



King Zog and the Struggle for Stability in Albania. by Bernd Jurgen Fischer

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Slavic Review, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Summer, 1989), p. 330

Published by:

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2499152>

Accessed: 15/02/2015 01:25

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“Modernism as ‘Radical Traditionalism’ in Ion Barbu’s and Constantin Brancusi’s Artistic Views” is both the title and a summary of Ioana Em. Petrescu’s article. For Barbu, this tradition was that of classical Hellas and Platonic universals; for Brancusi, it was the archaic, primordial spirit reflected in the Romanian peasant. Petrescu elaborates in considerable and convincing detail the apparent paradox of the modernist traditionalist.

Finally, Michael Impey tackles the maledictory theme in the writings of Tudor Arghezi (e.g., “Triumful” and “Blesteme”). He reacts against the current emphasis on the folkloric (i.e., autochthonous) elements in Arghezi’s work and argues for a unified view of the poet as writer and polemicist. In the end, he argues, the poetic context must always be foremost.

Overall, as indicated above, these studies are sound and varied; they are real contributions to Romanian studies. The only cavil is that the annual does not appear annually.

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KING ZOG AND THE STRUGGLE FOR STABILITY IN ALBANIA. By *Bernd Jurgen Fischer*. Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 1984. ix, 353 pp. \$30.00, cloth.

Ahmed Bey Zogu was the dominant political personality in Albania during the 1920s and 1930s. During this time, he served as minister of war, minister of the interior, prime minister, and president; he reigned as King Zog from 1928 to 1939. Zog was not a popular monarch. He alienated the majority of his compatriots by his efforts to modernize the country, by the pervasive corruption and authoritarian policies that characterized his regime, and by his foreign policy that resulted in Albania’s increasing subservience to Italy. His reputation was further tarnished by his hasty flight from his homeland at the onset of the Italian invasion and occupation of his homeland in April 1939 and the subsequent refusal of the Allies to recognize his government in exile during World War II.

In his well-documented monograph, *King Zog and the Struggle for Stability in Albania*, Bernd Fischer has sought to provide a balanced, analytical account of Zog’s efforts to fashion a viable Albanian national state in the wake of the country’s experience of some 450 years of Ottoman domination and the disruptive effect of World War I. Fischer is sympathetic to the myriad of problems and challenges that confronted Zog in his quest to create a modern Albania. In his efforts at nation-building and state-building during the 1930s, Zog had to contend with such problems as social conservatism, sectionalism, the lack of a national education system, and a tradition of freedom from central authority. Owing to the poverty of the country, prospects for economic development were dim without external assistance. At the same time, the author is sensitive to the shortcomings of the Albanian ruler—his limited education, his penchant for intrigue, his vanity, and his poor judgment of subordinates—that undermined his resolve for reform.

Yet despite Zog’s flaws, Fischer concludes that the Albanian monarch by the end of his reign had succeeded in laying the foundation for a centralized state by disarming the northern tribesmen, curbing the blood feud and brigandage, establishing a national bureaucracy that was able to collect taxes and draft recruits for the army, and promulgating a legal system based on west European models. The author also maintains that as a consequence of Zog’s domestic policies and his opposition to escalating Italian demands on Albania in the late 1930s, the king helped foster a spirit of national pride in the country.

Fischer’s monography is an important contribution to Albanian historiography. It is not, however, the definitive study of the Zog era. That work will have to await the opening of the Albanian archives to non-Albanian scholars.

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