

DIE VORKÄMPFER DER NATIONALEN BEWEGUNG BEI DEN KLEINEN VÖLKERN EUROPAS: EINE VERGLEICHENDE ANALYSE ZUR GESELLSCHAFTLICHEN SCHICHTUNG DER PATRIOTISCHEN GRUPPEN. By *Miroslav Hroch*. Acta Universitatis Carolinae Philosophica et Historica Monographia 24. Prague: Universita Karlova, 1968. 171 pp. Kčs. 20, paper.

Although this monograph is short (seventy-six pages) on the development of the case-study peoples and long (eighty-eight pages) on Teutonic *Strukturanalyse* and Marxian *soziale Zusammensetzung*, it is nevertheless an important and difficult comparative study and a contribution to a neglected aspect of an otherwise well-known subject, and will be studied and appreciated by students of national rebirths.

An extension of the author's previous work on the social composition of Czech national institutions (1957), the book has as its main hypothesis that the origin of modern national rebirths cannot be explained simply as the result of patriotic agitation. The work is basically an analysis of the social stratification, territorial distribution, occupation of parents, and early environment of the national leaders of seven small peoples of differing historical development.

The author, eliminating Southern Europe and the Balkans, concentrates on Central, Eastern, and Western Europe. Central Europe is represented by the Czechs, who are seen as a type possessing an old culture and a national tongue, and having experienced previous independence. (The Slovaks are treated briefly as a study in contrast.) The Lithuanians, Estonians, Finns, and Norwegians were chosen to characterize Eastern Europe. The Lithuanians represent a type having an independent history and a tradition of political autonomy, but lacking cultural development in their national tongue. The Estonians were selected as having no independent cultural or political tradition of their own. The Finns are depicted as a type having no strong native cultural or linguistic tradition, but having experienced political autonomy. The Norwegians are presented as an example of a people whose national rebirth ran first along political lines and later along cultural ones. Finally (representing the West), the Flemish are studied as an example of the unsuccessful efforts of the patriots in a country that is highly developed politically and economically to prevent a multilingual state from arising.

The author's many rather complex conclusions are neither unanticipated nor conclusive, but really argue for further research. There are over 250 footnotes, maps, and tables, but no bibliography or index.

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MAGYAR HUMANISTÁK LEVELEI: XV-XVI. SZÁZAD. Edited by *Sándor V. Kovács*. Nemzeti Könyvtár. Művelődéstörténet. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1971. 712 pp. 53 Ft.

The writing of letters in an individual style was one of the novelties introduced by the Renaissance. It is tempting to compare the documents in this book with the letters from the eleventh through fourteenth centuries published in an earlier volume of the same National Library series: L. Makkai and L. Mezey, eds., *Árpád-kori és Anjou-kori levelek* (1960). The often unknown authors of the medieval writings—

many of which were taken from formularies and *artes dictandi*—were basically interested in writing down precisely and in a legally valid form their requests, complaints, or reports. Here, however, the variation of style and the very personal touch even in the choice of profusely interspersed classical citations are obviously the prized qualities. The selection covers a period of a century: the somewhat Biblical style of the earliest letters is contrasted with the classical-mythological style of the ones from King Matthias's court and with the businesslike, matter-of-fact reports of later Habsburg courtiers.

Most of the 345 letters were written by famous humanists. The volume opens with the full text of the *Epistolae* of Johannes Vitéz de Zredna, including—wisely—most of the notes of its contemporary (1451) editor, Paulus Ivanich (pp. 53–200, nos. 1–82). Janus Pannonius and Stephan Brodarich are represented with about thirty letters each. There are almost eighty selections from the collection of Petrus Váradi and fifty from that of Miklós Oláh (Olahus). The editors found it appropriate to print some thirty letters “by King Matthias.” This is justifiable, because they were penned by various humanist chancellors and notaries, only their attribution is debatable. The remaining letters (about forty) were written by over a dozen minor Hungarian literary and political figures between about 1440 and 1540. The majority of the documents in this volume appear for the first time in Hungarian.

The linguistic job was done by the translators (Iván Boronkai et al.) with great skill and good taste. The tone of the letters is well captured in colorful and often forceful language, rich in imagery, and entertaining. Unwanted archaism is avoided. The text is rendered in modern yet vigorous Hungarian, without losing the flavor of humanist Latin circumlocutions. The notes and index are extensive and useful.

The letters reveal particularly one aspect of Hungarian humanism: that its social basis was, if not exclusively aristocratic, at least courtly and noble. Some of the authors came, of course, from humble estate and excelled through learning. But even the poets and writers treat of matters of state, political and ecclesiastical prebends, embassies, and the like. Correspondence regarding books, or on aesthetic or philosophical questions, and letters by and to artists are rare, other than those of Janus Pannonius. This may reflect the fact that the “makers” of humanist culture in Hungary were mainly foreigners, while their sponsors, readers, and protectors were native. If more space had been allotted to minor authors, the impression might have been different. One's appetite is whetted by the short biographies preceding those spare selections from their correspondence. Perhaps the attention given to the famous humanists—mostly high dignitaries of the realm—could have been limited in favor of their lesser-known contemporaries.

The volume contains about a dozen letters not *by* but *to* Hungarian humanists: all of them by Erasmus. True, Olahus also included letters he received in his *Epistolarium*, though not only the ones by a famous author. But in this context they seem something like name dropping. Why is it still deemed necessary in Budapest to prove that Hungarian *literati* around 1500 A.D. were “in” enough to be addressed by the great man from Rotterdam? This splendid collection of letters would in itself dispense any doubts.

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