

- POLAND: THE LAND OF COPERNICUS. Edited by *Bogdan Suchodolski*. Translated by *Bogusław Buczkowski* et al. Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1973. 231 pp. 60 zł.
- NICHOLAS COPERNICUS: THE COUNTRY AND TIMES. By *Maria Bogucka*. Translated by *Leon Sz wajcer*. Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1973. Illus. 201 pp. 40 zł.
- MIKOŁAJ KOPERNIK: ŚRODOWISKO SPOŁECZNE I SAMOTNOŚĆ. By *Karol Górski*. Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1973. Illus. 230 pp. 40 zł., paper.
- NICOLAUS COPERNICUS AND HIS EPOCH. By *Jan Adamczewski*. In cooperation with *Edward J. Piszek*. Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.: Copernicus Society of America, 1974. 163 pp. \$7.95. Distributed by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

None of these four books makes any pretense of being an original scholarly contribution, even though each is founded upon impressive scholarly bases. All are works of sophisticated popularization which provide for the general reader reliable treatments of the life and times of Nicholas Copernicus. Taken together, they represent the best of the considerable literature of this genre on Copernicus and on the Poland of his times which appeared during the *rok Kopernika* of 1973.

Bogdan Suchodolski has edited a book that has very little to say directly about the astronomer and his achievements. Instead his aim has been to sketch the Copernican context, on the implicit assumption that this "environmental" method will explain something about what Copernicus did and why he did it. Although this approach has clear limitations, it is nevertheless useful in clarifying and defining the conditions of a period. On the whole the eleven essays in this book are careful not to claim to be comprehensive. All are well written (though not equally well translated), but the essays by Marian Biskup on Royal Prussia, Andrzej Wyczański on the Polish social strata, and Paweł Rybicki on science in Poland during the Renaissance are particularly successful. A good index and sixty-five intelligently chosen black and white illustrations enhance this book.

In her attempt to present "not a biography of the great astronomer . . . , but the times and the country in which he lived and worked" (p. 5), Maria Bogucka uses the same environmental approach. The greatest strengths of her attractive book, which is graced by over seventy illustrations, lie in its more unified narrative and its sureness in dealing with affairs of north Poland, the area where Copernicus spent most of his life. Here the expertise of the single author, whose scholarly work has focused on the economic history of this region in the early modern period, is seen to its best advantage. In addition, for those interested specifically in Copernicus, it should be noted that Professor Bogucka skillfully weaves the details of his life into her general narrative.

The volume by Karol Górski is more specifically devoted to the details of Copernicus's biography. It is also more overtly scholarly in character than the others under discussion here. Because of this it may appeal less to the general reader. After brief geographical, historical, and biographical introductions, Professor Górski devotes the remaining three-fifths of the book to Copernicus's life "in remotissimo angulo terrae," as the astronomer called his home in the dedicatory letter of *De revolutionibus*. It is in this section of the book that Górski grapples with his central question of the extent to which the genius of Copernicus was

shaped by the conditions of his society. Górski appears to argue convincingly that the environment was decisive, but in reality he sidesteps the issue by virtually ignoring the detailed mathematical and astronomical revolution which Copernicus wrought. Nevertheless, this book provides some very useful insights into specific aspects of Copernicus's outlook and activity, particularly in connection with the Knights of the Teutonic Order. In addition to fifty-one black and white illustrations, a good critical bibliography, and a useful chronological summary of Copernicus's life, Górski also provides an excellent short note on portraits of the astronomer.

The final book in this Copernican quartet is the handsomely illustrated and beautifully written popular biography by Jan Adamczewski. Printed in Poland, but given wide distribution in this country through Charles Scribner's Sons by the Copernicus Society of America and Mrs. Paul's Kitchens, Inc., this book provides a judicious, sensitive evocation of the time, the land, and the man. There are neither notes nor bibliography in this work, but its learning is reflected in the skillful quotation from both the sources and the best modern authorities and in the careful, cautious judgments on such controversial issues as the question of Copernicus's ordination, his language, and the sources of inspiration for his scientific work. The text is complemented beautifully by scores of black and white photographs and illustrations (many of them not widely used in other illustrated works) and by eight color plates. The only weakness of this book is the surprisingly limited attention given to Copernicus's astronomy and the technical side of his accomplishments.

This last observation is also characteristic of many of the popular works on Copernicus which have recently appeared, including those under review here. One must search for an adequate scientific introduction to Copernicus in such specialized treatises as the commentary by Professor Noel Swerdlow on the *Commentariolus* (in *Symposium on Copernicus*, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1974), or in the scholarly publications appearing in the Polish series *Studia Copernicana*. Thus the quinquacentennial celebration of the astronomer's birth seems to have brought with it for the general public a richer and deeper understanding of Copernicus's country and his times, but not necessarily of his work.

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SOZIALVERFASSUNG UND POLITISCHE REFORM: POLEN IM  
VORREVOLUTIONÄREN ZEITALTER. By Jörg K. Hoensch. Beiträge  
zur Geschichte Osteuropas, no. 9. Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1973.  
xv, 500 pp. DM 72.

The author of this important study has made a name for himself as a diplomatic historian of East Central Europe. The current work represents a chronological shift from the twentieth to the eighteenth century and a geographic shift from Czechoslovakia to Poland. The shift has been very successful.

It is not accidental that Hoensch chose as the motto of his book a quotation from R. R. Palmer's *Age of the Democratic Revolution* concerning the partitions of Poland. In fact Hoensch responds to the question raised by Palmer about the difficulty of forming an "accurate impression of the social changes or emerging interests that motivated the new ideas" in mid and late eighteenth-century Poland. Relying on his own archival research and putting to good use recent Polish con-