

DAVID LANE, and GEORGE KOLANKIEWICZ, eds. — *Social Groups in Polish Society*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1973.

The book here reviewed is the first attempt at a comprehensive summary of data on structural and social change in Poland since *Polish Society* by Szczepanski (1970). Lane makes clear that this change is not so profound as it may appear at first sight. In 1937 over two-fifths of the capital of joint stock companies was in foreign hands. State enterprises accounted in 1932-33 for about 17 per cent of the general turn-over of industry and commerce. The state "owned the railways and airlines and it had a monopoly in the production of alcohol, tobacco and armaments. Approximately half of all bank credit originated from government banks, and the State had a large financial stake in chemicals, coal and iron and steel" (p. 2). On the other hand the regime "was conservative and lacking in drive and policy; probably the best description of it is 'ineffectual authoritarianism'" (p. 5).

The social structure of Polish society has changed considerably since then. Among all gainfully employed persons and helping family members in 1970 in comparison with the early thirties there were fewer independent farmers (33 per cent instead of 52 per cent) fewer handicraftsmen and petty merchants (around one per cent instead of 11 per cent), more manual workers (41.5 per cent instead of 29 per cent), and many more white collar workers (23 per cent instead of 6 per cent). Polish society consists now to a much larger extent of wage or salary earners. The traditional lower classes have now much better schools, better jobs and fringe benefits. However, the trends which developed extensively only in the sixties and seventies, started much earlier than 1945 when communists took power in Poland. These trends have to be primarily related to the general progress towards modernization of the country.

For Polish peasants, as presented by Paul Lewis, until the Second World War "the idea of the State (*panstwo*) remained etymologically and politically associated with the dominance of the 'gentleman' ('*Pan*')" (p. 35). Living on small holdings and having only very limited opportunities to find jobs outside agriculture, the peasants were in a disadvantageous position compared to all other classes. After 1945 they gained greatly by settling the devastated "western territories" and areas expropriated from the landlords, as well as by gaining for their products much better prices than during the inter-war period. However, their freedom became endangered by the forced collectivization campaign (stopped when Gomulka returned to power in 1956), obligatory deliveries, heavy taxes, shortage of bank credits, and various kinds of bureaucratic restrictions. The process of farm division has continued despite all measures imposed by the state to stop it. Moreover, the agricultural work force has aged very considerably because of the exodus of young people to towns and industry.

According to Lewis "Gomulka's policy had provided a structure in which the more pressing frustrations of the peasants could be eased; poor peasants who were unable to support themselves from agriculture could generally find off-farm work in the non-agricultural sectors of the economy" (p. 86). It seems possible to agree with Lewis that Gomulka's version of communism was for Polish peasants more irksome than oppressive (p. 86), and that they learned how to deal with bureaucratic institutions. However, such a relationship derived more from some kind of co-existence than from co-operation based on mutual trust. The state agencies still control the key elements of successful farming and the modernization of farms depends on the mutual "understanding" between their owners and local bureaucrats; farmers in order to secure some advantages for themselves have to bribe the officials. The heavy dependence of farmers on bureaucracy does not contribute to the security and the eagerness of owners to invest in their farms. This contributes to the relatively low efficiency of Polish agriculture.

Though an article by George Kolankiewicz deals with the Polish industrial manual working class his principal attention is focused on workers' councils and trade unions. It is

doubtful if both of them can be treated as representing the interests of that class. It is true that "the setting up of the workers' councils was a way of exposing the reality of the industrial situation, the bureaucracy of administration, the inexperienced management and the subservient trade unions" (p. 102). In all these respects the councils appeared more as a response to the crisis of the totalitarian structure, than as a means to satisfy the vivid interests of blue collars, especially those in lower ranks. The managerial element, professional intelligentsia and skilled workers had mutual interest in utilizing workers councils as a tool for at least some decentralization. "Workers' councils desired decentralization, since they felt it a necessary prerequisite for democratization within the enterprise. Similarly, senior management argues for decentralization, considering it a necessary precondition to expert and rational management" (p. 109). However, the interests underlying the whole idea of workers' councils remained weak and inconsistent. The leading bureaucrats in the Party and in the State had enough power to retard the spread of workers' councils, while the electorate in the factories was divided: "skilled workers had expectations concerning the role of the workers' councils which were considerably opposed [to] or inconsistent with those of the unskilled manual workers" (p. 113). In such a situation it was possible for the political establishment gradually to maneuver the workers' councils into a position of minor bureaucratic units subservient to the Party and fulfilling its policy in the field of production organization, efficiency and productivity. In this respect the present role of workers' councils differs but little from the traditional role of trade unions in the Soviet bloc.

George Gomori deals with the Polish cultural intelligentsia, and particularly with writers. He finds, despite obvious tensions, some common interests between *apparatchiks* and cultural intelligentsia. He notes that "although party functionaries in their official declarations speak about the working class as the vanguard of society and the most important class in present-day Poland, they are well aware of the fact that without the consent and co-operation and the participation of the intelligentsia no full development of a country's resources is possible. Also, whatever social pressures may exist in East European countries, a serious conflict will erupt only when a significant part of the intelligentsia breaks its alliance with the ruling communist bureaucracy and channels the forces of change into definite political action" (p. 154). It is a specific mixture of privilege and professional ambitions which pushes the cultural intelligentsia into opposition to the ruling establishment. The ambition of a writer is "to transcend the limitations of society including those imposed on society by the prevailing power structure, giving him a loyalty to the dialectics of change rather than to any political party" (p. 158). Yet the cultural intelligentsia is too much dependent on the *apparatchiks* to attempt a direct alliance with blue collars or farmers. The intellectuals will thunder against the "dictatorship of the numbskulls" but in reality they will not go beyond signing protests and denouncing one another in private for being too loyal to the regime. Gomori seems to exaggerate a little the resistance spirit among the cultural intelligentsia.

The co-operation with the establishment is even more evident among the technical intelligentsia, as described by George Kolankiewicz. Between 1958 and 1971 the number of people with higher education employed in the nationalized economy grew from 240,000 to 535,000 (women from 67,000 to 199,000) while the number of people with secondary professional education grew from 439,000 to 1,401,000 (women from 225,000 to 737,000). A large part of these were engineers and technicians. From a small privileged group during the interwar period (five thousand in 1921 and less than 15,000 by 1939), the engineers in particular have become very numerous. Employment of the engineering and technical personnel in the nationalized industry doubled in the period 1960-1971, while the membership of the technical professional associations grew even more rapidly. Such technical specialists, employed directly in production and management, have found it very useful to their careers to join the Party. In 1967 over two-fifths of all employed engineers were Party members — much more in production than in design, research and development.

The main value of the book consists in the treatment of Poland as a forum for the articulation of various group interests. In this respect the authors follow the methodological tradition promoted by Skilling. However, the actual choice of groups creates some doubts. Why should writers be studied and not scientists? Is the administrative and economic staff less important than the technical intelligentsia? What about people involved in military or para-military functions (army, militia, secret police, etc.)? What about students and youth in general? If, as seems probable, the choice of groups was dictated by the availability of empirical data more than by any other consideration, then it should be clearly stated in the book.

However, my main reservation about the book concerns the treatment of the structural framework of Polish society. The authors pay too little attention to the growing discrepancy between the rising aspirations of Polish masses and the formal structure of the state socialism. David Lane is probably wrong when he states that "the absence of a body of competent and educated citizens contributed to the setting up of a centralized bureaucratic system and was a major obstacle to the development of participant democracy within the framework of Polish socialism" (p. 310). The system was brought from Russia already rigid and highly centralized. In Czechoslovakia, for instance, the general educational level of the population was much higher than in Poland or in Russia but exactly the same model was imposed there too.

Lane says that "social groups become political groups by making claims on the political system" (p. 317), and that "the aggregation process will remain an obscure part of the Polish political system until studies are carried out in Poland on the regulation of conflict" (p. 318). It should be asked how various groups in Poland make claims on the system and how their demands are aggregated. Peasants as a group resist authority yet they are not organized into a coherent pressure force. The intelligentsia is far too internally differentiated in order to be able to act in a coherent manner. As regards manual workers, "paradoxically, their weak capacity for articulation as a political interest group through institutional channels may lead to wider class action. This is because, having common objective life chances and faced by a threat to their own security, groups of workers may spontaneously rebel against the authorities to assert their own rights. Thus, in October 1956 and December 1970 the workers briefly turned from being a fragmented set of groups to become a class 'for itself' — though this was limited in scope and did not include all workers" (p. 319).

In Poland, as in several other countries which experienced the rapid process of modernization, "the authoritarian structure remains tied to the party elites in which legitimacy is enshrined, whereas 'participant orientation' to politics has spread to social groups. Such might be groups of writers, factory managers and workers who without a well-based democratic societal infrastructure lack confidence to push their group interests. Changes in state socialist societies since 1956 may be explained by the fluctuating influence of these groups" (p. 321). The growing number and strength of various pressure groups in modernized Poland create new demands on the political system. The ruling party is some kind of a "fulcrum in a consultative but authoritarian political system" (p. 322). It depends on the ability of the party to deal with various groups which have their own sanctions against the establishment. "In extreme circumstances, they may refuse to produce, as peasants; they may work inefficiently, as members of the technical intelligentsia; or they may riot, or absent themselves from work, as the manual working class has done" (p. 324).

Lane makes clear that "the cement which holds together the social system is political: the institution of the party provides for State socialist society what private property supplies for capitalism, namely a value system which is codified into laws and which promotes social and political solidarity" (p. 326). Yet the question remains: how can a participatory political system emerge peacefully to suit state socialism, which has contributed so directly to a higher level of industrialization, to urbanization and to the general growing

sophistication of the masses? Only by analysis of specific case studies in Poland, where such peaceful participation has occurred, can the beginnings of an answer be found. Unfortunately, though a few such studies have already been completed, the authors have ignored them.

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RAY ALLEN BILLINGTON. — *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Given the vast literature on the frontier thesis, it is remarkable that Frederick Jackson Turner has heretofore lacked a biographer. It is fitting that Ray Billington, America's major exponent of the frontier thesis, should now pioneer that role. The opening of the Turner Papers in the Huntington Library provides a solid foundation for such a venture, amply augmented by gleaning from over fifty other manuscript collections and innumerable printed sources.

In his preface, Billington indicates his object is to write the biography of a college professor; but, as Billington takes pains to make clear, Turner was no ordinary college professor, which after all is the point of the book. Though the frontier thesis inevitably looms large, it is Billington's purpose to show that Turner's greatness as a historian rests on more than that. Indeed he wishes to lift the albatross of monocausationism from around Turner's neck. Turner was not merely a pioneer, but perhaps the father, of "The New History." He realized very early that the historian's proper study was the whole of society, not just politics and political institutions. He survived his graduate training under Herbert Baxter Adams more or less unscathed. Politics rested upon an economic base and all the social sciences provided the historian with his tools. He was among the first to realize the importance of economic and social history and he introduced them very early into his own courses. The common man was a topic worthy of the historian's attention and his quest should be for a usable past. Such was Turner's creed years before James Harvey Robinson wrote *The New History* and Charles A. Beard published his classic work. His reviews of Burgess, Rhodes and Von Holst written in 1890's indicate his insistence on probing beneath the surface of mere political events.

Billington reminds us that Turner was recognized by colleagues as a distinguished diplomatic historian, as well as pioneer in immigration history, although in that role he is something of a Jeremiah reflecting the Progressive suspicions of the alien newcomers in American society. Instrumental in the creation of the *Dictionary of American Biography*, he rendered his final service by doing much to transform the Huntington Library into the major research institution it is today.

The frontier thesis still dominates the book nevertheless. The greater part of it is devoted to the years of its gestation, birth and propagation, 1884-1910. The first five chapters record the emergence of the thesis just as they record the birth and intellectual maturing of Turner himself. This ground has already been recently traversed by Billington in *The Genesis of the Frontier Thesis* (San Marino: 1971). Those familiar with that work will find little new here. The biographical sections of the *Genesis* are now expanded, while those on the intellectual background are given in a briefer form. This is not only more appropriate to a biography but is in keeping with Billington's own rather Turnerian interpretation of the thesis itself — rooted in young Fred Turner's experiences in Portage, Wisconsin, to be later refined and nourished by subsequent observation and reading. What Turner really sought in the work of others was *how* the frontier shaped men and institutions; he needed no convincing that it did.