

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