“T. G. Masaryk and Nationalism.” The author’s judgment of Czech nationalism is basically negative. It “succeeded only to a limited extent: the rival ideologies failed to attract mass political followings and had a negative effect on the organizational stability of conservative bodies such as the Czech Catholic Church” (p. 102). There is an underlying Roman Catholic orientation here, an approach that is reflected in the fact that the chapter on “Nationalism and Catholicism” is the longest in the volume. Whatever reservations a critic might voice about this chapter, it will be tempered by the recognition that it explores a much-neglected topic. The author’s sympathies lead him sometimes astray, however, notably in the discussion of the revolution of 1848. His observation that “the revolutionary events of 1848 retained a clear clerical character” is a case in point. One of his supporting arguments is that “The Slavonic Congress” of that year “was organized by Catholic clerics” (p. 74). In fact this is wholly inaccurate. Among the twelve members of a committee chosen to organize the congress, there was not a single Catholic cleric; not to mention the fact that both the president and the key-note speaker of the congress were Protestant lay people (Palacký and Safářík). The author plays down the forceful anti-clerical tendencies present in the Czech national movement of the time, moreover, exemplified by Karel Havlíček (himself a Catholic and a disillusioned ex-seminarian), the founder of modern Czech journalism, and writ large across the pages of most of the Czech press. As a result, the treatment of the 1848 revolution verges on caricature.

The author is well informed about the later decades, but in general the account is marred by too many casually dispensed judgments and non sequiturs, and it is difficult at times to extract meaning and purpose from the argument. In the chapter of conclusions, we are told that the progress of Czech nationalism “was rather faltering and chequered. In a sense it consisted of unexpected jumps: from semi-feudal conditions it jumped into semi-liberal ones, only to plunge into democracy after 1906... the [nationalist] ideologies might have brought about vigorous intellectual activity, historical and philosophical research and journalistic furore but their end results were naught, if not confusion” (pp. 101-102). Many a reader, including this one, will stand helpless before such ruminations and will be hard put to puzzle them out. To conclude, a comprehensive modern study of Czech nationalism is much needed, but the author has missed an opportunity to fill the gap. The field continues to be open.

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The Polish response to statelessness after the third partition of Poland took two diverging paths. As Stanislaus Blejwas notes in his excellent study, the more famous response was armed insurrection as represented by the romantic tradition. The second response opted for “organic work” as represented by the positivist tradition. The proponents of this view repudiated armed insurrection and stressed instead cultural and economic endeavors. These Poles believed that “organic work” was the most realistic method for defending the interests of the nation during this period of subjugation.

Many historians have concluded that the positivist tradition was alien to Polish political thought because it rejected independence. To be sure, positivism was not viewed as being altogether an aberration, it has nonetheless been portrayed as a distasteful alternative. It is that assumption that Blejwas questions. While the book focuses on the Warsaw positivists of the nineteenth century, the well-structured arguments have lasting positive implications for Polish political realism.
Realism in Polish Politics helps fill a gap in a badly neglected area of research on Polish politics. The fact that the romantic tradition has appeared for some scholars to be a more appealing response to the Polish dilemma and the very complexity of the positivist response are partly responsible for the rejection of the positivists. Nevertheless, Blejwas clearly points out that the aims of the positivists were to preserve the Polish national identity through the advancement of education, commerce, and economic reform in return for a recognition of the existing geopolitical reality.

Through a detailed analysis of the economic, social, and political developments in nineteenth-century Poland, Blejwas deals effectively with the many misconceptions held about the positivists. More important, he shows that this current in Polish history was both dynamic and assertive. The positivists are portrayed as a very important component in the struggle for Polish independence. Positivism was based on a profound belief that only "the strong would survive, and the ability to survive did not rest on military success, but a strong industrial and commercial base. . . . Only such a base would enable the Polish nation to resist integration into the organism of a foreign state." (p. 193).

The most striking part of the book is the Afterword. The reader is quickly led through a discussion of political realism from the rejection of positivism in the 1880s, to the Solidarity period. Blejwas adds to previous studies that call Roman Dmowski a political realist and notes the vital role played by his National Democratic movement in restoring Poland's independence. The fourth partition of Poland during World War II and the subsequent communist take-over, however, renewed the discussion of realism and idealism for the Poles. Nevertheless the tragic defeat of the Polish Home Army, Western rejection of aid to Poland, and Stalinist rule deprived the Poles of realistic options.

The Polish October of 1956 brought with it a renewed—if limited—discussion on the future of Poland. Blejwas then describes the birth of "neopositivism," led by some Polish Catholics who recognized the nation's geopolitical difficulty. These neopositivists were permitted to have five deputies elected to the Sejm and formed the Znak parliamentary circle. Znak was willing to repudiate the "all or none mentality."

It is at this point that the reviewer has a serious disagreement with the thesis of the book. Blejwas refutes the notion that the student protests of 1968, the workers' protests of 1970, and the opposition to the proposed 1976 constitutional amendments were the revival of the romantic tradition in Poland. His evidence is based on the opposition having rejected armed insurrection and some of the early writings of Jacek Kuron which, Blejwas claims, reflect the views of the nineteenth-century positivist Alexander Swietochowski.

Blejwas also makes sweeping conclusions about Solidarity. He insists that the paradox of Solidarity lay in it not being a romantic, but a realistic uprising. This interesting conclusion, however, is weakened by the meager and selective evidence used to support it. Solidarity quickly became a victim of the frustration most Poles felt after thirty-five years of failed promises and corrupt rule. Yet Solidarity's repudiation of insurrection did not eliminate the other elements of the romantic tradition. The messianic image Solidarity displayed in the just belief in its cause, the almost taunting attitude of some senior Solidarity advisors, who felt that the Soviets would not act against a ten-million member organization, the openness of anti-Russian sentiments in Poland, and the frequent calling upon the West to support Solidarity cannot go unnoticed.

Even the evidence produced by Blejwas that "organic work" could not be possible under the present political system does not do justice to the contemporary political realists who recognize the differences between the nineteenth-century economic possibilities for Poland and present limitations. The cases of East Germany and Hungary and the room for some personal initiative should be noted.

In conclusion, despite some differences of opinion with Blejwas, the reviewer considers this book without doubt an important contribution to the study of Polish politics,