

Many collaborative efforts suffer from three faults: a poor allocation of subject matter, an uneven quality of scholarship, and a lack of uniformity in format and footnoting. Varsányi's volume is plagued mainly by the last two of these imperfections. The level of the contributors' scholarship varies greatly, and there is considerable diversity in organization, format, and the handling of references.

Besides offering several impressive and stimulating essays (along with a few rather undistinguished ones), this attractively produced book presents a great deal of information which will be useful to all students of East Central Europe.

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LANDWIRTSCHAFTLICHE ZIRKEL UND LANDWIRTSCHAFTLICHE PRODUKTIONSGENOSSENSCHAFTEN IN POLEN. By *Stanisława Hegenbarth*. *Osteuropastudien der Hochschulen des Landes Hessen*, series 1. *Giessener Abhandlungen zur Agrar- und Wirtschaftsforschung des europäischen Ostens*, vol. 72. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot in Kommission, 1976. 193 pp. Tables. Figures. Paper.

The first two chapters of this highly informative book are devoted to a detailed description of the development, formal organization, and activity of the two basic forms of Polish cooperative farming—the agricultural “circles” and the cooperative farms. The descriptive material is related to official farm policy developments since 1956 and especially to the government's central dilemma: the need to reconcile the peasantry to a social order responsible during the collectivization period for much suffering, while still keeping alive, despite the far-reaching policy changes after 1956, a commitment to the full socialization of agriculture at some future date.

Skillful use is made of Polish sociological studies of the farm sector, particularly those which analyze the attitudes of the farmers themselves toward the officially approved institutions which determine their activity—the circles in the case of private peasants, and the cooperative farms in the case of members of the cooperatives. In the latter case, the author brings out the fact that the skepticism of the members themselves concerning aspects other than the material benefits they derive from membership—notably a steady job—is paralleled by the negative attitudes toward the cooperatives held by private peasants. Therefore, further socialization of farming will depend largely on the continued acceptability of the circles to the private peasant. Mention is made, however, of recent policies which appear to entail transformation of the circles from loose associations of independent farmers into economically efficient enterprises directed by appointed specialists rather than by officers elected from among the members of individual circles. As the author points out, this development has now been under way for several years. But she also notes that the less flexible and more impersonal organizations created under this system would run counter to the private farmers' wishes as noted in the sociological surveys available.

The author accepts as inevitable the ultimate socialization of farming in Poland (p. 157), but this belief, which is supported by the continuing decline in the agricultural area farmed privately, may be too pessimistic. Since 1960, the decline in the area privately farmed has averaged only about 100 thousand hectares annually—or about 6 percent in total. Though the rate has risen in recent years, the decision (after this book was written) not to make the surrender of an elderly or incapacitated farmer's land to the socialized sector a precondition of a pension should slow it down again. New legislation to facilitate the transfer of land within the private sector—in line with the encouragement of larger private peasant farms—will increase the attractiveness of private farming, although possibly at the cost of an accelerated reduction in the number

of private peasants. Other recent dispositions—permitting associations of a minimum of three private holdings to work land in common; and encouraging vertical integration between private farmers on one hand and the processing industries and the cooperative farms on the other—could also strengthen the private sector with little effect on the basic independence of the private peasant holding.

The author is to be congratulated for the thoroughness and balance of this book. The pragmatism and flexibility with which the basic organizational forms have been employed in the past two decades is well brought out. It is perhaps inevitable, within the scope of an institutional study, that the background of high production costs and low efficiency—a fundamental motive for change in one respect and a potent restraint on adventurism in farm policy in another—has not been sufficiently covered, but the work as it stands should be required reading for students of Communist farm policy.

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AN ECONOMIC THEORY OF THE FEUDAL SYSTEM: TOWARDS A MODEL OF THE POLISH ECONOMY 1500–1800. By *Witold Kula*. Translated by *Lawrence Garner*. Introduction by *Fernand Braudel*. London and Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: NLB and Humanities Press, 1976 [Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1962]. 191 pp. \$13.00.

For as long as mankind has left record of his thought, we find evidence of man's proclivity to discern order, meaning, and predictability in the conditions of his life. Where such order was not self-evident, men have devised schemes of order and imposed them upon phenomena in whatever manner satisfied their needs. It is a hallowed tradition, then, which this author continues. Witold Kula, professor of economic history at the University of Warsaw, is one of the ablest of the economic historians in the socialist countries, and he offers here a sterling example of Marxist thought being used to give order to a segment of history. From a thorough knowledge of the literature and the source materials—although the materials are fragmentary, as he admits—the author delineates with admirable clarity the socioeconomic forces which were at play in Poland during the period cited in his title. He proposes that the method which he uses is not only appropriate to the study of Poland at that time, but may also be applied to the understanding of any society as it passes from premodern to modern conditions.

The key to the author's claim of universal validity for his theories and method may be found in his definition of the word "feudalism" and in his conception of what an economic theory should do. Feudalism is "a socioeconomic system which is predominantly agrarian and characterized by a low level of productive forces and of commercialization; . . . a corporate system in which the basic unit of production is a large, landed estate surrounded by small plots of peasants who are dependent on the former both economically and juridically, and who have to furnish various services to the lord and submit to his authority." An economic theory must explain the laws of the long-term dynamics of a society, and the internal causes of that society's disintegration and transformation. According to the definition above, all premodern societies are "feudal"; and economic theory, as here presented, would explain the nature of those societies and the processes of and reasons for those societies becoming modern. Professor Kula even suggests that "collaboration between the students of the economy of present-day backward countries [*sic*] and the students of economic history may prove to be of mutual benefit." (A caveat: the experience of those who have worked in developing countries indicates strongly that there are no universals. Variations are so numerous and significant that a program which is successful for one people and place may be a lamentable failure elsewhere.)