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Marius Turda (ed.), *The History of East-Central European Eugenics, 1900–1945. Sources and Commentaries* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 656, £85.50, hardback, ISBN: 9781472533562.

Until recently, the history of European eugenics has been framed primarily within the history of Western Europe or of race and racism, most notably during World War II. Overlooked and under-researched is the early development of the ‘wellborn science’ at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as its impact on East-Central European social politics and, conversely, the impact of East-Central European eugenicists on the science itself. For the most part, scholarship on these topics has been published in specialist articles or as book chapters, often in one of the scattered vernaculars of the region and thus inaccessible to scholars and researchers elsewhere.¹ *The History of East-Central European Eugenics, 1900–1945* bridges this major linguistic and historiographical gap, one that spans a number of disciplinary genres, including nationalism studies, intellectual history, anthropology, the history of medicine, and, more broadly, the history of science. As Turda states in the introduction, the book endeavours to account for ‘the multiplicity of scientific, cultural, linguistic, and political contexts that served the complex ideological transmission and application of eugenic ideas and practices in East-Central Europe’ (xii). The contributors to this book, alongside its selected texts, demonstrate convincingly how ‘eugenic experiences’ played key roles not only in the nation-specific biomedical and nationalist agendas (especially by the inter-war period) but also in the transnational and cross-cultural biopolitical, sociological, and even religious movements across this part of Europe.

Eugenics in East-Central Europe was a broadly conceived science, one that was understood and applied in a multiplicity of ways, as befitting the multiplicity of national, geographical, and social-scientific contexts that defined the region in the first half of the twentieth century. Self-identified eugenicists – many of whom were medical doctors, anthropologists, or other experts in sociological and biomedical fields – were, naturally, at the forefront of East-Central European eugenics. However, exponents of eugenic thought were not limited to the laboratories and lecture halls of prominent hospitals and universities. As this book highlights, eugenics was also understood, interpreted, and practiced further afield, by politicians, armies, churches, jurists, literati, women’s organisations, youth organisations, self-help movements, minorities, and many other institutions and communities that formed the tapestry of everyday life in East-Central Europe. From Jewish eugenicists in Poland to Catholic eugenicists in Romania, from schools of ‘Latin’ eugenics to ‘Slavic’ eugenics to Saxon eugenics, an array of national and international ‘eugenic subcultures’ facilitated the transmission and adaptation of eugenic knowledge from the Baltic to the Black Sea and from one end of the Danube to the other.

¹ Much of what is available in English has been written or co-ordinated by Marius Turda, the UK-based historian and editor of the present book. See Marius Turda, *Eugenics and Nation in Early 20th Century Hungary* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Christian Promitzer, Sevasti Trubeta, and Marius Turda (eds), *Health, Hygiene and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe* (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2010); and Marius Turda and Paul Weindling (eds), *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900–1940* (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2007).

The History of East-Central European Eugenics is divided into two parts. Part I: State-Oriented Eugenic Movements, provides representative texts produced in East-Central European states and territories, including Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia (states that were territorially and politically reconfigured throughout the period under investigation). Introducing these primary-source texts are overviews, critical analyses, and biographies written by contributors (mainly historians) specialising in the history of eugenics in a particular nation or subregion. Due attention is paid by these commentators and the book's editor to illustrate how eugenics and eugenicists informed the various state- and nation-making projects – and their attendant notions of 'national belonging' – in East-Central Europe at the start of the twentieth century and certainly after World War I. The book also explores how, in turn, eugenic programs helped shape multi-cultural and multi-ethnic contact zones such as Bohemia and Moravia, Transylvania, and Vojvodina, as well as the individual and collective identities articulated across these regions. Part II: Minority Eugenic Movements comprises but two chapters, one on Volksdeutsche eugenics in Vojvodina, another on Saxon eugenics in Transylvania. Though such movements are indeed smaller in size and scope, they nevertheless show how ideas, agendas, and programmes of the nationally dominant majority could be appropriated and developed in parallel by minority communities increasingly under threat of persecution, exclusion, and removal.

Understandably, contemporary historiographical and methodological approaches to modern European history have struggled to wean themselves from the use of nation and race as categories of analysis, searching instead for alternative routes to navigate the continent's complex past. Unfortunately, the wider story of eugenics – as a major topic in the history of science and biomedicine, one that spans the European continent – has suffered due to the science's association with the radical, far-right politics of Germany and its allies in the 1930s and 1940s. To be sure, *The History of East-Central European Eugenics* offers ample evidence of a science increasingly obsessed with racial hygiene and degeneration/regeneration. But the selected texts, as well as the mini biographies that introduce their authors, also offer insights into the ways in which many individuals – rich and poor, educated and uneducated, men and women, majority and minority alike – craved scientific understandings of their families, communities, and nations, and sought scientific remedies for their seemingly ill-fated pasts, presents, and futures.

Books of this scope and ambition invariably have limitations. As the editor readily acknowledges, feminist and socialist eugenic texts deserve a place but are absent. Also, the choice to showcase German minorities in the only two chapters on minority eugenics is rather conventional for such an inspired overall collection. Finally, the book could benefit from the inclusion of more images – such as the pictures, graphs, and charts that likely accompanied some of these texts – to give readers a visual sense of the originality of East-Central European eugenics. But these are minor detractions. *The History of East-Central European Eugenics* is a landmark on the subject. Providing an excellent balance of commentaries, translated primary sources, biographies, and bibliographies for further reading, it is, moreover, a model for collected books of this type in any field. Scholars and students in a range of academic disciplines, including those in the medical professions, will find this book not only a useful guide to the history of eugenics in East-Central Europe but also a window into the history of science and society in modern Europe.

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