era not only in itself but also as part of a longer historical trajectory—and even as a precursor to the social transformations that followed the regime change of 1990. This makes the book particularly useful for researchers of the post-socialist period.

The first chapter introduces the reader to the literature and rich sources of the history of everyday life in Hungary. It sets out the book's objectives, one of which is to interpret the everyday traces of the correlations between lifestyle and social transformation. Chapter 2 focuses on transformations in everyday life and consumption through changes in official income statistics, wages, and consumer prices, while taking into account the limitations of the statistics. The author notes that "both legal (second jobs, part-time jobs, household farming) as well as illegal (moonlighting [*fusizás*], services provided without a business license, shopping tourism, exchanging foreign currency, the black market) solutions for acquiring alternative sources of income continued to expand." Moreover, these "oddities of wealth accumulation did not escape public attention," which was also an essential form of public discourse on social inequalities and wealth accumulation (72).

Although the real value of incomes increased constantly during the socialist period, the state-regulated distribution system, particularly the redistribution of housing, led to very unequal income growth levels across various social groups. An essential finding of the subsection on poverty is that the social composition of those experiencing poverty was constantly changing: while in the 1970s, the majority of impoverished people came from rural households, by the late 1980s, urban employees made up the majority of the poor (67). Although Valuch bases his essential claims on household statistics that measure consumption, he points out a crucial methodological problem in that these statistics largely refer to those who were continuously employed and only rarely to those who worked sporadically.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the changes in consumption and housing relations in the socialist period, with particular emphasis given to informal forms of housing distribution, which played a crucial role in determining social inequalities in everyday practice. The share of food in household consumption fell until the change of the regime and then increased again, which was experienced by most social groups as a form of impoverishment. The increase in social inequalities is also revealed by a detailed analysis of expenditure on clothing and food (chapters 5 and 6), as social inequalities were most strongly expressed in the ownership of clothing as a status symbol.

Valuch convincingly demonstrates that high levels of inequality were present throughout the period, and that consumption, especially from the 1960s onward, became "one of the most important means and realms of social representation and distinction" (475). Accordingly, the book provides a more nuanced understanding of socialist-era consumption, housing, clothing, and dietary habits. It is essential reading not only for scholars of the socialist era but also for those who want to understand the experience of social transformation and regime change in Central and Eastern Europe after 1990.

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Waters, Leslie. Borders on the Move: Territorial Change and Ethnic Cleansing in the Hungarian–Slovak Borderlands, 1938–1948

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This work by Leslie Waters is a long-anticipated exploration of the Hungarian–Slovak borderlands, bringing the region to life in a compelling manner. Her engaging work delves deep into a place marked

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by the political aspirations of Hungarians and Slovaks, both of whom were close allies of Nazi Germany and competed throughout World War II for Adolf Hitler's attention. The book explores the history of state-sanctioned expulsions, transfers, and ethnic cleansing, offering a comprehensive examination of how borders, peoples, and ideologies interwove. Waters approaches this topic through a dual lens, considering both the broader historical developments and the individual responses to these developments on the ground.

Drawing from an array of academic disciplines, including borderland and nationalism studies, Holocaust studies, and the history of social welfare, Waters navigates the intricate web of this borderland's history with meticulous research and thoughtful analysis. Waters's research is extensive, drawing from nine archives across Slovakia, Hungary, and the United States. Her sources include administrative documentation from both national and local levels, newspaper coverage, as well as early and late witness testimonies.

The book is structured around five geopolitical turning points. These include the November 1938 First Vienna Arbitration, which resulted in the Hungarian seizure of southern Czechoslovakia and southern Carpathian Ruthenia; the collapse of interwar Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1939, with the establishment of the Slovak state and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the Hungarian occupation of Carpathian Ruthenia included; the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941; the occupation of Hungary in March 1944 and the subsequent destruction of the Jewish community in the borderlands; and the arrival of the Red Army to the region in early 1945.

Early in the book, one of the notable aspects that becomes apparent is the region's historical complexity, exemplified by the multitude of names used to describe it. From 1918 until 1938—and then again from 1945—the borderland region was referred to by Slovaks as southern Slovakia, while Hungarians called it the Upper Lands or Felvidék. These names were not mere labels, as in just six years people transitioned from living in Czechoslovakia to Slovakia, then to Hungary, and then back to Czechoslovakia. On an almost ongoing basis, borderland dwellers were compelled to adjust their loyalties to the new establishments that now governed their lives.

In the context of political strategies and broader geopolitical aspirations, whether they be those of Nazi Germany, Hungary, or Slovakia, Waters effectively demonstrates the personal agency of variously positioned individuals and groups that lived in this contested region. She reveals, for instance, how individuals navigated the shifting borders by relying on both established and new networks. The fluidity of these borders also gave rise to the agency of mid-level actors, particularly bureaucrats, who played pivotal roles in the lives of the borderland's inhabitants.

The Felvidék loyalty commissions are an intriguing example of this. Established by the Hungarian government, these loyalty commissions were intended for those who worked for the Czechoslovak state and wanted to preserve their position in the Hungarian civil service. Commissions scrutinized a person's behavior under the old system to determine who should retain the privilege of representing the Hungarian state. Deliberations and complaints from residents denied loyalty certificates were common, Waters shows, but most decisions remained intact. Still, the loyalty commissions and the discussion around their verdicts reveal the participative nature of how a nation expands.

The Hungarian strategy to make the region Hungarian (again) came with different implications for different groups. When it comes to the Slovaks, we learn that the Hungarian regime opted for suppression rather than outright expulsion. This is because their aspirations extended beyond the borderlands to the acquisition of Slovakia as a whole. As Waters demonstrates, southern Slovakia, or Felvidék, became "a testing ground for the Hungarian state's attempts to re-establish Hungarian ethnic dominance in the Carpathian Basin" (66–67). Whereas ethnic engineering fantasies could not be fully realized, politicians on both sides did succeed in pushing forward strategies that resulted in a near-total liquidation of Jewish life on the new border. For the Holocaust in Hungary in particular, what unfolded in the reannexed Felvidék had implications that extended beyond the region: it provided the state with "institutional knowledge necessary to expediently carry out Jewish concentrations and deportations, as well as geographic location for many of its apparatuses for facilitating genocide" (178).

Waters sometimes appears to convey multiple arguments simultaneously: how border changes cannot be separated from the Holocaust; how territorial politics intersected with social welfare; how social

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programmes developed; what strategies states took to dictate mobility and impose ethnic categories; or how individuals and communities reacted to national policies. Perhaps the book's narrative could have been more effectively streamlined for the reader. What is evident, however, is Waters's dedication to give the Hungarian–Slovak borderland the recognition it deserves in the extensive literature on Central and European borderlands. In *Borders on the Move*, she achieves this and more. Waters brilliantly showcases the intersection of territorial integration strategies with ethnic cleansing, making a point as to why nation-building cannot be understood without acknowledging the role of nation-cleansing in borderlands.

Borders on the Move is an indispensable addition to the study of Central European history. Leslie Waters paints a vivid picture of a region marred by shifting borders and the human stories that unfolded within them. This book should become a cornerstone for scholars interested in understanding the intricate and tumultuous history of the Hungarian–Slovak borderlands during World War II and its aftermath. I personally hope that it will attract more scholars to explore the region itself.

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Wheatley, Natasha. The Life and Death of States: Central Europe and the Transformation of Modern Sovereignty

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023. Pp. 424.

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The twentieth century was a century of new states. The League of Nations was comprised of 42 states at its founding in 1920; the United Nations was made up of 51 members in 1945. But by 1965, thanks to decolonization, its ranks had more than doubled to 117. The United Nations currently has 193 members. What defines the biography of these states—their birth, life, and death?

Historians have typically studied state-making since the eighteenth century in contexts where sovereignty and legitimacy were based on the idea of a national community. But in the nineteenth century, most people in the world did not live in what we would today call "nation-states," in which a single "nation" was matched to territory and state, and in which legitimacy depended on linguistic or national homogeneity. Rather, they lived in empires pieced together like puzzles of many constituent parts. These "composite" states or empires were created piecemeal over time through wars, occupations, treaties, and compromises, and with varying degrees of consent from the governed. They too needed a source of legitimacy.

In *The Life and Death of States,* Princeton historian Natasha Wheatley begins from the vantage point of the Habsburg Empire. The logic behind its existence was a puzzle that preoccupied generations of central European legal scholars and intellectuals. These theorists posed new questions about the temporal nature of statehood and sovereignty. For example, if sovereignty was lost, as with partitioned Poland, was it merely suspended? Did it still exist as a frozen possibility, an embryo of statehood that might be thawed out and implanted in the future? What "rights" or forms of autonomy did former statehood confer to these ghosts of states within states?

Wheatley's extraordinary work spans two centuries, bringing together international, intellectual, political, and legal history. She explores how theorists and politicians from the Habsburg Empire negotiated the creation and transformation of their own state. In this process, as she demonstrates, the

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