

Jan Reychman, *Zycie polskie w Stambule w XVIII wieku* [Polish Life in Istambul in the XVIII Century]. Warszawa, Poland: Panstwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1959. Pp. 312.

There is a relatively substantial literature on various aspects of the relations of Western European states — Venice, France, England, Austria, the Netherlands — with the old Ottoman-Turkish Empire. Little, however, is known about the relations between Eastern Europe and the empire. It is therefore gratifying to have the aforementioned book which attempts to fill this gap as far as one of the countries — Poland — is concerned. It deals with the numerous contacts between the ancient Polish Kingdom and Ottoman-Turkey during the eighteenth century — a period that witnessed the political decline of both states, and Poland's extinction as an independent nation. Its author, Dr. Jan Reychman, a professor at the University of Warsaw and one of the leading Polish orientalists, has for the past three and a half decades concerned himself with his country's contacts with the Turkish Empire. His indefatigable researches in archival sources, both published and in manuscript form, in diplomatic and other correspondence, and in contemporary accounts, have resulted in many monographic studies and articles on different aspects of these relationships. He has used a number of his investigations in the preparation of the present work. The value of this comprehensive, scholarly, elegantly written book is enhanced by the fact that much of the manuscript material which the author has utilized no longer exists; it was lost when the Krasinski Library (Biblioteka Krasinskish), where most of the documents were available, was burned in 1944.

Poland's contacts with the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century were diplomatic, commercial, cultural, and other. But Reychman concentrates on the people who were involved in these relations. As he says in the preface to the study, his purpose is "to show live people, in concrete, real situations, on the basis of real, albeit somewhat peculiar conditions of Polish life in Istambul in the XVIII century." His pages then are a gallery of different groups of Poles who came or drifted into the Ottoman capital in "*le galant XVIII siècle*" and became a part of the life of the European colony there: the courtly envoys and diplomats; the dragomans and Polish *jeunes de langues* (*Sprachknaben*); the travelers and artists; the women; the traders and the mercantilists; and the repatriates, Turcophiles, and emigrants. He also gives a detailed account of "the center of Polish Jacobins in Istambul toward the end

of the XVIII century," which came into being in support of the French Revolution and of the Polish sympathizers with the revolutionary regime. Lastly, he critically examines the famous, persistent "legend" of a "Polish embassy residence" in the capital. As the Polish-Turkish diplomatic and trade relations are likely to interest most readers of this journal, the comments which follow will be confined to these two areas.

There was no permanent Polish colony in Istambul prior to the eighteenth century, although the diplomatic relations between the Polish Kingdom and Ottoman-Turkey had dated back to about 1414, when the first Polish legates were sent to the High Porte (A. Zajasczkowski and J. Reychman, *Zarys dyplomatyki osmansko-tureckiej*. Warsaw, 1955, p. 115). The relations had been sporadic through the centuries, Polish representatives being dispatched only on special occasion — to negotiate an armistice, to conclude a treaty, or to report to the Sultan about the accession of a new king. Likewise the trade between the two states had been negligible.

The situation changed after the treaty of Karlowitz (1699), when Poland and the Turkish Empire simultaneously saw themselves threatened by Russian aggression. Poland, in its attempt to secure its integrity by basing its politics on Ottoman support, sought to establish permanent relations with the Porte. It did indeed secure the privilege of sojourn for its missions, but the Turks turned down its request for a permanent embassy. Despite this, however, "the stay of Polish representatives in fact became continuous, uninterrupted" in the second half of the eighteenth century. Reychman presents vivid character sketches and descriptions of the activities of the Polish envoys, from Rafal Leszczynski — sent to the High Porte by king August II in 1700, with the ratified treaty of Karlowitz — to Piotr Potocki, the last ambassador of independent Poland, on whom devolved the unpleasant task of liquidating his mission in 1792, owing to Catherine II's strong opposition to him. She demanded his recall because "he did not neglect anything to create suspicions and urge the Turkish cabinet to interfere in Polish affairs." This coercion came on the eve of the second partition of Poland. However, Reychman does not offer a political evaluation of the Polish legations in Istambul during the eighteenth century, for, as he says, "We know that the legations played no great role, as the Kingdom of that day possessed no strong political conception." On the other hand, his general evaluation of the representatives themselves are revealing.

Of the Poles appointed during the first half of the century, the author says: "Persons appointed for Turkish missions were for the most

part rather mediocre characters, not measuring up to the importance of their tasks, they indeed cut brilliant figures, but were of weak minds, with little knowledge of the country to which they were sent, and with limited diplomatic qualifications." But the caliber of the representatives improved under Stanislaw August — the last Polish king; reg. 1764-95: "From Stanislaw August's accession to the throne legations to Turkey began to assume a more respectable character, the envoys are already true diplomats, in the missions there is no lack of people with knowledge of the area, of wider interests, the results of these legations we can still today appreciate, although their diplomatic results were continually scanty." In fact, that king's first representative, Tomasz Aleksandrowicz — dispatched to inform the High Porte (1766) of his master's accession to the throne — though not an outstanding personality, and though he was not able to instill confidence in the Porte toward the king, because of the latter's strong partisanship for Russia, nevertheless, secretly laid the foundations for a permanent representation of Poland in Istambul: "the service of the dragomans was reformed, a chancellery and a school of oriental studies for the education of future dragomans set up, and an interest was taken in the organization of a post-office. The embassy now became a real office." Reychman devotes much space to the auxiliary institutions — the oriental school and post-office — of the Polish legation, so vital for the carrying on of its diplomatic activities. It may be noted that the post-office was part of every foreign embassy in Istambul at that time; a number of them had continued down to the establishment of the Turkish Republic. In his description of the Polish post office, the author has used his very first article that dealt with this particular subject, published when he was "a first year student at the University of Warsaw."

The economic provisions of the treaty of Karlowitz also contributed to an expansion of Polish trade with Ottoman-Turkey — a significant, but little known chapter in Poland's economic development during the eighteenth century.

The treaty (article 8) "created the legal conditions" for regulating the commerce, which till then was nothing but "organized smuggling." Furthermore, prior to the treaty, Polish trade — controlled by Armenians on both sides of the frontiers — was unfavorable. It consisted of imports of luxury items for its wealthy classes, while Polish exports to Turkey included a few raw materials and liquor — the latter destined for consumption by the Sultan's Christian subjects.

Although at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the trade be-

tween the two partners "was miserable, based on backward methods," as both countries were little developed, it gradually improved and expanded, especially during the last three decades of the century, under the impact of Poland's "first stages of the capitalistic system." Moreover, Prussia's closing the door to Poland's commerce with the West after the first partition of the Kingdom (1772), forced Poles to search for new trade routes to the Ottoman domains, as the old Armenian caravan trails over the Balkans no longer sufficed for transporting bulky products (e.g. wheat) that more and more came to comprise Polish exports. In this process, the Poles pioneered in the utilization of waterways, such as the Dniester (and with Russia's permission, the Dniaper) for the transport of exports, and in the establishment, through connection with the Dniester, of navigation on the Black Sea, which "by the middle of the XVIII century was not yet accessible to European shipping." Reychman gives an excellent account of these Polish activities and describes the contributions of the many people — both foreigners in the Polish service and Poles — who played a leading role in them. As the author makes clear, this work was done chiefly by individual entrepreneurs, "as the few official representatives of the Kingdom or the royal agents had little interest in the trade." These pioneers were businessmen and noblemen. The latter, whom the author calls "mercantilists," probably contributed most to the success of the various projects concerned with the expansion of the trade. Among them — to mention a few of the outstanding ones — were: Thomas Hugon, a Frenchman in the Polish service, an one-time Prussian *Comerziallrath*, "who proposed a series of projects for the organization of the Polish trade in the East" (1780); duke Nassau, who, in order to obtain Polish citizenship rights, "on his own explored "the course of the [Dniester] river, pointed out its navigability, and drew a map of the river" (1784); the young and enterprising Polish nobleman, Walerian Dzieduszynski — "not a man of business interests, but a citizen, a statesman," who was the first to organize a fleet of ships (1785), and insisted on trading in the Ottoman territories under his nation's flag, claiming this right on the basis of "treaties which guaranteed freedom for the Polish flag"; and the Polish officials, Michael Poniatowski and Antoni Onufry Okiecki, on whose initiative the *Kompania dla Handlu Wschodniego* (Company for the Eastern Trade), a joint-stock company, was formed in 1782, and which was managed by Prot Potocki.

The growth of Poland's diplomatic and trade relations with the Turkish Empire in the eighteenth century led to the creation of a Polish

colony in Istanbul, as Poles came there not only to carry on these activities, but also in many other capacities, including that of missionaries for the protection of the Catholic faithful in Turkey. The community grew in number as the century was closing, when the partitions of the kingdom and the abortive revolts of the Poles brought many exiles to the Ottoman capital in the vain hope of obtaining the support of the High Porte in their struggle for national liberation. For the ancient Polish Kingdom ceased to exist.

Reychman's highly valuable work has twenty-one pages of annotations; a three-page dictionary of oriental expressions; an index of names of ten pages; and is enriched by eighty-seven contemporary illustrations. It is deserving of a translation into one of the more accessible Western European languages.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

ARTHUR LEON HORNIKER

Theodor Vrettos, *Hammer on the Sea*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965. Pp. 182.

This is a very short novel with a given theme. The preconceived theme is the religious conflict and rehabilitation of a young Greek guerrilla fighter in German-occupied and tortured Greece during the years 1942 and 1943. But neither the novel's important theme nor its terrible background, Greece during that period, is plausibly dealt with or shown convincingly. Stavro, the hero of the novel, is not justified as a character from his actions or from his words. He is confused, not because of his beliefs or lack of any belief, but because of the author's failure to present him clearly as he really is, *i.e.* as his author wants him to be. And the other characters in the novel — guerrilla fighters, priests, common people — are not presented any better, except perhaps Uncle Petro, the only person occasionally making some sense, though most of the time babbles nonsense or obscenities.

The author tries hard to be factual, yet he seldom succeeds. Often he has no sense of time and place. For instance, on November 12, 1942, Stavro, the author tells us, was 23 years old and his uncle Petro 48; but in December 1943 they are still 23 and 48 respectively! The village Platano, the author says, is on the slopes of Taygetos and a harbor on the Aegean, but it is also near Kalamata in the most southern part of Greece to the West! These are only two of the many inaccuracies and inconsistencies of the narration. They are not important in themselves, except