

in leading Yugoslav periodicals: in the *Zora Dalmatinska* in Zadar and the *Podunavka* in Belgrade. A comprehensive translation of the *Comedy* was accomplished in 1910 by the Bishop of Kotor, Franjo Tice-Uccellini, in decasyllabic verse and with commentaries: *Divna Gluma*. The most recent attempt of this type is the Kombol-Delorko translation. Professor Cronia particularly stresses the accomplished metrical and musical faithfulness of the Serbo-Croat translation to the Italian original.

The final chapter of the book is dedicated to Dante studies in Serbia and Croatia. Cronia's argument that there were no Dantologists in these areas equivalent to Dante scholars in France, Germany, England and other countries, where the study and scientific elaboration of individual problems and themes in Dante's works was taking place, seems somewhat exaggerated in light of the scholarly contributions of Mirko Deanović, Bishop Tice-Uccellini, Mihovil Kombol, et. al. The author does however, emphasize the lively interest in Dante extending from the middle of the nineteenth century down to the present day.

Finally, it is clear that Cronia's book has fully accomplished its objective by providing us with an exhaustive study of Serbo-Croatian interest in the great Italian poet. It will serve as a springboard and an incentive for further detailed research, and it should therefore be hailed as a major event in comparative Slavic literary studies.

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J.B. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis, 1934-1941*. New York : Columbia University Press, 1962. Pp. XV + 328.

Jacob Hoptner's volume traces the complicated course charted by Yugoslav diplomacy in its efforts to ward off attack by Italy and Germany in the years when the Axis powers were gaining control of Central Europe and the Balkans. The failure of this policy, Mr. Hoptner feels, has been unjustly exploited by those who cannot forgive the Yugoslav government for seeking to assure its own survival through a rapprochement with Italy and Germany at the expense of Yugoslavia's traditional allies in the West. The author wishes to set the record straight; if he does not exactly exonerate the Yugoslav diplomats, he certainly goes to their defense, attempting to demonstrate that in the circumstances they were compelled to act as they did to protect their country's vital interests.

Mr. Hoptner has impressive evidence at his disposal to support his

arguments. He has gained access to the dispatches of the Yugoslav government, examined the personal papers of Milan Stojadinović, and talked extensively with many of the persons who were directly involved in the events in question. Whether one agrees with Mr. Hoptner's thesis or not, the result of his labors is a remarkable book which dramatically re-creates the last agonizing years of Yugoslavia's struggle for survival in the twilight of independent Eastern Europe.

Mr. Hoptner is most effective when dealing with the coup d'état of March 27, 1941, demolishing many of the myths that have grown up in connection with this dramatic incident. His account is especially valuable in demonstrating how those who seized power were forced to adopt exactly the same policies toward Germany as the deposed Cvetković government. In vain the conspirators tried to persuade the Axis that Yugoslavia would remain loyal to her commitments under the Tripartite Pact. The Germans were convinced that Yugoslavia could no longer be trusted, and invaded the country within two weeks.

At the time of the coup Churchill announced that Yugoslavia had "found her soul," and Mr. Hoptner has some particularly harsh words for this famous utterance, which he feels demonstrates Churchill's readiness to sacrifice Yugoslavia for the sake of British interests. In fact Mr. Hoptner shows such delight in taking the British to task that one begins to doubt his objectivity in discussing Anglo-Yugoslav relations. Granted, Britain's policy toward Yugoslavia in the inter-war period left much to be desired. But Mr. Hoptner's account makes absolutely no attempt to see the situation from the British point of view.

One might also question the manner in which Mr. Hoptner uses his sources. Throughout much of the book it seems that the tail is wagging the dog, for the views of the diplomats and politicians, reproduced at great length from diplomatic dispatches and other sources, crowd the author out of the picture. Perhaps for this reason, Mr. Hoptner deals with essential points in only a haphazard fashion, if at all. The reader must search diligently to ascertain the pro-fascist sympathies of Stojadinović, and the role of the Communists in the events of March 27 are ignored.

Mr. Hoptner has been strongly attacked by those who disagree with his interpretation of the problems which Yugoslavia faced in foreign policy before World War II. Writing in *Istorijski časopis* (No. 2, 1963), a Yugoslav reviewer, Dušan Bogdanović has taken the author to task for ignoring the Communist view of the events in question and failing to use materials which have appeared in Yugoslavia since 1945 (for example Ćulinović, *Slom stare Jugoslavije*). An English reviewer has sharply criti-

cized Hoptner for ignoring the role of the Communists in the pre-war period and writing an apology for the Stojadinović and Cvetković regimes out of anti-Communist motives. Both of these attacks seem wide of the mark. There is absolutely no grounds for charging Mr. Hoptner with "anti-Communist" motives (and even if this was true, one wonders why it should be mentioned). As far as Communist literature on the pre-war period is concerned, it leaves much to be desired, and Mr. Hoptner can be excused for not referring to it. The fact of the matter is that, despite certain shortcomings, Mr. Hoptner's book is an indispensable work on Yugoslavia, and is frequently cited by historians in Yugoslavia as well as in the West.

Of course it is still possible to take issue with much of what Mr. Hoptner says. One can agree that Yugoslavia had the right to protect her vital interests, even if this meant striking a deal with the Axis. The fact remains, however, that the Yugoslav government (at least after it was freed of the influence of Stojadinović) persisted in maintaining its Western ties until the very last moment rather than coming to terms earlier with the Germans, as a policy of *Realpolitik* might have dictated. Was this policy of "brinkmanship" just as correct as the decision to join the Tripartite Pact? To be consistent, Hoptner would have to argue that the government of Cvetković was primarily to blame for the disaster of 1941, since it delayed Yugoslavia's association with the Axis powers until it was too late.

Mr. Hoptner would have strengthened his position if he had cautiously suggested what *might* have occurred had Yugoslavia remained a member of the Tripartite Pact. This is really the crux of the matter, for the author clearly feels that such an outcome would have been to the country's advantage. In fact this might well have been so. Contrary to widespread opinion, Yugoslavia's situation was not hopeless. When the Second World War broke out the country occupied a key position in the Balkans, and her army was highly respected by the Axis powers. The Yugoslav diplomatic corps showed skill and determination in exploiting this situation, exacting maximum concessions from the Germans before being forced to sign the Tripartite Pact. After the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Germans would have found it extremely difficult to divert the troops necessary to subdue Yugoslavia, and Yugoslavia's role as a benevolent neutral might have been extremely valuable to the Allies in the latter stages of the war.

If the possibility for playing such a role existed, however, it was only because the Yugoslavs obtained important concessions from the

Germans when signing the Tripartite Pact, assuring Yugoslavia the position of a genuine neutral even while nominally a member of the Axis bloc. In turn, one cannot really explain this success without understanding how stubbornly Yugoslavia resisted German blandishments out of loyalty to the West.

The tragedy of Yugoslavias' fate in 1941 lay in the fact that skilled diplomacy and sheer courage had brought her to the verge of a great diplomatic victory which could have aided the West, but the same urge for freedom sparked the events of March 27 and destroyed this golden opportunity. Mr. Hoptner is undoubtedly right in saying that the West was shortsighted in criticizing Yugoslav diplomacy and welcoming the events of March 27, but he has not perhaps explored the full implications of his position.

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Kazimierz Grzybowski, *The Socialist Commonwealth of Nations: Organization and Institutions*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964. Pp. XVII + 300.

Mr. Grzybowski's stated purpose is "to describe and analyze... the organization, aims, and activities of the socialist commonwealth, and to trace their evolution, their techniques of international cooperation, and their function in the regional arrangements of the socialist bloc." This is an ambitious set of objectives; and the fact that Mr. Grzybowski falls somewhat short of achieving them neither discredits his research nor detracts from the valuable insights he provides into the legal intricacies of Eastbloc institutions.

Indeed, the book's unique contribution stems from Mr. Grzybowski's training in law. He writes with authority and persuasion when he unravels the administrative complexities of such organs as the Danube Commission, or when (pp. 33-36) he analyzes the dual character of the Soviet-type trading enterprise. Perhaps the book's shortcomings, as well as its strengths, are attributable to the author's legal background. For his economic analysis of CMEA<sup>1</sup> often seems unsophisticated and uncritical, and his perception of political reality within the CMEA complex is obscured at times by too formalistic a treatment.

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1. CMEA, or Comecon, is the abbreviation for the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance, established by the USSR in 1949 to coordinate economic activities within the Soviet bloc. Its membership includes the USSR, the countries of Eastern Europe (excluding Albania and Yugoslavia), and Outer Mongolia.