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Richard Ivan Jobs, *Backpack Ambassadors: How Youth Travel Integrated Europe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. 360 pp. Map, illustrations, bibliography, and index. \$105.00 U.S. (cl.). ISBN 978-0-226-43897-9; \$35.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-0-226-46203-5.

Review by Christopher S. Thompson, Ball State University.

The study of postwar European integration has long emphasized its economic and political dimensions. Generally adopting a “top-down” approach, this substantial and ever-expanding body of scholarship has tended to focus on the statesmen, government leaders, and “Eurocrats” who were instrumental in conceiving and implementing the gradual integration of the continent, as well as, more recently, the politicians, parties, and movements opposed to that process. In his original, extensively researched, and illuminating monograph, Richard Ivan Jobs offers a compelling, complementary, “bottom-up” counterpoint to this historiography by addressing the contributions made between 1945 and 1992 by various organizations and millions of young travelers to Europe’s social and cultural integration. In exploring the horizontal integration fostered by the transnational activities of these non-state actors, Jobs seeks to decenter the conventional account of the integrative process. His focus is the role played by a particularly mobile segment of European civil society, backpacking youth (a social group that first appeared massively after the war), including how their activity both impacted and was shaped by official policy. In his capable hands, the complex, multi-faceted nature of European integration is given its just due; so too is the important yet long-neglected part played in this process by millions of unofficial, mobile young “ambassadors.”

Much of the book focuses on developments in Western Europe, for it is in the democratic, more prosperous half of the divided continent that the conditions for vastly expanded, often spontaneous, and largely autonomous and unsupervised youth travel emerged and were sustained after the war. These included the baby boom, rapidly improving economies favoring the development of mass tourism and the growth of a middle class able to afford such activities, increasing secularization that undermined objections regarding the moral risks associated with unchaperoned young men and women moving freely from country to country, and the expansion of the mass media and education.

Jobs organizes his material in five lengthy chapters that are both chronologically and thematically driven. He first examines the involvement of border-crossing youth in the reconstruction efforts of their war-torn neighbors during the immediate postwar period. Beyond the practical benefits of such assistance, there was an even more important, longer-term imperative: the reconciliation of a continent that had experienced two horrifically destructive conflicts in the first half of the century. Bringing together European youth who had not fought in World War II, were not responsible for the tensions that had led to its outbreak, and had an immense stake in the continent’s future was seen as crucial to establishing good relations between former enemies, the foundation of an enduring peace. Jobs devotes considerable attention to the postwar expansion of the international youth hostel movement which was instrumental in providing lodgings for the increasing number of youth who spread out across Western Europe. Logically enough, the proponents of youth travel were particularly focused on young West

Germans, who, it was assumed, needed to be taught democracy in the wake of the Nazi dictatorship. This objective could be advanced through their contacts with Western European and American youth either in their own travels abroad or when the latter visited West Germany. A second motivation behind the promotion of youth travel in Western Europe was the desire to combat Communism by uniting the Western half of the continent in a shared democratic identity. Young Europeans were not simply the passive beneficiaries of official policies, they also took action to advance their interests. For example, the European Youth Campaign exercised pressure on national governments to facilitate border crossings and make rail travel less expensive for young travelers, efforts that ultimately helped lead to the creation of Eurail and Interrail youth passes.

Jobs further develops the theme of European postwar reconciliation in the second chapter, which focuses, again logically, on attempts to improve Franco-(West) German relations by encouraging the youth of both countries to visit each other, a desire also shaped by the emerging Cold War: a stable, democratic West Germany, tied to the West, would provide a crucial barrier to Soviet ambitions on the continent. Compared to the other occupation zones, the French zone in postwar Germany was characterized by an unusual degree of informal contact between German youth and youth from the occupying nation, part of a broader fraternization policy which, the French hoped, would help to de-Nazify German society. Jobs examines in some detail important events such as the European Youth Rally held in 1951 in West Germany at Lorelei and the creation in 1964 of the Franco-German Youth Office, which over the ensuing decades brought several million French and German youth together through the cultural exchange programs it facilitated or helped to fund. Such initiatives apparently bore fruit: the 1960s saw improving mutual perceptions among French and West German youth and, more broadly, increasing support in both countries for European integration.

In Chapter 3 Jobs shifts gears to consider the connections between youth travel and the youth movements of the 1960s. He argues that the tumultuous events of 1968 constituted a turning point for young travelers who now considered themselves members of a transnational social group rather than representatives of particular nations. Building on their experiences with their fellow “ambassadors,” they developed common values, interests, and priorities, and a shared vision of a continent in which they could travel freely, unobstructed by national borders. As they moved from protest site to protest site in Western Europe and even to Prague during its “Spring,” their “social encounters ... found a political expression” (p. 98); backpacking and staying in a hostel took on a new, politicized significance. Jobs devotes considerable attention to the role played by and symbolic importance attached to one figure in particular: Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the Franco-German youth leader, who personified both the revolutionary activism of 1968 and his generation’s vision of a more open, tolerant, borderless Europe. The mostly middle-class, young white protesters of the 1960s—mobilized by social and political concerns—were traveling around Western Europe at the same time as another very different group, which was also provoking considerable alarm: poor non-European immigrants seeking jobs and a better life. In May and June 1968, in France, the former—as part of their campaign against nationalism, borders, and xenophobia—expanded their protests to express solidarity for the plight of the latter. If primarily Europeanist, the political activism of the “backpack ambassadors” at times adopted a broader, internationalist perspective.

Jobs turns next to the period from the mid sixties to the early 1980s when “youth travel in Europe was transformed into the iconic cultural form of backpacking that we understand it to be today” (p. 140). It was at this time that backpacking came to reflect the transnational youth culture emerging in the West. Jobs examines the role played in this development by guidebooks, which helped inform youth about where, why, and how to travel. He then considers the development of the hippie counterculture and the moral threats (notably drug use and sexual promiscuity) it was believed to pose to society, especially in those places—such as Amsterdam, London, Copenhagen, and West Berlin—where young “drifters” and “beatniks” congregated in large numbers, often taking over public spaces such as parks. During this period, hitchhiking became a major vector for youth mobility, the Interrail pass was established (in

1972), and hostels improved their comfort levels and relaxed their rules. Young Americans began arriving in unprecedented numbers, many of them armed with Eurail passes (created in 1959), some to avoid their draft boards. Such travel emerged during this period as a rite of passage for youth, especially for young men who were in the majority (whereas female students dominated study-abroad programs).

In his final chapter, Jobs addresses the subversive impact of youth travel on authoritarian regimes in both the Soviet bloc and Western Europe. He focuses on the music-driven Western youth culture, which “provided a means of age cohort identification across geopolitical, linguistic, and cultural boundaries,” offering Eastern European youth and those living in restrictive Western European regimes such as Portugal and Spain “a way to participate in the mainstream, to be part of the larger world beyond” (p. 199). This music scene was transnational not only thanks to the availability of (often black-market) records in places where they were officially banned, but also as a result of radio transmissions and music festivals that drew huge international crowds of youth in places—notably Berlin—where their presence and mobility challenged the presumed inviolability of Europe’s Iron Curtain. Meanwhile, Eastern European youth took advantage of the greater mobility within the Eastern bloc allowed during certain periods by the authorities to acquire western albums in the more permissive countries (such as Hungary); in the specific case of East German youth, during the final decade of the Cold War they were actually permitted to visit West Germany, notably through exchange programs, where they were exposed directly to Western youth culture.

Throughout his examination of youth travel in postwar Europe, Jobs balances the substantial statistical data he provides and the histories of the many organizations, initiatives, and events he examines with the voices of dozens of young travelers. His frequent use of anecdotes and quotes drawn from first-person accounts of the experiences of these “backpack ambassadors” enriches his “bottom-up” approach and reflects the diverse sources upon which he relied: published and unpublished memoirs, journals, and diaries, as well as newspapers, magazines, reports, and interviews. Jobs consulted numerous libraries and archives in Western Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, and the Netherlands), as well as in the United States and Singapore. Only such extensive research could have yielded the comprehensive and nuanced account he offers of the impact of postwar youth travel on European integration. The book is further enhanced by numerous photographs along with political cartoons and posters, which provide useful illustrations of many of the developments, events, and cultural practices Jobs examines.

One of the advantages of aging for historians is that their experiences increasingly become part of “history,” including, if they work on the most recent past, the subject matter of the courses they teach. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, I was, quite unwittingly, one of Jobs’s “backpack ambassadors,” (as was Jobs himself, some years later). Armed with an Interrail pass and an International Youth Hostel Association membership card, I shared lodgings, meals, and conversations with the many Western European peers I met in the course of my travels. Whether or not one was fortunate enough to have had some of the experiences Jobs recounts in his study, we are indebted to him for placing them in their broader context and exploring their historical significance. In eschewing the longstanding scholarly emphasis on government- and elites-driven political and economic integration, Jobs makes an important contribution to the literature on European integration. Indeed, his examination of social and cultural developments initiated and experienced by non-state actors addresses what one might term a historiographical “democratic deficit.”

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