

POLAND. By *Václav L. Beneš* and *Norman J. G. Pounds*. New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1970. 416 pp. \$10.00.

It is not easy to condense all the important information about a great nation into a single book. This difficult task has been performed skillfully by Professor Pounds, who prepared the book's first two parts entitled "History" and "Land and Resources," and Professor Beneš, who wrote the remaining two parts on "The Polish Republic" (born after World War I) and "The People's Republic." The titles of the first two chapters, "The Beginning of the Polish State" and "The Decline of the Kingdom," are misleading. It would seem that the "golden age" of Polish cultural development and the pinnacle of her political power had been left out. They have, in fact, been divided between the two chapters. Readers unfamiliar with Central and East European history will get an insight into some glorious moments of Poland's past: her union with Lithuania, the fights with the Turks and Tatars which merited Poland the nickname "Bulwark of Christianity," the religious tolerance at a time when religious wars were destroying Western Europe, and the establishment of a democratic, parliamentary system of government. The author analyzes the gradual decline of Poland, which began with the "Deluge"—the invasions in the mid-seventeenth century. The historical part of the book extends into the period of partitions.

In the second part of the book, Pounds discusses "The Territorial Basis of the Polish State" and "Economic Growth." He comments on economic planning based on nationalization, and points out that collectivization of agricultural land "aroused no enthusiasm" and "was resisted" (p. 134), and that it was stopped after the uprising of autumn 1956.

Beneš's contribution to the volume begins with an analysis of the political background of modern Poland and continues with a description of the Polish political system between the two world wars and the activities of "Poland in Exile" after 1939. The last part is devoted to recent history—the hopes raised by Gomułka when he rose to power in 1956 in spite of the Soviet pressures to stop him, and the disenchantment of the nation at the nonfulfillment of those hopes. The book ends with observations on "Poland Today," bringing developments up to 1970. The conclusion is that "communism was unable to gain the support of the Polish nation" (p. 346). Throughout his chapters, Beneš shows an excellent understanding of Polish problems, feelings, and ambitions.

Even a severe reviewer would not find much to criticize in this volume. Maybe the most serious objection that could be raised is in the handling of Polish-Czech relations. Although both parties were partly to blame, the author mentions only the "forceful annexation of the Czechoslovak part of the province of Teschen by Poland" (p. 179) in 1938 without making it clear that part of this territory was forcibly annexed by Czechoslovakia when Poland was engaged in a war for her life with Communist Russia in 1920–21. Another Polish argument which seems to make sense is that the Poles entered this industrially well-developed area when the Germans began to march into Czechoslovakia; in effect, by taking over some important factories and mines, they prevented Germany from using them to boost its war potential.

The authors agree that "Poland has had a noble and distinguished history, possesses a deep and rich cultural heritage, and has greatly enriched the culture of all of Europe," and they are convinced that "the existence of a strong and independent Poland best serves the interests of Europe as a whole" (p. 9).

The book is supplemented by eleven maps and twenty-six illustrations. There are some helpful appendixes, including one on place-name variations, as well as a bibliography and an index.

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THE ARCHITECTURE OF POLAND. By *Brian Knox*. New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1971. x, 161 pp. + 216 photographs. \$18.50.

Brian Knox has written an informative and perceptive guide to the architecture of Poland. It is organized topographically, by regions and their principal cities. Within these limitations a chronological development is rather freely maintained. The knotty problem of what constitutes "Polish" architecture is solved in an Alexandrian fashion by covering "the area . . . you get a visa for, and where the Poles live now." It is an eminently practical solution for the traveler, but somewhat disconcerting for a professional art historian, since it includes German architecture in the Western territories and omits the most indigenous "Polish" architecture developed in the Eastern provinces now included in Russia. However, this approach corresponds precisely with the title of the book. Indeed, Mr. Knox has stated his purpose very clearly in his prologue and has carried it out admirably.

The book is a lively and knowledgeable commentary on the historical as well as the architectural material. It is impressive in its scope, since it deals with monuments from the tenth to the twentieth century, and with the main trends of Polish history, indicating the subsequent architectural influences from such diverse sources as France, Germany, Italy, and the Low Countries.

Diagrams of medieval cities, maps showing the spread of monastic and knightly orders, and schematic drawings of plans for new housing districts are not only helpful but give the reader a sense of the author's keen involvement with the subject. The principal data relating to each building are provided, and ground plans of the more important structures, with elevations and reconstructions, are included. The photographs are clear and the views varied. I was occasionally disappointed when Knox after praising something warmly did not illustrate it. This only reinforced my appreciation of his critical judgment and my delight in his rather breezy style of expression: "A logical ground-plan which led to a visual disaster." The arrangement of the photographs on the page is sometimes a little confusing, but this is a minor flaw. An excellent annotated bibliography is appended.

Although a large body of factual data is necessarily included, the author is witty, incisive, and urbane. Knox's book is not only a most welcome traveling companion but also a useful tool in English for the nonspecialized art historian.

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THE CZECH RENASCENCE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: ESSAYS PRESENTED TO OTAKAR ODLOŽILÍK IN HONOUR OF HIS SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY. Edited by *Peter Brock* and *H. Gordon Skilling*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1970. xi, 345 pp. \$10.00.

This Festschrift dedicated to the old master of Czech history unites seventeen scholarly studies of American, Czechoslovak-émigré, and Czechoslovak authors