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At His Crossroad: Reflections on the Work of France Bučar by Igor Kovač (ed.). Cham: Springer, 2019. 170 pp., \$131,81 (p/b), ISBN 9783319783307

There is a tendency in political science and political theory alike to give a few classics disproportionate scholarly attention, while other scholars remain understudied, if not ignored altogether. In the introduction to his edited book on France Bučar, Igor Kovač's rightly laments the visible hiatus between Bučar's intellectual stature and the dearth of either English translations of his writings or critical works assessing his thinking. Bučar was a concentration-camp survivor who fought against the Italian fascists and the Nazis; a dissident during the Cold War, who was expelled from the communist party in 1963 and ousted from academic positions in 1976; a legal and public-administration scholar who co-authored the Slovenian constitution; and as a politician, he was a prominent advocate of Slovenian independence, but also a proponent of European integration. *At his Crossroad: Reflections on the Work of France Bučar* is to date the first effort to introduce English readers to Bučar's ideas. The book brings novel insights into fields as diverse as economics, legal theory, European integration, and ethics. Moreover, it calls on political scientists and political theorists, which are often overly focused on Western thinkers, to broaden their perspective to Eastern Europe.

The book is divided into two parts. The first gathers four essays on different aspects of Bučar's thinking. The second is the first English translation of Bučar's 2006 book, *At a New Crossroads*. The first two essays read Bučar's work through the lenses of system theory. As Mark Hamilton readily admits, this has a rather weak textual basis in Bučar's texts, as he never specifically addressed system dynamics (p. 15). In the same vein, Peter Verovšek lays out what he dubs as Bučar's 'critical system theory', but his essay seems to me of value mostly because it is a mine of

insights into the intellectual and political climate in which Bučar's ideas were formed, including what he calls 'the Ljubljana School of Lacano-Marxism' and the writings of prominent Slovenian philosophers, such as Slavoj Žižek. Urška Velikonja points out that deregulatory measures in the US can be implemented by failing to enforce a piece of legislation, which allows to by-pass judicial review and avoid delays (p. 26). This she connects with Bučar's analysis of non-decisions, which he conceived of as a dysfunction in need of correction (p. 31). Matej Drev discusses a topic which is central to Bučar's analysis: the relation between profit seeking activities by the private sector and the provision of public goods by the government, and links it to recent debates on artificial intelligence.

Bučar's book deals with a gamut of topics which are impossible to give full justice here. I will briefly mention what I see as the most interesting arguments. The fast economic progress in formerly underdeveloped countries such as Slovenia has pitfalls, as increasing standards of living lead to an erosion of the spiritual values which were associated with traditional ways of life (p. 47; cf. pp. 66–67). Intolerance and xenophobia may help to preserve a country's identity, but may also lead to stagnation and to a country not being receptive to new ideas (pp. 84–86). The process of European integration may trigger xenophobic reactions, as small nations are likely to worry that the ensuing cultural amalgamation mostly reflects the cultures of larger and more powerful nations (p. 85). When environmental conditions pose severe constraints on a society, such that the breaking of an ethical rule by a member can have major negative repercussions on the society as a whole, ethical rules are taken very seriously. As the external environment becomes less of a threat, ethics begins to deteriorate. Thus, by freeing people from the threats of the natural environment, and making them more secure, technological progress also undermines ethics (p. 61; cf. p. 106). Market

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1 capitalism requires larger strata of the popula-
2 tion having access to education, but this can
3 threaten social hierarchies (p. 99).

4 Bučar's anticipated that European integra-
5 tion was likely to threaten national identities
6 and to stimulate xenophobic reactions. But
7 while many today read this process through
8 economic lenses (integration hurts the interests
9 of certain industries and workers, which rally
10 'round the flag to hide their parochial inter-
11 ests'), Bučar saw the process as having cultural
12 and power dimensions. Integration and techno-
13 logical developments undermine established
14 ethical rules and identities, particularly those
15 of small nations. And whatever new collective
16 identity may arise as a product of deeper inte-
17 gration, it is likely to reflect more the identity

of the larger and more powerful states, leaving
smaller states unsatisfied with the outcome.
Scholars of European affairs and economic
integration may benefit from reading Bučar's
writings carefully.

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