

Review

Sue Bridger & Frances Pine (eds), *Surviving Post-Socialism: Local Strategies and Regional Responses in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. London: Routledge, 1997; xvi + 224 pp., £45.00.

Bridger & Pine's Edited Volume provides an important counterpoint to much of the transition literature focusing on economic, legal and political macro-level reforms that often assumes that the reforms are moving the system toward idealised models. A primary theme of the book is that 'transition' is not a linear progression with a predetermined outcome.

Surviving Post-Socialism makes an important contribution by detailing how people have responded to the introduction of reforms and to new financial and social constraints. Collectively, the volume documents the diversity of responses to 'transition' policies by describing a variety of local strategies and adaptations along regional, class and gender lines.

The articles on land reform, privatisation, agricultural restructuring and rural adaptation contribute important challenges to conventional wisdom on economic reform. The article by Myriam Hivon, for example, provides a nuanced analysis of Russian villagers' experience with private ownership. Villagers' less than complete compliance with recent agrarian reforms cannot be reduced to a "Russian culture of envy" or "tradition of egalitarianism", as certain Western pro-reformers have concluded'. Although the unwritten rules of private ownership observed in the village varied from the expectations of agrarian reformers, villagers did have previous experience with such ownership (p. 48). Louise Perrotta, who studied land reform in Russia, likewise chips away at Western notions of reform. She concludes that 'there is no simple causal relationship between structural change and improved economic efficiency or standards of living' (p. 164).

Also astute is Marta Bruno's 'Playing the Co-Operation Game: Strategies Around International Aid in Post-Socialist Russia'. Bruno recounts how recipients took advantage of donors' lack of local knowledge by participating in trips abroad and in workshops, even when recipients knew that these had little value apart from providing personal opportunities. Recipients upheld the facade that donors' projects were worthwhile, while at the same time requesting more money that would be used not to benefit the wider public but themselves personally. As Bruno reports it, 'Russians have accepted the "given" of international aid and co-operation projects (whether wanted or not) and are weaving them into the complex system of patronage, social relations and survival strategies which are taking shape in post-socialist Russian reality' (p. 171).

Although there is good discussion of rural and marginal groups, I would like to have seen the book also include more economically and politically powerful groups such as the 'new rich' or the emerging middle class.

Still, as a whole, the book illustrates why anthropological analyses should inform the study of transition processes. *Surviving Post-Socialism* demonstrates why the voices of anthropologists should take their place alongside the more vocal disciplines of economics and political science, and be heard by policy makers.

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By Janine R. Wedel, The George Washington University