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Šarić, Liljana, Gammelgaard, Karen and Rå Hauge, Kjetil (eds). *Transforming National Holidays: Identity Discourse in the West and South Slavic countries, 1985–2010*. Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society and Culture, 47. John Benjamins, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA, 2012. xiii + 314 pp. Illustrations. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Appendix. Index. €99.00: \$149.00.

THE common point of interest uniting the contributions to this volume is the transformation of collective identity within the context of broader societal transformation that took place in Central and Southeast Europe between 1989 and 2010. The work is focused on discursive constructions of collective identity in speeches delivered at and print media covering national holidays. The analyses invariably confirm that identity discourse used on the occasion of national holidays was subject to frequent and drastic changes and controversies, indicating the salience of national identity as a category of practice for elites during societal transformations.

Although the academic relevance of the articles is beyond dispute, the volume as a whole lacks an overarching framework. The authors apply a broad array of methodological approaches within discourse analysis. At times this complicates the analysis and the argument of the separate articles and the volume as a whole. The same applies to the introduction by Liljana Šarić and Karen Gammelgaard, which reads like a series of thoughts and lacks a concise definition of methodology and concern. Additionally, most of the contributions remain restricted to a descriptive account of the instability of interpretations of national holidays by press and politicians, and no overarching findings or further research questions are attached to the different case-studies.

Nevertheless, a number of shared findings are evident. A first group of essays focuses on the profoundly changing interpretations of national holidays in the region since the fall of Communism. Marko Soldić clarifies how in Macedonia, Ilinden has gained new relevance and meaning to make sense of the country's internal and international situation. Soldić also points out that the two major political parties appropriated Ilinden in support of their political agendas, establishing parallel interpretations and commemorations. Alexander Bielicki studies homilies delivered at the Slovak national pilgrimage on Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows Day to show that the languages of religion and nationhood were closely intertwined in the late Communist period and mid 2000s. However, the content of the intertwining changed drastically, contingent on the socio-political position of the Catholic Church in Slovakia. Gammelgaard studies presidential addresses delivered on 28 October by Czechoslovakia's last Communist president and the three presidents of the Czech Republic after 1993. She too concludes that the discursive construction of Czech national identity changed considerably depending on the political context.

A second, more in-depth and stimulating theme in the essays revolves around

competing discursive constructions of national holidays. Kjetil Rå Hauge describes the controversial re-introduction of the national holiday of 3 March in Bulgaria after the fall of Communism, presenting the major arguments pro and contra and suggestions for other national holidays. In Croatia, Šarić explains, there are controversies and public confusion over two new competing statehood days that are closely associated with political opponents. In the most rewarding contribution to the volume, Vjeran Pavlaković relates the change of the official Antifascist Struggle Day in Croatia to societal divisions between the state authorities who have embraced Croatia's multi-ethnic Partisan legacy, the Serbian minority, which seeks the affirmation of its role in Croatia's history and present, and far-right organizations that refute Croatia's Partisan legacy. Lastly, Svein Mønnesland outlines the controversies surrounding the search for a national holiday in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where political representatives of the national communities propose national holidays that express diametrically opposing interpretations of the state's historical identity.

A third group of essays shows that the power of national holidays lies in their ability to accommodate various meanings. Šarić points out that the Serbian Statehood Day unifies thematic foci related to the competing civic-democratic and national-liberation model for interpreting Serbian past, present and future. Additionally, Statehood Day fuses the secular statehood models with the religious worldview as it concurs with the Orthodox holiday of Candlemas. Elżbieta Hałas examines how Polish presidents after the fall of Communism have variably constructed Polish national identity on the National Holiday of 3 May. In this case too, the concurrence of the state holiday with the church Feast of Our Lady, Queen of Poland, has allowed the clergy to merge the language of the nation with that of religion.

The contribution of Titus Ensink and Christoph Sauer is the only one to focus on the international aspect of national holidays, scrutinizing Polish-German and Polish-Russian relations in the commemoration of the Warsaw Uprising. They argue convincingly that the Polish-German form of joint commemoration is an example of what Aleida Assman has termed dialogic remembering, transforming a traumatic history into an acknowledgement of guilt and a basis for peaceful coexistence. With regard to Polish-Russian relations, the commemorations express a clash between radically diverging historical interpretations, although Ensink and Sauer see some signs of a Russian willingness to acknowledge guilt at recent Polish commemorations of the Second World War.

Tatjana Radanović Felberg's and Knut Andreas Grimstad's articles are disappointing, as they remain merely descriptive and fail to link collective identity discourse to broader societal transformations. Radanović Felberg describes how Montenegrin historical identity was constructed in the discourse used by *Pobjeda*, a daily close to the government, and long-time president and prime minister Milo Đukovanović on Independence Day. Grimstad shows that

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the media coverage of Polish Independence Day in the daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* constructed a Polishness compatible with European values.

Although the quality of the articles varies, the case-studies presented in the volume will undoubtedly be valuable to students and scholars interested in the interaction between politics and culture in Central and Southeast Europe. The major strengths of the work as a whole are that it indicates the instability and dynamics of collective identity discourse during the transformation processes in the region and that it convincingly introduces national holidays as a fruitful source to analyse collective self-understanding. However, it lacks a clear overarching framework and will benefit from complementary, in-depth research that scrutinizes the relation between elite constructions of national holidays and the broader society, instead of the discursive constructions *an sich*.

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