Rolling Transition and the Role of Intellectuals

Published by Central European University Press

Rolling Transition and the Role of Intellectuals: The Case of Hungary.
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“Bozóki provides a sweeping and compelling account of the transformation of Hungary from the late communist period through the democratic transition and the early post-transition period. It is a major contribution to the tradition of the critical sociology of intellectuals in the spirit of Karl Mannheim’s Ideology and Utopia and Konrad and Szelenyi’s The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power.”

Michael Bernhard, University of Florida

“The democratic transitions from communism to capitalism in east central Europe have shaped the contemporary world in an enduring but ambivalent manner. On the one hand bringing the end of communism in a peaceful and negotiated manner and largely avoiding bloodshed and upheaval that were wrought elsewhere was a seminal achievement. On the other hand it also created an opening for populist politics which criticized the “incompleteness” of the transition and sought to undermine democratic institutions. In Rolling Transition, András Bozóki offers the most comprehensive, lucid and penetrating account of this ambivalent transition to date, focusing on Hungary. He shows that the democratic transition was not a single event, but a protracted process lasting almost 20 years, and, paradoxically, partly initiated by the communist regime’s attempt to co-opt the intellectuals. This constant movement, replacement, splitting and reforming contributed to the peaceful nature of the transition, but also allowed it, in the final stage, to be captured by a new generation of professional populist politicians. This book is essential reading to anyone who is interested in understanding the origins of the contemporary political order in east central Europe, as well as to all those interested in how epochal historical change comes about.”

Gil Eyal, Columbia University

“The book is the prime example of systematic research leading to an original and inclusive synthesis. Strong points of the book include the empathic examination of the threats, traps and opportunities due to the institutionalization of free, loosely coordinated activities of dissident intellectuals.”

Attila Pók, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

“This marvelous book is a comprehensive and at times riveting account of the significant role intellectuals played in the Hungarian transition from state-socialism to democracy. Along the way it reconceptualizes the idea of transition and offers a novel and compelling model of regime change. No one who reads this book will view the collapse of Hungarian state socialism, or for that matter the possibilities elsewhere for democratic transitions, in quite the same way again.”

Jason Wittenberg, University of California, Berkeley

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
András Bozóki is Professor of Political Science at the Central European University in Vienna. His main fields of research include democratization, de-democratization, political regimes, ideologies, Central European politics, and the role of intellectuals.