

30 LAT GOSPODARKI POLSKI LUDOWEJ. Edited by *Kazimierz Secomski*.
Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, 1974. 384 pp. Maps. 60 zł.

The main purpose of this book is to impress upon the reader the major achievements of a Communist planned economy during the first thirty years of People's Poland. The volume, consequently, suffers from all the obvious shortcomings of a typical "jubilee publication." Moreover, among the authors of the eleven substantive contributions, which make up the volume, are not less than seven ministers or former ministers of the Polish government and high functionaries of the party's economic apparatus, while the introduction was written by Poland's former chief planner. Hence, when reading this book, one has constantly to bear in mind that it was written by top officials of the party that has been in power during the period under review, and who, at least for the last ten years, have had a major say both in formulating Poland's economic policies and in carrying them into effect.

This being the case, one can hardly expect the authors to approach their subject matter objectively. In effect, they are evaluating the results of their own policies and, in at least five cases, their own administrative implementation of the overall economic tasks. This, however, does not change the fact that some of the authors—for example, Professors Szczepański, Pajestka, and Rajkiewicz—are acknowledged authorities in their chosen fields, and others are bona fide economists in good repute. Thus, in some of the contributions, one can see a constant tug of war between the propagandistic and laudatory tendencies of the publication as a whole and the desire of individual authors to strive for a more objective assessment and for higher scientific standards. Unfortunately, the utilitarian exigencies of a jubilee publication (and those of *raison d'état*) almost always prevail in this unequal struggle.

The result is a book which does give its reader a lot of information about main trends of development of the Polish economy in the period 1944–74 and about the economic policies pursued by the party in power, but which is almost devoid of any critical approach. Policy conflicts (in the field of industrialization, for example) and errors in implementation are acknowledged, but invariably the reader is told (though not in such a crude manner) that the collective wisdom of the party has prevailed and that the optimum solution for a given problem was ultimately chosen. This laudatory narrative is liberally sprinkled with a selection of statistics that frequently leaves much to be desired.

The book is, therefore, a very useful handbook for a provincial party propagandist, but it is hardly suitable reading matter for the general reader. The bulk of the 30,000 copies printed will undoubtedly land on library shelves, and remain there, side by side with other jubilee publications and selected speeches of party leaders. In a way, this is a pity. Apart from a lot of pure propaganda and political apology, this book contains some very valuable information for any scholar in a position to sort out the wheat from the chaff. It would, of course, be tedious work, but it might be worthwhile. Furthermore, it is definitely a game for the initiated, for people who have sufficient groundwork knowledge about the postwar development of Polish economy and enough scientific patience to fish for the tidbits of meaningful information in the sea of one-sided narrative and political self-justification.

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