In the course of his examination of Polish society in early modern times, Professor Kula offers some acute observations. A “perfect market” is nothing more than a theoretical abstraction. Feudal enterprise always appears profitable when one calculates only the money invested; but if one calculates the real costs, especially labor, that enterprise is almost always unprofitable. The peasant goes to market only to acquire a certain, fixed sum of money, and, therefore, he sells less when prices are high and more when prices are low. In capitalism, economic crisis is a result of a fall in prices; economic crisis occurs under feudalism when prices rise. The peasant produces more from his own land than from the land of the lord, given the same technical means. (There may be a lesson here for some contemporary societies.) When conducting macroeconomic studies, one should disregard periods of turmoil. Economic activity is deemed more rational as the range of alternatives increases. Few would argue against the author’s assertion concerning the “perfect market”; one might, however, question the other assertions.

Professor Kula has conducted a careful and enlightening investigation of Poland during early modern times. He offers useful and provocative suggestions to others who would join him in that examination, claiming only that his work is initiative, not definitive. According to his theory, there were several salient causes of the transformation from feudalism to modern society in Poland: the rate of interest on money fell to a level below the profit margins of the agricultural estates; the mobility of the population led to the near-emergence of a wage-labor market in agriculture; the struggle of peasants for access to a market slowly created a market; the Partitions, threats to the country’s independence, and the rigors of defending the country (for example, during the Napoleonic Wars) helped to undo old institutions; and institutional reforms, such as the introduction of mortgage credit, strict taxation, and the abolition of serfdom in the Duchy of Warsaw, replaced old with new.

Professor Kula’s book is an impressive exercise in examining phenomena and placing them in an order which explains the nature of a given society and which aids in the study of other societies. Some may take exception to his method, or ask different questions and find different answers, but Professor Kula is a pioneer in method and has taken long and important strides along the path toward understanding. Professor Kula deserves our appreciation, even though one may have serious doubts about whether humanly imposed order applied to history is capable of revealing accurately and completely the truth of history.

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The ironmasters of sixteenth-century Poland were an unusual and interesting segment of the population. They were largely outside the folwark system and moved freely from forge to forge in the hills of Little Poland and Silesia. They were even ethnically a bit distinct. Many of them were the descendants of German immigrants and, although they were largely Polonized, they still displayed a curious mixture of German and Slavic names. Ironworking in this area began to decline in the last third of the century, but still had the vitality to inspire one of the few descriptions of ironworking in Europe to survive from so early a date, now translated into English. This description is largely of interest to the historian of technology, however, because it contains little of impor-
tance for economic historians that can be understood without a detailed knowledge of
the history of the period. Indeed, much of Roździeński’s information will be obscure
even for the technologist, and it is unfortunate that the introduction does not go into
the subject with more detail. Piaskowski’s very brief summary of the history of iron-
working in Poland is simply not enough to fill in the gap for the reader who does not
know Polish (at whom this translation is presumably directed), and his brevity results
in a description that is occasionally misleading—as in the case of the decline of iron-
working, here (p. 9) attributed solely to the greed of the szlachta in an era of rising
grain prices. While the economic necessities of the nobility played a part in the process,
it was a more complex part than Piaskowski indicates. He relies mainly on Zientara’s
1954 work on the subject, but much has been written since then to round out the picture.

Piaskowski’s thorough Polonization of Silesian names, though understandable, is
no more commendable than the German habit of completely Germanizing them. This
practice extends to Archduke “Ferdynand,” whom the nonspecialist reader may have
trouble identifying as Emperor Ferdinand I, at that time already king of Bohemia and
therefore suzerain of Silesia. Equally useless for those who do not read Polish is the
bibliography of works on ironworking and on Roździeński, which consists mainly of
items in Polish. A shorter list of articles in Western languages by Polish scholars in
the general area of social and economic history of sixteenth-century Poland would
have been much more important in filling in the gaps left by the introduction.

The translation is good, and follows the sensible practice of emphasizing accuracy
over grace. Roździeński is not always perfectly clear, and the translator has faithfully
rendered his ambiguities. Comprehension of the text would have been aided by notes,
however, because there are numerous references to places, people, and institutions
which the reader not specializing in Polish and East European history will inevitably
find puzzling. The 1962 Polish edition included forty pages of notes (even giving both
Polish and German names of places in Silesia), and something of this kind would have
been extremely useful in this edition. Since it is unlikely that such a work will appear in
a second English edition, it is a misfortune that the translation has not been supported
by a better apparatus.

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TWENTIETH-CENTURY CZECHOSLOVAKIA: THE MEANINGS OF ITS
346 pp. $14.95.

This is, unfortunately, Josef Korbel’s last book—he died in June 1977 at the age of
68, leaving behind only the skeleton of another book about the Czechoslovak legions in
the First World War—and it is by far his best and most mature work, the fruit of a
lifelong love affair with his country of origin.

Professor Korbel first describes the roots of the new state which emerged in 1918
and tells the history of the First Republic (1918–38). The years of progress are
followed by the years of darkness (1938–45), the years of hope and fears (1945–48),
the years of shame (1948–62), and finally the Sisyphean years (1962–68). The book
culminates in a masterly description of the Prague Spring of 1968 and its sad conse-
quences. The author is right in calling the slogan “socialism with a human face”
elloquent in its simplicity and succinct in its meaning, but he is mistaken in his belief
that it is “Dubček’s brilliant phrase.” Whatever his merits otherwise, Dubček never
coined this slogan which was born more or less by chance. The dissenters of 1968 got
hold of a formula contained in the Action Program of April 1968 (of which Dubček
is not even coauthor) and complained that the Gottwald-Novotný policy had led to