Sidney Waldman

Nicholas Bethell has given us both an interesting political portrait of Władysław Gomułka and a good political history of Poland since World War I. It is not a highly personal biography of Gomułka because intimate details of his personal life are unavailable to both Western and Eastern scholars. Rather it is a political biography that traces Gomułka's life as a member of the Communist Party of Poland between the two world wars, his rise to power in Soviet-occupied Poland, his downfall and arrest under Stalinism in the late 1940's, his resurrection in the Polish October of 1956 and his political collapse in the late 1960's.

Bethell analyzes recent Polish history as it centers around the rise of the Polish Communist Party and Gomułka in their various struggles. The author's argument that Gomułka was both a Communist and a patriot and not a patriot first and a Communist second, and his argument that Gomułka's purpose in his political career has been to show that communism and Polish patriotism are compatible, provide major themes throughout the work.

Perhaps the greatest shortcoming of Bethell's generally acute analysis is his failure to describe adequately and explain Gomułka's failures from 1958 to the end of his rule. Too often the author speaks about Gomułka's stubbornness and inflexibility during that period without giving the reader an adequate sense of the issues at stake in Gomułka's choices, his perspective in making these choices and a critique of that perspective.

Bethell's analysis of the dilemmas and failures of the Allied wartime leaders (and the Allied press) as they faced the problem of creating a new Polish government out of the conflict between the "London gov-
I ttl'hc rlctcnniiicd Gomiulka's actions philosophy as throughout his public lifc, of striltgy reveal facts in the first half of the book. His discussion of why Gomulka was not executed, while Rajk (Hungary), Kostov (Bulgaria) and Slansky (Czechoslovakia) were, despite the fact that they were less revisionist than Gomulka, is also extremely interesting. This analysis, like many in Bethell's book, benefits from his willingness to introduce a number of alternative explanations and eliminate those which can be disregarded, keeping others which are plausible.

The major flaw is the lack of depth at crucial points. For example, his analysis of why Gomulka rejected his 1956 supporters, e.g., Kola-kowski, Kott and Andrzejewski, is superficial. To say that "... once rebels come to power, they tend to lose their unorthodoxy. They will then seek to unload their rebellious friends, men who were once necessary and useful, but who cannot be expected to form part of orderly revolutionary government" is to be superficial. Whether or not this happens depends on the kind of revolution a particular leader has in mind, and Bethell's analysis of the substance of Gomulka's dispute with these men is cursory. More important, Bethell does not adequately describe the social and economic developments that caused Gomulka's shift in attitude from 1958 to 1970, nor does he give the leader's rationale for that shift except in a superficial way.

The author's repeated allusions to Gomulka's "honesty" (as a Communist he did what he thought was required and right, given the circumstances) seem somewhat naive and even apolitical in that they...
avoid the hard political and philosophical questions that one must raise in evaluating someone such as Gomulka. In his conclusion Bethell quotes with approval Milovan Dijljan's statement that Gomulka suffered from dogmatic blindness and narrow judgment. Yet he does not tell us, even briefly, what alternatives Gomulka should have pursued to avoid such narrowness and blindness. Surely that blindness and dogmatism are reflected in more than Gomulka's Stalinist-like attitude in supporting the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and his involvement, even if half-wittingly, in the anti-Semetic campaign in Poland of 1968. (Bethell commits one of his major errors in not seeing that Gomulka's encouragement of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia may have been partly or even largely motivated by his own internal political problems at that time when his own position was precarious.) Bethell's statement that history may judge Gomulka more favorably than we do because of his achievements in helping Eastern Europe move toward a more civilized polity ignores the question whether Gomulka was merely a symbol for forces operating in Poland in 1956 or made a major contribution in developing and maintaining those forces.

Gomulka is still an impressive piece of history, well researched, well written and extremely interesting. Those who write about Gomulka in the future will have to come to terms with Nicholas Bethell.

The Sovereign State of ITT
by Anthony Sampson
(Stein and Day; 323 pp.; $10.00)

Capitalism, Inflation and the Multinationals
by Charles Levinson
(Macmillan; 306 pp.; $7.95)

Lawrence A. Veit

Private enterprise has passed through a variety of stages since the beginning of the industrial revolution and has never been without its critics. Recently, critical attention has focused on the activities of the multinational corporations (MNCs), although interest in the global operations of companies is hardly new. Marx had his own version of the search for global markets, in which economic aggrandizement would lead inevitably to the destruction of Western imperialism. Needless to say, that scenario has proved incorrect, but if Marx were alive today there is little doubt that he would be very much interested in the activities of the multinationals.

In short, as the vehicle for hundreds of billions of dollars of world production, the MNC is an immensely complex phenomenon, and our efforts to understand it must be given high priority. But the best efforts of researchers and analysts alike have shown that it is no easy task to investigate even one company, much less generalize about the new role of multinationals. Thus, all new light is welcome, from whatever source.

Anthony Sampson has applied his extensive literary abilities to the corporate biography of one very, very interesting company, International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT). Describing ITT as powerful, arrogant and amoral, he shows that the company has consistently followed a policy of increasing corporate profits without regard to the social and economic interests of the United States or the many other countries into which it has extended its operations. He has chosen ITT, not because it is typical of MNCs, but because it is a "caricature." As such, its capers have spiced many a newspaper and clearly distinguish it as a prime source of material for his larger, deeper and more coherent effort. To his credit, he bends over backward to warn the reader that ITT's behavior is not typical of MNCs, albeit others are far from guiltless of similar indiscretions.

According to Sampson, the swashbuckling and highly individualistic Sosthenes Behn, the company's founder and chief executive for more than thirty years, established a pattern for company operations—maverick, coercive, secretive and collusive. But personality is not the only explanation for ITT's peculiar life-style; because its initial business was communications, the successful pursuit of profits required Behn to deal from strength with a variety of foreign governments, and this in turn called for the development of a potent private intelligence network and dirty tricks arsenal. (The reader is urged to refer to testimony in the Watergate hearings.)

Sampson develops this theme in a variety of ways, but perhaps his most fascinating evidence comes from confidential U.S. Government files which have only recently been declassified. These show that ITT's behavior prior to and during the Second World War was something less than exemplary. In its single-minded pursuit of profits, and to avoid expropriation, the company was much more cooperative with the Nazis than other American firms, and, according to Sampson, if the Germans had won the war, ITT's excellent diplomacy would have made the company appear "impeccably Nazi; as they lost, it reemerged as impecably American." ITT's occasional cooperation with Allied Intelligence does not seem sufficient justification for the government's failure to punish the company for