

GOMUŁKA: HIS POLAND, HIS COMMUNISM. By *Nicholas Bethell*. New York, Chicago, and San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969. 296 pp. \$5.95.

Nicholas Bethell, translator and critic of Solzhenitsyn's works, has written an illuminating and very readable political biography of one of the most durable leaders in Poland's history. He has concentrated on Gomułka's wartime and postwar activities and on his re-emergence during the Polish "October" of 1956. Gomułka's very early socialization, why and how he came to identify with communism, are, according to the author, too sparsely documented to permit thorough investigation, and the years of leadership (1956-67) are given only one chapter; at that time "his life became guided by circumstance and therefore biographically less interesting" (p. 233). The last chapter, entitled "His Darkest Year," describes the events of 1968 and concludes that "he [Gomułka] is a victim of east European politics . . ." (p. 272). The loss of power that Lord Bethell describes has now culminated in Gomułka's fall from power. The middle years, between intellectual formation and national leadership, are carefully and thoroughly researched, and particularly valuable for the reader.

Still, the picture is, as Lord Bethell acknowledges, unclear. After the heroic October came the decade which witnessed the gradual whittling away of the 1956 concessions, the initiation, in 1968, of purges of intellectuals, many of whom were Jews, and participation in the invasion of Czechoslovakia. On balance, Gomułka emerges as a paternalistic patriot: he leads "the Polish people as gently as possible (but by force if necessary) along the road he is convinced it is in their best interest to follow" (p. 256). Such an analysis cannot explain or predict political behavior, and it tends to ignore the parameters of the political arena. The biographer of a Communist leader finds very little information of a personal sort in the public domain; some compensatory emphasis on the dynamics of elite recruitment and circulation seems, to this reviewer, to be necessary. Otherwise, it is difficult to account for what Bethell sees as Gomułka's loss of power as leader and the rise to prominence of Moczar and other competitors. Similarly, the constraints produced by severe economic problems have not been adequately treated; the intimate relationship between these problems and revolution in the Czech case should be instructive, particularly in the light of recent events. Poland's tentative, conservative reforms will surely provide a central issue for the party leadership for years to come.

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BIBLIOTHECA CORVINIANA: THE LIBRARY OF KING MATTHIAS CORVINUS OF HUNGARY. Introductory essays and commentaries by *Csaba Csapodi* and *Klára Csapodi-Gárdonyi*. Translated by *Zsuzsanna Horn*. Translation revised by *Alick West*. Published with the assistance of UNESCO. New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1969. 398 pp. 143 plates. \$55.00.

"There were so many ancient Greek and Hebrew books, which Matthias had collected at great expense and sacrifice from Constantinople . . . and other Greek cities, and such quantities of ancient and modern Latin manuscripts, as nowhere

else in the world." Thus did Alexander Brassicanus, the Viennese humanist, describe the Bibliotheca Corvina, the library of Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary (1458–90). So great was the reputation of this collection that Lorenzo de' Medici planned to model his own library upon the Corvina. And when Matthias died, Pietro de' Medici reportedly exclaimed, "Manuscripts will now be cheaper." At the very time that printing began to spread through Europe, the hand-wrought codex enjoyed its last and greatest age. On it was lavished all the art of the calligrapher, the miniaturist, the binder, all the philological learning of the scholar, and much of the wealth of the mighty. In the case of Matthias, for instance, so great was the quantity of purchases that the Magyar nobility grumbled at expenses which, they claimed, emptied the country's treasury.

The systematic building of the Corvina collection began around 1467. An avid reader himself, Matthias began by collecting relatively plain, undecorated books, purchased primarily for the sake of the text itself. After his marriage to Beatrice of Aragon in 1476 the already strong Italian influence on court life at Buda came to enjoy a virtual monopoly. Florentine workshops received commissions for highly ornamented codices, and the king's purchasing agents were flooded with orders. The magnitude of Matthias's operations may be gauged from the fact that in the year of his death Florentine workshops were hard at work on 150 codices that had been ordered for the king.

How large, then, was this library, what was the nature of its content, and what became of the collection? Since neither a catalogue nor the court's expense account survives, the answer to the first two questions must be conjectural. Csapodi, one of the two contributors to the work under review, rejects Brassicanus's exaggerated assessment of the size of the collection and places the total number of volumes at the realistic figure of 2,000 to 2,500. (Brassicanus, writing in 1525, seems to have overlooked the Vatican Library, which, at the time, contained 4,070 volumes.) With respect to content, two-thirds of the Corvina's holdings were in Greek and Latin authors and the Church Fathers; the remaining third consisted of Renaissance works on medicine, astrology, philosophy, architecture, and literature, with a sprinkling of medieval theology and a few incunabula. (This analytic estimate is arrived at by extrapolating from the 650 known references to items belonging to the Corvina.) But the answer to the third question is all too certain. Only about 170 volumes survive, of which nearly 150 were preserved in the West. The remainder of the collection, with the exception of 22 codices, disappeared after the Turkish occupation of Buda in 1541.

The present work, published by Praeger with the assistance of UNESCO, and printed in Hungary, is a magnificent tribute to its subject. It brings under one cover the important scholarship on all known Corvinian materials throughout the world. Csapodi's opening chapter on the history of the library, though intended for the general reader, presents some compelling reassessments of previous scholarship, for example, the studies of József Fitz and Edith Hoffmann in *Mátyás király emlékkönyv* (1940). The English translation, by the way, is excellent. Csapodi's second chapter is for the specialist. It summarizes the content of each surviving work, traces the history of its ownership, describes its physical characteristics, and identifies the artist or workshop that produced it; a bibliography follows each item. The pride of place must go, of course, to the 143 magnificent color plates, reproduced from codices found in thirteen different countries, with heavy emphasis on items outside present-day Hungary. Klára Csapodi-Gárdonyi's description of each plate on its facing page is extremely helpful, particularly to those unfamiliar

with Renaissance illumination and iconography. An index and summary bibliography at the end of the volume facilitate the work of the reader. Since most of the material presented is new—Ilona Berkovits's recent study (1964) deals only with items preserved in Hungary—the work constitutes an authoritative and indispensable source for anyone dealing with the spread of fifteenth-century Italian humanism into East Central Europe.

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MAGYARORSZÁG KÜLPOLITIKÁJA, 1919–1945. By *Gyula Juhász*. Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, n.d. 374 pp. 40 Ft.

I trust that this new study by Juhász will sooner or later be translated into English; it should definitely be made available to the general English-reading public, both because of its scope and because of the competence displayed by the author. It confirms the impression created by Juhász's earlier study on the foreign policy of the Teleki government (*A Teleki kormány külpolitikája, 1939–1941*) that he is one of the soundest interpreters of contemporary Hungarian history.

While the book includes introductory observations on the armistice negotiations in 1918, the Károlyi government, and the Republic of Councils, as well as a brief mention of the formation of the Debrecen government in December 1944, its topic is Hungarian foreign policy during the Horthy era. This is not to say that Horthy is the main protagonist. In fact, the regent is infrequently mentioned, for while the name may be a convenient tag on the era, he did not dominate or attempt to dominate the formulation and conduct of Hungarian foreign policy.

The study confirms the notion that in this period Hungary played a role (albeit often negative) quite out of proportion to the country's size, population, or economic and military significance. The main purpose of the Little Entente in the 1920s was defense against Hungarian revisionism, a clear case of overkill. In the 1930s Italy and Germany seemed to vie for Hungarian friendship; the Second Vienna Award (August 1940) was an indication that the Axis partners courted Hungarian friendship even at the risk of losing that of Rumania, on whose oil the Italian and German war machines depended. Ribbentrop even promised, in January 1939, that henceforth Hungary would always be mentioned first among the little countries in Hitler's speeches (p. 193). Perhaps the Hungarian government should have rejected such flattery; but Juhász unequivocally condemns the territorial provisions of the Treaty of Trianon and points out that much of the reactionary and chauvinistic nature of Hungarian policies between the wars can be explained in terms of the shortcomings of that treaty (pp. 65–69).

Since I am in the process of completing a study of German-Hungarian relations during the Second World War, the last two sections of Juhász's study (dealing with the period 1939 to 1944) interested me most. Presumably Juhász is a Marxist historian, whereas I have not received training in Marxist history. It does not seem to make much difference. Juhász abstains from using worn-out epithets such as fascist, feudal, or "semifeudal" in his characterization of the Horthy regime, contenting himself with the term "counterrevolutionary"—which it undoubtedly was. Nor is it merely a matter of style, but also of interpretation: basically I must agree with Juhász that Hungary was subjected to an increasing amount of economic, diplomatic, and eventually military pressure on the part of