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**Political, Economic, and
Social Challenges**

Minton F. Goldman

*With a Foreword
by Karl W. Ryavec*

M. E. Sharpe

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Foreword

With this book Professor Minton Goldman has performed a timely and useful service for teachers, scholars, and students of Central and Eastern Europe. The wide-ranging changes recently set in motion in this historically rich region of over 100 million people between Western Europe and Russia constitute the latest significant example of decolonization, albeit of a special variety, of a large area of the world. Long under either foreign rule or forced outside influence, the twelve countries of *Mitteleuropa* (Middle Europe) are now embarked on the difficult course of potential five-sided or quintuple transformation on the new historical tide flowing from the failure of communism and the breakup of the Soviet Union. The transition now facing the area has five main aspects: attitudinal and cultural, societal, political, economic, and diplomatic. This is a high number of "transition challenges" to face at one time. The so-called developing countries or "Third World," on whose experience most of our scholarship on political and economic development is based, did not have to cope with the powerful and limiting after-effects of communism as they underwent development, nor did they have to re-establish private enterprise. Even the most traditional countries possess private enterprise, however basic in nature. Not so some ex-communist countries. As Goldman correctly says, "Communism had distorted everything it touched." (p. 51.) Accordingly, post-communist change is a very special and highly difficult, and problematic, challenge. Yet the challenge and its outcome are crucially important, not only for Central Europe itself, but also for Western Europe, Russia, and the United States as well as for international relations. Twice in this century world wars engulfed the region and brought the world's major powers into either deadly conflict or close and even desperate alliance. And today the attempt to stop the internecine war in Bosnia and prevent its escalation is but another indication of the continuing importance of Central Europe for world politics and the major powers.

The main focus of Goldman's welcome book is the progress and problems of post-communist development. It covers the several aspects of the transition in the region as a whole as well as in all the countries specifically. In the first two chapters the reasons for the collapse of communism and the commonalities of development are explained, and in the following nine chapters the extraordinary and interesting diversity of the various countries' rejection of communism and their progress to date in the post-communist transitions are examined country by country. All chapters are subdivided into sections and subsections, thereby allowing easy accessibility to particular topics. The book clearly sets forth the difficulties encountered in moving from communist monolithic authoritarianism to pluralistic democracy, in transforming command economies into free-market economies, in coping with threats to progress and stability such as continuing communist influence and predilections and outbreaks of divisive nationalism and ethnic discrimination and conflict. Problems such as dealing with polluted environments, anti-Semitism, and the difficult situations of women in the post-communist period are covered. In addition, the book is notable in dealing with the international aspects of the transitions. There is attention to the foreign policy of the individual states, especially in relation to one another but also toward Russia and the other newly independent states, Western Europe, and the United States.

This book benefits from the author's many years of experience in teaching and writing about the region's domestic and foreign policies and his extensive experience in the field, especially his numerous interviews with government officials and academics in most of the countries covered. The author has used a wide variety of recent good primary and secondary source materials in producing this up-to-date, clearly written, well organized, wide-ranging, and valuable examination of the first years of the post-communist changes in Central and Eastern Europe. As Goldman makes clear, transformation will not take place overnight, but he has given us an excellent guide to the issues, processes, and the initial steps of this great voyage of transition that is so necessary for the area and so important for Europe, the United States, Russia, and world politics itself.

Karl W. Ryavec
 Professor of Political Science
 University of Massachusetts at Amherst

POLITICS/HISTORY

"[An] up-to-date, clearly written, well-organized, wide-ranging, and valuable examination of the first years of the post-communist changes in Central and Eastern Europe."

—Karl. W. Ryavec, *University of Massachusetts at Amherst*

This comprehensive introduction to the nations of Central and Eastern Europe outlines these countries' shared and divergent experiences of communism and post-communist transition. Detailed chapters on each country of the region describe

- the particular features of the country's communist regime and its collapse—with focused attention to the absorption of East Germany, the breakup of Czechoslovakia, the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and the ensuing war in Bosnia;
- the country's response to four post-communist challenges: (1) creating democratic political institutions; (2) economic liberalization; (3) achieving social accord; (4) reorienting relations with the world, and especially with neighboring states;
- the social stresses and dislocations associated with system change: ethnic conflict; financial insecurity; job loss; disrupted family relations; environmental degradation.

Balanced, straightforward, and jargon-free, these accounts are supplemented with maps and economic, political, and demographic data to create an invaluable one-volume survey of the region.

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11. Yugoslavia—The Bosnian Civil War

Conclusion

Minton F. Goldman teaches political science at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, and is a past recipient of the university's Excellence in Teaching award. He is the author of the Global Studies volume *Russia, the Eurasian Republics, and Central/Eastern Europe*.

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