"Anna Mazurkiewicz, *Voice of the Silenced Peoples in the Global Cold War – The Assembly of Captive European Nations, 1954-1972*. Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2021."

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Within the East Central European context, Polish scholarship is at the forefront of diaspora research, and Anna Mazurkiewicz from the University of Gdańsk is one of the most prominent scholars within this discipline. Due to linguistic difficulties and various other reasons, researchers who study the diaspora from the nations of East Central Europe tend to focus exclusively or at least primarily on one particular ethnicity. *Voice of the Silenced Peoples in the Global Cold War* by Mazurkiewicz transcends this barrier. It is an important contribution to diaspora studies as it presents the activity of the Assembly of Captive European Nations (ACEN), which was a multinational organization in the United States that represented the shared ambitions of political exiles belonging to ethnicities from the aforementioned region during the Cold War period.

In her book, Mazurkiewicz makes the conscious decision to consistently use the term "East Central Europe" to refer to the area that is located geographically between Germany and Russia, and which became part of the Soviet bloc after Yalta and the end of World War II. She acknowledges that at the time when the ACEN was active, Western politicians, journalists, and diplomats usually referred to the region as "Eastern Europe" – but she points out that this was "an artificial and temporary creation," the existence of which had always been questioned by the exiles from the region.[1] The political exiles who were involved in the work of the ACEN always identified themselves as representatives of countries from *Central* Europe.

The ACEN was an umbrella organization of ten exile committees from nine East Central European countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania) that was financed and supported between 1954 and 1972 by the American government through the Free Europe Committee (FEC). The FEC divided people from East Central Europe living in the United States and the West (and their organizations) into three distinct categories. "Exiles" represented the democratic political elite of their original home countries; they retained their original citizenship and were deeply involved in the political struggle

1 Mazurkiewicz, 18.

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to liberate their homeland. "*Émigrés*" were socially well-integrated citizens of the host country, who became successful in their respective fields, but continued to be interested in the fate of their homelands. Finally, "ethnics" were ordinary citizens of the host country, first or second generation immigrants, who still retained their emotional and cultural links to their home countries.[2] ACEN was an organization of people belonging to the first group, of political leaders in exile, who used to be high status in their country of origin (politicians, diplomats, etc.). These people arrived in the United States in the second half of the 1940s, and wanted to continue their political activity, in the slowly diminishing hope that they would one day be able to return. After they realized that their stay in the United States was going to be longer, these exiles decided to prepare for the liberation of their homelands, as well as the period that would follow a potential liberation, and in addition, focused on current events, trying to keep the East Central European region on the agenda of international affairs.[3]

The first chapter presents the founding of the organization, its structure and its members, the structure and membership of the national delegations selected by national committees, the work conducted by them, and the ACEN's place in the institutional structure that was established in the United States during the Cold War. The ACEN was funded by, but formally not organized by the FEC. The FEC was an organization founded in 1949 by the CIA as a tool of political warfare, which did provide work for the émigrés and use them as symbols of resistance to communism,[4] but "did not represent Europe, it represented the U.S. policy."[5] In contrast, the ACEN "wished to be perceived as an alternative to the communist representation of East Central European nations in the free world,"[6] and provide information on the region by following the international situation, interpreting it from the perspective of the captive nations, and sharing this with the Western audiences. The members of the national delegations included former members of parliaments, cabinet members, even prime ministers, and religious leaders.

The relationship between the ACEN and the FEC was not always ideal, but when the ACEN tried to contact the administration without approval from the FEC, they were unsuccessful. ACEN served as a platform for the American government to keep in touch with the exiles, as well as provide them with financial support, but they were always "kept at an arm's length by the White House."[7] At the same

2 Ibid., 3-4.
3 Ibid., 22-23.
4 Ibid., 52.
5 Ibid., 26.
6 Ibid., 29.
7 Ibid., 44.

time, Mazurkiewicz argues that American money was "not the only unifying force" behind the organization, which kept on working even after they did not receive any more support from the FEC in 1972. In spite of the obvious tensions between the various nationalities, they shared a common goal: they were all interested in the restoration of the sovereignty of their home countries, and the withdrawal of the Soviet troops.[8] The ACEN did not get directly involved in American partisan politics, but maintained contact with friendly ethnic organizations, such as the Conference of Americans of Central and Eastern European Descent, and the American Friends of the Captive Nations, which did try to influence U.S policy towards their homelands.[9]

At the same time, the focus of the ACEN was not domestic, but international; they were hoping to call attention to the plight of East Central Europe, and to put pressure on the Soviets. This also coincided with the goals of the Americans, who wanted to use the organization as an instrument of "global political warfare.[10] The various areas where the ACEN was active within the global arena are discussed in the following chapters. The chapters are each organized around a central topic that was at the center of the activity of the ACEN, but because the focus of the organization was shifting over time, this closely corresponds to the chronological sequence of the events.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the activity of the ACEN in Western Europe, mostly in relation to the work of the Council of Europe. The exile leaders in the ACEN were supporters of European integration, hoping that one day their homelands, under freely elected governments, could also become members of this community. In the late 1950s, ACEN organized special sessions in Strasbourg, concurrent with the meetings of the Council of Europe. But parallel to the changing nature of the Cold War, with less emphasis on Europe in the global conflict and with the coming of *détente*, by the 1960s, the FEC wanted to reorient the activity of the ACEN to the third world, and decided to cut funding for this type of activity. Due to a number of disagreements, ACEN ceased to be a "politically useful instrument" for the Americans, who had used it to build support for anticommunism and the American presence in Europe by reminding the Western Europeans of the fate of the other half of the continent.[11]

8 Ibid., 51.
9 Ibid., 88.
10 Ibid., 99.
11 Ibid., 120.

The third and fourth chapter present how the ACEN reacted to the events in Poland and Hungary in 1956, and attempted to use them to promote its goals. Chapter 3 is about the rebellion in Poznań in the summer of 1956, and how the exiles used everything within their means to call attention to it, including reaching out to the United Nations. While Poland did not become a focus of discussion at the UN to the extent they hoped it would be,[12] the ACEN did manage to garner the attention of the media, which was an experience that served them well later that very same year, during the revolution in Hungary, discussed in Chapter 4. In this chapter, parallel to the activities of the organization related to the Hungarian revolution, Mazurkiewicz explores the relationship between the United Nations and the ACEN, which was sometimes referred to as the "Little U.N."[13] Although the response of the UN to the events in Hungary was seen as "belated and inadequate,"[14] the Hungarian question remained on the agenda of the UN for another six years. During this time, the ACEN continued to provide UN delegates with information about the situation in Hungary, including the six-volume *Hungary Under Soviet Rule*, which was the most important publication of the ACEN, prepared in cooperation with a number of Hungarian *émigré* organizations.

Chapter 5 contains an analysis of the impact of the lobbying activity of the ACEN in the U.S. Congress. Mazurkiewicz presents a thorough examination of the congressional records from the period, and with special attention to the Captive Nations Week, which was organized every year to raise awareness to the plight of the nations under communism. As the focus of the Cold War shifted away from Europe, so did the center of the activity of the ACEN. In Chapter 6, the relationship between the ACEN and the Asian Peoples Anti-Communist League (APACL) is discussed. A major difference between the two organizations was that the APACL enjoyed the support of their respective national governments (the Republic of China, South Korea, and South Vietnam),[15] thus the APACL was not exclusively reliant on the American government for funding. The ACEN and the APACL often cooperated on various issues, events related to anti-communism. Latin America was another area where the ACEN was active, usually seeking the help of East Central European ethnic communities that lived in these countries. Here the most important goal of the FEC was to dissuade Latin American intellectuals from communism, where East Central Europeans could offer great help, by sharing stories of what communism meant in practice.[16] Mazurkiewicz

12 Ibid., 146.
13 Ibid., 147.
14 Ibid.,171.
15 Ibid., 217.
16 Ibid., 242.

concludes that while these programs did manage to raise awareness to the fate of the East Central European region in Latin America, most Latin Americans did not relate this to their domestic situation.[17]

Chapter 8 is about the relationship between the ACEN and the FEC. Whereas initially, in the 1950s, the activity of the ACEN was seen as useful by the FEC, the situation changed as the focus of the Cold War changed. In 1963, the CIA already considered the ACEN to be useful "primarily in the West for it represents the past as far as Eastern Europe is concerned"[18] – to which past there was, most likely, no return. Meanwhile, the members of the ACEN were aging, and American policy towards the region was undergoing significant changes. With the coming of *détente,* this constant reminder about the fate of the East Central European nations was becoming increasingly uncomfortable. Eventually, by the mid-1960s, the goals of the FEC and the exiles started to diverge.[19] The FEC cut the budget of the ACEN, which was met with resistance by the exiles, who believed that the ACEN "should not become a satellite of the FEC."[20] Meanwhile, the ACEN itself was also plagued by internal conflicts, and in addition, information about the CIA funding the FEC was leaked to the public. Eventually, FEC support to the ACEN ended in 1972.

In Chapter 9, Mazurkiewicz contemplates the nature and significance of the ACEN. The organization meant different things for different people: it was a forum for exiled politicians, a lobby group that worked to influence Congress to pass legislation that would benefit the captive nations, and it was an instrument of political warfare for the CIA. It contributed to the preservation of national political tradition, provided a safe haven for the elites, set a precedent for regional cooperation, served as center for research and information on the region, and weakened the communist regimes by maintaining the opposition abroad.[21] In Chapter 10, Mazurkiewicz presents how the connection between the CIA and the FEC was revealed to the public, how it affected the ACEN, and how this eventually resulted in the end of financial support for the organization. At the same time, ACEN continued its operation, albeit on a very low budget and much lower intensity. Eventually, some of the ACEN members (like Béla Varga, the first speaker of the Hungarian Parliament in 1990), could even return to their homelands after the fall of communism.[22]

17 Ibid., 289.
18 Ibid., 294
19 Ibid., 303.
20 Ibid., 311.
21 Ibid., 328-329.
22 Ibid., 339-340.

In addition to the chapters presented above, the book contains a number of appendices that could be beneficial for future researchers. It includes the "ACEN Charter and Rules of Procedure,"[23] as well as a list of the ACEN delegates from 1954 to 1971 (indicating their national committee, affiliate organization, years active, and ACEN committee membership), a list of ACEN representations abroad, and a list of ACEN publications. It also contains an index of names, terms and institutions. *Voice of the Silenced Peoples in a Global Cold War* is extremely well researched, it is based on material from more than 30 archives from a number of different countries.

Overall, in *Voice of the Silenced Peoples in the Global Cold War* Mazurkiewicz sheds light on an important, but often ignored aspect of the Cold War – the role and influence of the exiles and *émigrés*, and highlights their agency. These people saw themselves as active participants of the Cold War struggle, and made considerable efforts to call attention to the plight of their homeland, provide the Western audience and decision-makers with information, and work towards liberation from communism. The book can be an important resource for historians of the Cold War, as well as researchers interested in the East Central European community in the United States, as a good example of multinational cooperation between people coming from this region.

23 Ibid., 343-357.