

Hubert Gabrisch (ed.), *Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1989, 214 pp.

This volume is a collection of papers on economic reforms and their implementation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, during 1981–1988. It is the first (1988) yearbook of the Vienna Institute for Comparative Economic Studies; papers for this volume were selected from those published by the Institute. Several of the authors have had careers in their respective East European countries, in academia, government, or economic administration. The book is divided into three parts: one theoretical, and two empirical.

Part one consists of two very different essays on the reform of socialist economies. The first, by Jiri Kosta, is a brief analysis of economic, political, social, and ideological factors that promote or inhibit reform. It includes an interesting section on the problems of transition, and is suitable for undergraduate courses that cover the reforms. The second essay, by Tadeusz Kowalik, is a lengthy discourse on the transition from a command to a “regulated market” economy, including analysis of why this is the most likely type of reform, and experience with such reform in Poland, Yugoslavia, and Hungary. The author relies heavily on the presentation and analysis of existing literature on the topics under discussion, but is selective rather than comprehensive in its use. Both authors emphasize the close relationship between economic and socio-political reform.

In the second part of the book, six papers trace the reform process in individual countries, up to 1987 or early 1988. The countries covered are the U.S.S.R., Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. Most of these papers provide lucid summaries of reform measures in their respective countries, and analysis of motivation for their introduction and efficacy of their implementation. There are cases, however, in which analysis is lacking, and English is awkward. In general, this part of the book provides useful background on experience with reform in various East European countries, including the interrelationship of economic with political and social factors. The papers invite comparisons of the specific features of the reforms in different countries, and analysis of common issues, such as Gorbachev’s influence on the timing and extent of reform in each case. But this is left to the reader.

The last part of the book examines two specific areas of reform: banking and foreign trade. The two papers in this part provides clear, but very brief outlines of reforms in the CMEA countries in these two sectors of the economy.

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