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DAVIES' GOD'S PLAYGROUND

Norman Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland*, vol. I : *The Origins to 1795*, XXXIII, 605 pages ; vol. II : *1795 to the Present*, XXVII, 725 pages, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1981.

The history of Poland in its entirety, dealt with by one author and comprising 80 sheets of print—this is indeed a feat which no Polish historian has managed to accomplish, since the times of M. Bobrzyński or W. Sobieski. A foreigner has managed to accomplish it though, he himself admitting in his foreword that he was taking “a terrible liberty”. Mental mastery of a thousand years of history must of necessity be superficial. Arrangement of the events of all these years in a spirit of conceptual unity (without which it is difficult to talk of synthesis) is doubly risky for an outside observer, no matter how penetrating and well-disposed he might be. It is true that a dozen or so Polish historians, in a well-known Ossolineum series, recently compiled comprehensive histories of various countries, some of them outside Europe. All the same, their authors risked less than Norman Davies. Their books gained recognition in Poland, but I'm afraid they were barely noticed in the countries with which they dealt. Meanwhile Davies' history of Poland is snatched up by Poles in Poland and abroad, needless to say with mixed feelings. Everyone recognizes the significance of the event—namely that the Anglo-Saxon reader is now in possession of such a wealth of information about Poland's past. Everyone has to admit, too, that the author is sympathetic

in his evaluation of that past. But not every Polish reader will find his evaluations to his taste; and as far as Polish historians are concerned, they will pick up the errors of fact unavoidable in a work of this kind.

The notes (25 pages at the end of the first volume, and 26 at the end of the second) only partially refer to the work's sources. Apart from titles of books in many languages, they also contain supplementary explanations and remarks of a polemical nature. Most of the works cited are secondary sources: the author is familiar with the attainments of Polish historiography, up as far as the end of the seventies, and doubtless does not cite everything he has read, although the selection of lesser-known items can sometimes be puzzling. A comparatively greater number of notes is to be found in those sections concerning areas of more particular interest to the author, which is to say the first quarter of the 20th century. There are numerous references to quotations from sources woven into the text. These quotations are numerous, expansive and varied. They consist of extracts from chronicles, legal texts, publicism, correspondence, and they range from Ibrahim ibn Yaqub to Sławomir Mrożek. Polish belles-lettres are abundantly represented here, sometimes in the original. The abundance of these source extracts, usually provided with a succinct and apposite commentary, is one of the work's attractions, and no doubt also brings the reader closer to the untranslatable, Polish atmosphere of this or another era in a more effective way.

The construction of the work is worthy of comment. The first volume, concerning the pre-partition era, begins with five introductory chapters, one of which is devoted to historiography, the second to geography, whilst the following three provide a relatively succinct (in a hundred pages) survey of the history of Poland under the Piasts and Jagiellons. The remainder of volume I is therefore devoted to the Polish-Lithuanian Republic, 1569 - 1795. First come six thematic chapters with Polish titles and English sub-titles: "Antemurale (the Bulwark of Christendom)"; "The Nobleman's Paradise" (an exceptionally effective excursus here concerning the Polish grain trade); "The Vicissitudes of Urban Life"; "The Noble Democracy"; "Diplomacy in Poland-Lithuania". Altogether 250 pages, the main accent being placed

on the 17th century. Only after this do we get seven chronological chapters, in 150 pages, 20 of which fall to the Saxons, and 36 to Stanislaw August. Of course the Polish Enlightenment is also discussed in the thematic chapters; the accent of this volume, however, is placed more on the "greatness and decline" of the Republic, than on the belated attempt to save it. We shall come back to an evaluation of this approach presently.

The arrangement of volume II is similar. Here, too, thematic chapters come at the outset, in close on three-hundred pages: the first on the growth of the Modern Nation (here I miss Łepkowski's book in the notes), the next three on the specific features of the three partition provinces, whilst those following are titled: "The Process of Industrialization"; "The Rise of the Common People"; "The Roman Catholic Church"; "Cultural Heritage"; "The Jewish Community"; "The Military Tradition"; "The Polish Emigration". The last two chapters here concern chiefly the 20th century. Only then do we get the chronological chapters, about a hundred pages falling to the period of bondage, forty to the Second Republic, fifty to the Second World War, and about one hundred to People's Poland. The chapter "The Modern Polish Frontiers" which discusses changes in the territorial shape of Poland from 1918 to 1945, goes beyond these subsections. One should also add that the chapter entitled "The Communist Movement", dealing with the People's Republic, goes back to the beginning of the Polish workers' movement in the 19th century. Needless to say, with such an arrangement repetitions and cross-references were unavoidable; perhaps it was more important to give the foreigner an idea of the wider problems in the history of an unfamiliar country than to instruct him in chronological details.

How in fact does the author perceive these wider problems? In a way decidedly at odds with persistent trends in Polish historiography. The author feels that the latter has treated and still treats the development of Polish society and its culture as a continuous process, developing logically, in the course of variable stages, from the times when it was a primitive community up to the present day. In this respect "modern Marxist-Leninist historians in Poland have swallowed the old nationalist ideology hook, line and sinker" (foreword to vol. I, p. IX). In the People's Republic they are

actually seeking a lawful successor to Piast Poland. Nothing of the kind! argues the author. There is no continuity at all in Poland's history: 1138, 1795, 1813, 1864, 1939—these were turning-points at which the former state of things was finished with once and for all, with something entirely different beginning anew. There is, in fact, no continuity in the history of Polish territory, Polish society, Polish mentality; there has been no determinism in Polish history. In 1385, 1569, 1683, 1717, 1794-95, 1918, and 1944 decisions were taken or waived which might have come off differently and led to different results (I, p. 58). The few elements of permanence which do exist in Polish history are Christianity (I, p. 4); the spirit of a democracy of the nobility (I, p. 255), re-appearing even in the structures of "Solidarity"; the peasant's attachment to the land (II, p. 190); and the popularity of the slogan: "It is by unrule that Poland stands" (I, p. 321).¹

For any interpretation of history as one-sided as this one is, it is easy to find amongst the source material enough arguments for and enough against. I shall restrict myself to one observation. Poland's historical experiences have for sure been uncommonly tortuous, particularly over the last few centuries. But then other nations too have run into sharp turns. England in 1066, France in 1789, the United States in 1861 - 1865. Not to mention Germany, Italy, Spain. And yet the inhabitants of these countries have a justified sense of historical continuity over many centuries, as do the inhabitants of India, or China, despite even more variable vicissitudes. I do not deny that for the historian acceptance of determinism can be a path of lesser resistance, often a blind alley. We all have a fear of argumentation not based in fact, contemptuously dubbed *gdybanie* (a noun formed from *gdyby* meaning "if"). But we are all grappling, too, with a chaos of phenomena, picking out—more or less successfully—some sort of beginning, sense and logic. In practice the author of the work under discussion tends the same way, even if he objects to *a priori* constructions. He is thus lenient in his attitude towards individuals who, in difficult moments, "lay themselves open to what the

¹ "Waleśa, like the old Polish nobleman whom he so uncannily resembles, seems to have perceived instinctively that the main danger lay in the absolutist pretensions of state power" (II, p. 723 ff.).

ancients called Fate or Providence, what the moderns call Accidents, and what the British call 'muddling through'".

The work's title, *God's Playground*, also seems to testify to the irrationalism of Poland's history assumed by the author. The phrase: *Boże igrzysko* appears in poems by Jan Kochanowski and Krzysztof Opaliński, the author translating it as: "Bauble of the Gods", or "God's clown". He eventually accepts the term "playground", which "can be aptly used as an epithet for a country where fate has frequently played mischievous tricks" (I, p. XVI). In practice this attitude of the author's is expressed in the ascribing of greater significance to external factors than internal ones in the shaping of Poland's history. One can multiply the examples. The Polish-Lithuanian state could not cope with the Teutonic Order, but the latter was liquidated by the Reformaion (I, p. 121). The Republic collapsed as a result of Khmelnitsky's rebellion. The author does not consider that it was doomed to collapse on account of a structural crisis (II, p. 466). Peter the Great subjugated the Republic, whilst the First World War and not economic progress (II, p. 107), nor the efforts of the Poles themselves (II, p. 392), liberated Poland from Russia. The development of Polish society, too, owes more to external pressures than to internal processes (II, pp. 178 - 179). For an outside observer, the play of international forces will always appear to be the main factor which sealed Poland's fate in 1918, 1939 and 1945. Of course Davies recognizes that some part was played here by the Poles' level of consciousness and their commitment to independence, but to his mind it was a minor part. With irony he wonders if it is possible and worth the trouble to carry out research on Polish society in the 19th century, a time when the Polish-speaking element lived thoroughly mixed in with non-Polish elements in three different states, and when a significant majority of the Polish element did not as yet consider themselves as Poles at all (II, p. 178).

Such paradoxes can of course be irritating to Polish readers, since from their point of view the crystallization of national consciousness in the 19th century represents the most important element of the Polish historical process. But one must resign oneself to the fact that together with a change in the vantage-point, the view of the past is also subject to change. It is not necessarily only

the Poles' own point of view which will coincide with objective reality.

I do not intend to expound here on the subject of the ethnogeny of the Slavs, since I am not competent to do so. The Polish thesis concerning autochthonous proto-Lechites' doubtless suits Polish sentiments, to Davies it simply seems absurd. The ancestors of all the European peoples were wandering about the continent over centuries: why then are only the ancestors of the Poles supposed to have dwelt in one place since the dawn of history? (I, p. 40). None the less, our author prefers to believe Ms Maria Gimbutas, who makes the land between the Vistula and the Oder the cradle of the Balts... An ingenious diagram (I, p. 42) depicts the relative locations of seven main interpenetrating tribal groups in Central Europe, in the first centuries of the Christian era. The numerous, clearly composed diagrams, alongside the maps, are one of the book's strong points: no doubt they make more of an impression on the reader's mind than printed text.* But in the present instance of the original seat of the Slavs, I can only express regret that our author did not choose to give an opinion on Henryk Łowmiański's *Początki Polski* [*The Beginnings of Poland*]...

The next, early medieval issue which intrigues the author is the age-old contrast of Poland with Russia, with their close ethnic strata and so very similar geographical environment (I, p. 53). This, too, is not my field—although it does seem to me that prior to the Mongol invasion, the contrast between the possessions of the Piast and Rurik houses did not run so very deep. Geopolitics by no means explains, states the author, why it was Russia which devoured Poland, and not Poland Russia (I, p. 26). Poland lies in a dangerous narrowing of the European lowland—but the situation of Prussia was similar. Both Prussia and Poland had periods of power and periods of catastrophic decline, whilst the current liquidation of Prussia seems more thoroughgoing compared with the liquidation of Poland in 1795 and 1939 (*ibidem*). It is worth while

* Cf. vol. I, p. 68 for an effective map showing the interlocking of German, Polish, Bohemian and Russian spheres of influence in the area between Magdeburg and Kiev during the 10th-11th centuries. There is hardly a place here to which two or three rival hegemonies did not stretch at that time. The sketch's only shortcoming is the identification of the Sudovians tribe with the Samogitians.

the historian's asking himself such questions, even when he is only able to answer them with a generality. Such as that concerning the "Golden Age", for instance: "The Polish system gelled at a time when internal prosperity was at its height and the external threat was still small. The decentralized tradition of defence, finance, and executive power were perpetuated in line with previous conditions, and not in expectation of increased pressures. It could be argued that Poland developed too soon, or too easily" (I, p. 58).

Points which might appear controversial, as between Davies' standpoint and the views prevailing in Polish historiography, are not that numerous. In his detailed exposition Davies generally follows Polish findings, in matters taken to be controversial as well. Thus in discussing the attitude of the Polish state and the Polish people towards Jews, Davies rather complies with the Polish point of view; the same applies to the Toruń "blood-bath" of 1724, which in its time caused so much indignation in England. He writes with understandable enthusiasm about the Polish dissenters, and especially about the Polish Brethren; he acknowledges that they enjoyed greater freedom in the Republic than religious minorities in other countries. However, he rightly points out that this freedom of the dissenters provided evidence of "toleration" rather than of tolerance.

It is worth mentioning the skill with which Davies brings the exotic realities of Poland closer to the Anglo-Saxon reader. He emphasizes—quite naturally—Polish-English relations (diplomatic, economic, touristic, etc.). Thus he gives a colourful description of the financial vicissitudes of the last British ambassador to the Republic, William Gardiner; he recalls, too, the participation of English knights in the Teutonic Order razzias to Lithuania, the Polish affinities of the last Stuarts, and the merits of the Evans brothers, as pioneers of Warsaw's metallurgical industry. He quotes extensively (and not without a sense of humour) the accounts of English travellers to Poland; he makes a note of what was known about Poland in England at different times. He also introduces (II, pp. 10, 128, 152) extracts from Baedeker from the first years of the 20th century, relating to Warsaw, Poznań and Lvov; on the basis of these he is able to infer how much these

cities may have appeared Polish at that time in the eyes of a Western tourist. But above all, Davies attempts to explain Polish phenomena by the use of analogies with the Anglo-Saxon world. He thus compares the Polish-Lithuanian union with the union of England and Scotland (a Scottish dynasty in Westminster, the acceptance by the Scots of English culture, remnants of Celtic culture in the Highlands, and so on). Other parallels are the simultaneous Polish-Saxon and British-Hanoverian personal unions (I, p. 493). The author compares the Hasidim in Poland with the Methodists (I, p. 193); Polish *sejmik* (land diet) administration is compared with self-government practice in the English colonies in America (I, p. 370). The dispute amongst historians over the interrelation between the floating of grain to Gdańsk and so-called secondary serfdom is likened to the similar dispute over cotton-growing and slavery in the southern states of North America (I, p. 280). The author compares the Prussian policy of establishing German schools in Polish lands, in the first half of the 19th century, with the similar and contemporary policy of London in respect of Wales, Scotland and Ireland. As the Englishman of those times saw it, it was in the interest of the inhabitants of these provinces to get rid of their own ("lower") culture as soon as possible (II, pp. 124, 132). For that matter the Poles reasoned in a similar way when it came to schools in their own state for the Belorussians, after 1918. The Poznanian Uprising of 1918 is compared with the Easter Uprising in Ireland (II, p. 137). Warsaw "for most of the modern period, was more distinguished as the resort of intellectuals, burglars and insurrectionists than as the home of a ruling élite. On this score, it is more akin to Dublin than to London or Washington" (I, p. 306). Comparisons of this kind may take us by surprise, but from a didactic point of view they can be useful.

I shall not attempt to debate the detailed findings contained in volume I. I shall therefore merely point in passing to the anachronism of the term "Vatican" in describing the papacy of the Middle Ages (I, p. 70). Also anachronistic are the terms Western and Eastern Prussia in the 15th century (I, p. 123). The explanation of *dożynki* (harvest feast) as "harvest fires" (I, p. 166) seems to me to be faulty. *Zagończyk* to me refers to the Tartar

incursions, and not to a field/plot of land (I, p. 230). The Międzyrzec mentioned in vol. I, p. 193 is Międzyrzec Podlaski, not the one in Western Poznań—not Meseritz! The right of Polish citizenship granted to Potemkin was quite an exceptional occurrence; it is therefore an exaggeration to say that “a flood of Russians” received this right during the reign of Stanisław August (I, p. 237). The Polish nobility may have used a lash or whip on their serfs, but not a knout (I, p. 243). The “Duke of Leipzig” mentioned in Sobieski’s letter of 14 July, 1665 to his wife is surely Father Lipski. The assertion that around 1700 Lithuania “virtually seceded from Poland” (I, p. 496) goes rather too far. The Załuski library was not located in the Blue Palace³ (I, p. 509). The Orthodox Confederation was set up at Słuck, not Słupsk (I, p. 518). Stanisław August did not entertain the empress in his “royal palace” in Kanev (I, p. 528). The statement that in 1790 the Four-Year Sejm “divided itself into two chambers, to speed up business” is a misunderstanding (I, p. 534). More errors accumulate over the next few pages. The king joined the Confederation of Targovitsa in July, not August, 1792, so that the Russian campaign of that year lasted two months, and not “more than a year.” Suvorov did not take part in this campaign. Russia did not take all of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the second partition. In April, 1794 the Russians did not leave Warsaw “across the Vistula bridges”. In the same year Cracow was occupied by the Prussians, and not the Russians. The reference in relation to the year 1794 to the dumping of the remains of the former primate Podoski in the harbour at Marseille appears to associate this circumstance with the Polish Insurrection. Primate Podoski, however, died and was buried in Marseille in 1777. Sixteen years later the revolutionary mob sacked the church and desecrated the Archbishop’s remains without even knowing who this Podoski was (nor how unworthy he was of his church dignity).

I have more to say about volume II, particularly about the 19th century. I have to hand a 1982 reprint of the book “with cor-

³ The Blue Palace’s association with Anna Orzelska inclines one to quote one of Davies’ more telling remarks: “Unlike his spermatozoa, most of the political ventures of Augustus the Strong failed to reach their target” (I, 495).

rections". It is a matter for regret that these corrections do not embrace as many errors as any pre-print review would draw attention to. One might contend that many of these trifles do not affect the Anglo-Saxon reader ; however, they irritate the Polish reader and put him off a book which when all is said and done is worthy of respect. Here is a list of errors, probably not exhaustive : Alojzy Feliński and Franciszek Duchński were not priests (II, pp. 19 and 24) ; Latin had ceased to be the official language in the Kingdom of Poland long before the partitions (II, p. 21) ; Mickiewicz died in 1855, not 1854, nor was he buried near the Sea of Marmara, but his remains were transported to France (II, pp. 35 and 348) ; Mickiewicz did not like Pushkin's anti-Polish verses to the "barking of a mad dog" (II, p. 66). "Hail, lords and magnates" was adopted as their anthem by the Peasant Party, not by the communists (II, p. 64) (perhaps it would be worth mentioning that the melody of this anthem derives from an aria by Mozart, paraphrased by Chopin).

Dostoevsky can hardly be described as an officer : he served only a year in the army, and soon became a man of letters. On the other hand, his Polish comrade in adversity Tokazhevsky was not a landowner, but the son of an alcohol-distiller (II, pp. 92 ff.). The "Okhrana" was not an agency of the famous Third Section of the Emperor's chancellery ; it was the colloquial name for the Russian political police, at a time when the Third Section had already been done away with. Neither was the Okhrana headed by Pobedonostsev (II, p. 96). It is not accurate to say that the dramatic works of the three great poets Mickiewicz, Słowacki and Krasiński could not be performed in Warsaw under Russian rule (II, p. 98). *Dziady*, *Mazepa* and *Irydion* were put on stage (albeit with cuts). On page 107 we read : "After 1864, when serfdom was finally abolished..." As we know, it had already been abolished in 1807. On page 182, too, there is a reference to the selling of serfs in the Kingdom of Poland "at least till 1864". To a limited extent this might have applied to the provinces beyond the Bug, up to 1861. It is true that tsarism oppressed Russians as well as Poles and Jews, or Ukrainians (II, p. 108). This does not alter the fact that numerous Russians, in tsarist service, lived in the Polish provinces at the

cost of the local population. In the 1830s the Polish Bank did not yet have Russian managers (II, p. 173).

The author speaks with a certain amount of respect of the law-abiding Prussian state. However, he is rather too optimistic in his appraisal of the scope of autonomy in the Grand Duchy of Poznań. It is not true that the title of Grand Duchy was done away with in 1848. The resolution of the Frankfurt Assembly concerning the incorporation of Poznań within Germany did not come into force, and it was only with Bismarck that the Polish language was displaced in schools. The property of Poznanian participants in the November Insurrection was sequestrated, but not confiscated. In the Moabite Prison trial of 1847, 254 accused answered charges, but over six-hundred were arrested. The Poznań insurgents of 1848 were not armed with scythes alone (II, p. 120). The Bazar Hotel in Poznań housed many more than two Polish shops (II, p. 122). In December 1918 Paderewski landed at Gdańsk, not Szczecin (II, p. 137).

Concerning Galicia: in 1815 Austria did not regain anything from New Galicia (II, pp. 139 and 306); the figure of 400 land-owning families in the province (II, p. 143) is too low, if one considers that in the first curial category 2,000 landowners had the right to vote (II, p. 151); the "massacre" of 1846 was gruesome enough—but the peasants did not behead their victims (II, p. 147); neither Goluchowski nor Schmerling were "presidents of the Imperial Council of Ministers" in 1860 - 61, but only "Ministers of State" (II, pp. 149 - 150); the Provincial Sejm and its executive body existed from 1861; the School Council from 1869 (*ibidem*); the institution of mandataries also disappeared before the autonomy era (II, p. 151). From a formal point of view the author's contention that the emperor had a right of *veto* in respect of Sejm laws (*ibidem*) is questionable. He could instead refuse his *sanction* in respect of such laws.

On church affairs: the bishopric of Warmia did not embrace Pomerania or Western Prussia (with the exception of Malbork); the Cracow archbishopric was established in 1925, not 1875; Primate Poniatowski died in August 1794, not April (II, p. 208); the Catholic clergy in Prussia came under the supervision of a Protestant state, agreed: however, it did not come under a "Protestant

Consistory" (II, p. 209) ; the Roman Catholic Spiritual College in St. Petersburg did not bear the title "Sacred" (II, p. 209) ; its competence was limited to the western provinces, the attempt to extend its authority into the Congress Kingdom (1867) met with opposition from the bishops ; Bishop Popiel was removed from Plock not for refusing to delegate lay, but precisely spiritual members to the College (II, p. 220) ; the Uniate Church was completely liquidated in the Russian State after 1875 ; the 1905 tolerance edict enabled some ex-Uniates to go over to the Latin rite (II, pp. 211, 372) ; the attitude of Pius IX to the Polish question is presented in rather severe terms (II, p. 213) ; in 1861 - 62 the pope declined to condemn the Polish patriotic movement, and in 1863 he interceded with Alexander II for the Church in Poland ; the pronouncement of 24 April 1864 was not an encyclical, but an allocution of an unofficial nature ; the words *vae mihi* etc were not an incipit, but came in the body of the text ; the two encyclicals protesting against the persecution of the Church in Poland were published somewhat later ; one can find plenty of bad things to say about Metropolitan Sierżewicz, but was he really an ex-Lutheran chaplain of the Russian army ?... (II, p. 220) ; Archbishop Cieplak administered the Mogilev archdiocese on two occasions, but he was not officially a metropolitan (II, p. 221) ; on page 224 we read that after 1939 the churches were not completely shut down under the occupation : but in the "Wartheland" province admission to churches was in practice rendered impossible for the Polish population.

The author writes at comparative length about the Jews in Poland, and their political and cultural activity. Of interest is his observation on the parallelism of Jewish and Polish political currents at the turn of the 20th century. It has already been mentioned that the author refutes, or moderates numerous widespread allegations concerning the scale of discrimination against Jews in inter-war Poland ; in particular he draws attention to the fact that it was in the interest of Zionist propaganda at that time to paint a black picture of the Jews' situation in Poland. Regarding the Second World War, he says outright : "To ask why the Poles did little to help the Jews is rather like asking why the Jews did nothing to assist the Poles" (II, p. 264). Only two small objections

then to this chapter. The Warsaw pogrom of 1881 did not erupt at the news of the assassination of the tsar, since it took place ten months later (II, p. 251). Roza Luxemburg's family had nothing in common with Litvak immigrants (II, pp. 255 and 541).

More minor flaws. The Hotel Lambert did not co-operate with Lelewel in creating the Union of Polish Emigrés (II, p. 288). Polish Legion units did not take part in the battle of Marengo (II, p. 296). Davout's occupation force in the Duchy of Warsaw did not consist of 30,000 Saxons (II, p. 299). Prince Joseph Poniatowski's fifth Polish corps did not enter Vilna in 1812 (II, p. 303). Adam Czartoryski had not yet resigned his Vilna curatorship in 1814 (II, p. 313). After acquittal of the high treason charges, the members of the Seym Tribunal of 1828 were not interned in the Royal Castle (II, p. 314). Chłopicki was not returned to power after the dethronement of Nicholas I (II, p. 321). Łukasiński did not go blind in prison (II, p. 333). The monument to generals loyal to the emperor who fell on November Night, 1830 did not stand in Bank Square (II, p. 680). In 1848 Mickiewicz' Legion did not adopt the motto, *Ubi patria, ubi male* (sic! II, p. 342). In October, 1848 Franz Joseph was not yet emperor; nor did the Austrians have to prepare an attack on Lombardy at that time, since it had been in their hands since August (II, p. 345). The Warsaw Agricultural Society did not have any branches outside the Kingdom (II, p. 349). Wielopolski was not responsible in 1861 for declaring martial law and for the military incursion into churches. Jarosław Dąbrowski was tried in Warsaw, not in Russia (II, p. 351). There was no "urban guerilla warfare" in 1863 (II, p. 353). Father Mackiewicz was arrested as early as December, 1863 (II, p. 356). Żyrzyn does not lie in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains (*ibidem*). Traugutt came from Polesie, not Podlasie, and neither did he meet Napoleon III in Paris (II, p. 359). The date of Father Brzóska's capture—29 April, 1865 (II, p. 364). Exiled participants of the January Insurrection sent to Siberia were eventually entitled to partial amnesty; a significant proportion of those who survived returned to Poland after some years (II, p. 365). Waryński's famous speech at the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the November Insurrection took place in Geneva, not Warsaw (II, p. 540).

Davies relates the events of 1905 as if, at the news of "Bloody

Sunday" in St. Petersburg, a school strike broke out in Warsaw, with the workers joining only afterwards. The sequence of events was the reverse. It is not sufficient to say that as a result of the school strike the Russian Warsaw University "was half-deserted" (II, p. 371), since lectures were only resumed in the autumn of 1908. The description of the routing of the Warsaw brothels is rather fanciful. The attack was begun by Jews in the Jewish quarter, Christian elements joined in on the second day, and criminals on the third day. But in Davies we read: "On 24 May, hundreds of workers from the metal factories of Praga poured across the Vistula bridges and attacked the 'red light' district of Warsaw" (II, p. 372). The internal dispute within the Polish Socialist Party is erroneously presented—as if the "young" members were calling for an increase in terrorism, to which the more cautious "old" members were opposed (II, p. 376). The reverse was the case, as we know. On page 377 we read of the Chełm district being incorporated within the Kiev province; whereas the point here was the subordination of the newly-created Chełm province to the Governor-General in Kiev.⁴

I do not find too many points of contention in the further sections of the book. The "first skeleton company" did not retreat beyond the Galician border from Kielce (II, p. 382). Józef Ostrowski was not a count (II, p. 384). The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk denied to the Poles not only the lands beyond the Bug, but also the Chełm region (II, p. 385). Not all of the Congress Kingdom as far as the Bug was liberated in November 1918 (II, p. 391). The Germans were still positioned to the east of Siedlce at the beginning of January. The memorable Piłsudski-Wojciechowski encounter on 12 May, 1926 took place on Poniatowski Bridge, and not on the Kierbedź Bridge (II, p. 421). Primate Wyszyński was held at Komańcza not directly following his arrest, but only after being interned for almost three years (II, p. 58).

It would be unjust to focus the reader's attention on the author's minor slips, numerous though they be. For the book's merits—I am thinking here of volume II—are undeniable. Not because the interpretation of the post-partition period corresponds

⁴ This "district of Chełm" is also badly drawn on the sketch-map in vol. II, p. 83.

entirely with the views accepted in Poland, but rather because it encourages one to consider alternative points of view. Thus the author sees three main types in Polish political attitudes following the partitions ; "Loyalism, Insurrection and Conciliation" (II, p. 30). To the first of these, in which he includes not only Wincenty Kraśiński, Henryk Rzewuski and Bogdan Hutten-Czapski, but also Kazimierz Badeni, he attributes a more important rôle than the Poles themselves have usually accepted.⁴ He admires the irredentists, but refuses to believe that they had any sense of realism. Wielopolski is included amongst the conciliators, his legacy being taken over by Prus and the positivists, after whom came Dmowski, who is contrasted with Piłsudski. What is more important, the author attempts to trace these same three political currents—loyalist, insurrectionary, and conciliatory—into the second half of the present century as well.

As one might have expected, Davies does not attach too much significance to the two decades between the wars. In his view this was a "short interlude" of independence set within a much longer period of lack of sovereignty, stretching back to the "Mute Seym" of 1717. This is not a new thesis, it was put forward by H. Wereszycki in 1947. Our author gives it a new underpinning, demonstrating that the Second Republic was not in a condition to resolve any of its fundamental problems, external or internal (II, p. 79). Not that the author closes his eyes to some positive achievements during this short episode.⁵ On the contrary, he treats with disdain the abuse and accusations hurled at Poland at this time. He is positively ashamed that to the hostile chorus of Poland's ill-wishers were joined the otherwise noble voices of British liberals (II, p. 393).

Davies does not close his eyes then to the offences and mistakes of this period : to the chaos of parliamentary rule, to the abuses of the Sanacja regime, the disastrous minorities policy, Beck's diplomatic illusions—right up to the "most tragic mistake" in Poland's recent history, which is how the author describes the Warsaw Up-

⁴ "They were Central European counterparts of Scots, Welsh and Irish politicians who made their fortunes with the British government in London. They were nothing unusual" (II, p. 31).

⁵ In a short paragraph devoted to culture in the inter-war period he emphasizes two names in particular—Chwistek and Witkacy (II, p. 427).

rising (II, p. 474). He excuses these mistakes and transgressions in particular with the fact that it could not have been otherwise ; that no matter how the Poles might have acted after 1918, they could not have avoided disaster. In fact he is particularly impressed by the fact that so very many Poles behaved "gallantly" at the most difficult of times.

It is difficult to give an appraisal of close on one hundred pages devoted to post-war Poland, since the history of this period is insufficiently known even to Poles themselves. The author himself confesses that he is not sure of his judgements, based in large part on inconclusive sources (II, p. 594). Of Poland's post-war leaders, only Gomulka is esteemed by the author (in so far as any of them are). The undoubted fact that after the war Poland acquired rational borders, and that for the first time in her existence she became a nationally homogeneous country, is affixed by the author with the sceptical reflection : did she not pay too high a price all the same ? His reflections on the feedback interaction of the party headquarters in Moscow and Warsaw are worth consideration. The author is entirely positive in his evaluation of the post-war development of Polish culture, so very active despite the obstacles it has come up against.

Three pages, appended to the very end of the volume in the reprint, after the index, and entitled "Solidarity 1980 - 1981", were written before 13 December, 1981. Their tenor seems to go against the author's earlier guiding principles. For here is testimony to a powerful movement, the likes of which nobody in the world would have thought of, and which erupted entirely spontaneously, without interference from anyone outside. Did then the Poles turn out to be capable of shaping their own destiny independently ? In the book's last paragraph the author refrains from giving a prognosis. "A knowledge of Polish History is apt to inspire a note of pessimism, at least in any short-term forecast. No nation is ever so vulnerable as at the time when it tries to reform itself ; and Polish History is strewn with movements for reform which provoked internal dissension and preceeded external intervention" (II, p. 725). Once again, this prudent reflection has been overtaken by the accelerated course of history.

Drawing near the end of this fascinating reading matter, one

ought once more to express gratitude to the author for the pains taken in assimilating the history of Poland in such a very detailed manner, and even more so for his individual approach to the subject. The result would be of even greater value, if it was not weakened by factual errors. The author turns out to be very mindful of the orthography of Polish surnames and placenames, of all diacritical marks, though he does lose the letter ł in the surnames Pawłowski and Nałkowski (I, p. 34). He calls Mniszech "Mniszek" (I, pp. 377, 456), Stackelberg "Staeckelberg", Stanisław Szczepanowski "Szczepański" (I, pp. 145 - 146), and Kronenberg stubbornly "Kronenburg". I am only citing errors which are repeated several times. I most sincerely wish the author many further reprints, in which these errors might be corrected.

(Translated by Phillip G. Smith)