

MARIDA HOLLOS and BELA C. MADAY, eds. — *New Hungarian Peasants: An East Central European Experience with Collectivization*. New York, Brooklyn College Press, 1983. Distributed by Columbia University Press.

Economists, both in the East and in the West, have studied the Hungarian economic reforms and expressed admiration for them. Even the general public in Eastern Europe, and to a lesser extent in the West, followed the Hungarian economic developments with some interest. The social changes, however, that occurred in the country at least partially as a result of the economic reforms, have received much less attention. This is a pity for fascinating changes have taken place in Hungary. A country that never had a native bourgeoisie is in the process of creating one under Communist auspices. Bourgeois values, finally, have come to conquer.

The book under review deserves attention for it makes a contribution to the understanding of an interesting and important subject. The very idea of the book is an example of Hungarian accomplishments. The volume is made up of thirteen articles written by thirteen scholars, of whom five are Hungarians, who live in that country. Remarkably, from internal evidence it is almost impossible to tell whether the author of an article is a product of a Communist education system, or a Western social scientist. All the contributors share the same analytical framework and refer to the same scholarly literature.

The articles deal with different aspects of life in the modern village. Unlike most other collections of this kind, the volume is a coherent unit; there are only a few repetitions, and it is possible to talk about the book as a whole.

The authors give the general reader an excellent sense of life in the village. They demonstrate that the last four decades were a period of extremely fast change. After the dreadful failure of the initial attempts to force the peasants to give up their newly-acquired land and move into collectives, the post-revolutionary government invested heavily in farming and experimented with an organization of agriculture that included collectives, but at the same time did not exclude the role for private initiative. As Marida Hollos puts it perceptively: "In this generation of farmers, I suggest, it is the cooperative structure that has adjusted to the habits and wishes of its members rather than the members to the structure."

Michael Sozan shows that now a dual system of agriculture exists, in which productive cooperative farms coexist with even more productive private "household plots." The tremendous profitability of private forms of agricultural work, be it animal husbandry, vegetable growing or viticulture, undermines the ideological claims for Marxist-Leninist principles. The new socialist man certainly has not emerged. On the other hand, the Hungarian peasant has become incomparably richer than he has ever been. So much so, that his standard of living has become the envy of the urban dwellers and such an envy might lead to the development of new forms of class antagonisms.

The increase in prosperity, the new economic order, in which land beyond a certain amount could not be privately owned, and, very importantly, the opening of non-agricultural job possibilities for the inhabitants of the village, led to an extremely rapid change in values and life style. Several articles trace these changes. Katalin Gergely demonstrates how peasant women gradually gave up wearing traditional clothes (starting with shoes and ending with headgear), and instead turned to town clothing as a model. At the same time, however, there has been an increase of interest in old-fashioned costumes for festive occasions. Mihaly Hoppal describes how the old and new belief systems and life styles coexist. He mentions that the new life style isolates people and destroys their sense of community. People spend time away from the village and gradually lose contact with one another. The villagers, instead of gathering in public places, now often stay home and watch television. They often know more about the quality of the harvest in other parts of the country from the mass media, than they know about the economic circumstances of their neighbours.

Inevitably, some articles are more interesting than others. The editors could safely have omitted two pieces: one by Kathleen Szent-Gyorgyi, which is an unfortunate example of the worst in social

science, and seems to have no point; and one by Conrad Reining, who disarmingly confesses at the outset that his article was an unplanned by-product of a larger study of a different topic. Indeed, he lacks the expertise that the other contributors so obviously have.

The general reader, who is neither a scholar of modern Hungary nor an anthropologist, would benefit from a longer introduction that would place Hungarian agriculture within the context of the national economy. Further, most readers would want to know more about the historical background, especially about the difficult years between the land reform of 1945 and the second collectivization of 1959.

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KEVIN O'NEILL — *Famine and Farm in Pre-Famine Ireland. The Parish of Killeshandra*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984. Pp. xiv, 232.

Although local studies have long been a strong part of the English and Scottish historiographic tradition, they have been rare in Irish historical writing. This is only the second parish-based study done by a professional historian. The first was my own study of Islandmagee, County Antrim, and this volume by Dr. O'Neill is a quantum step forward from that benchmark in its sophisticated and focused use of parish data to illuminate historical questions of national importance.

To appreciate this fascinating study, one must realize what it is not: it is not a cultural or social history. It is "hard" history in the sense of being an attempt to explain the demographic patterns of a single pre-Famine parish by the use of economic variables. The parish of Killeshandra in County Cavan is not presented as being either typical or atypical, but rather as an important laboratory for discovering fundamental processes that may well have permeated hundreds of other Irish parishes in those dark years before the Famine. Since Killeshandra is virtually the only Irish parish for which manuscript census data survive, it is an extremely important laboratory indeed.

Dr. O'Neill presents a tightly-argued model of demographic transition that he denominates the "market implosion model". This is a three-stage model, in which the low-level equilibrium found in traditional agriculture gives way under market pressures to a "Chayanovian" stage and then to a "surplus-producing" stage, and finally to a "developed" stage. The details of this process are complex, but the most fascinating aspect is the way in which he has married a basically neo-Marxist view of land and capital to a recognition of the impelling power of the growing British market economy that is seen to operate in the way that the classical economists described it a century and a half ago.

Rigorous and, simultaneously, creative as this book is, reading it leaves one with a great sense of opportunity lost. The grounds of the debate were previously determined by Joel Mokyr's *Why Ireland Starved* which appeared in 1983. This was probably not available to O'Neill before his own book went to press. The basis of Mokyr's work, however, was available in print in 1980 in major, easily-accessible journals. Both in method and on several substantive matters, O'Neill differs sharply from Mokyr, and these differences should be directly confronted. In the first place their methods are radically different. O'Neill provides a rigorous micro-study, scrupulously based on primary sources, while Mokyr works in aggregates and eschews manuscript material. Second, their views of the impact of the British economy upon Irish demographic patterns are different in emphasis: O'Neill focuses on the British market demand for Irish agricultural goods, Mokyr on capital underinvestment by English landlords. Third, they differ sharply on the matter of leases. Mokyr claims, alone among Irish scholars, that most Irish land was held on secure leases, a claim for which O'Neill's work provides no evidence. Fourth, O'Neill's study shows a myriad of middlemen in the landholding