel and Pobóg-Malinowski. Moreover, Balcerak's citations from, and references to, the works of these émigrés are both detached and unpolemical.

In short, this book is a solid intellectual achievement. Particularly impressive —though not surprising, since it is the work of a diplomatic historian—is Balcerak's clear unraveling of the labyrinthine entanglements of the belligerents of World War I as they sought first to identify and then to apply their own policies to the problem of the nationalism of the peoples of East Central Europe. It is a pity that the author has not provided a bibliography, thereby forcing the reader to extrapolate the research base from the footnotes.

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