

feared, a reader who becomes acquainted with this tragedy only through Mr. Jobert's book would not be fully aware.

Further, while it is true that the communities which were considered Calvinist in Poland did not adhere to all aspects of Calvin's thought with an even conviction, and that these communities exhibited features altogether different from the Genevan theocratic order, this important and critical problem should have received a detailed analysis. To pretend to solve it by writing that the communities, in effect, professed Zwingli's doctrine (p. 97), is, it seems to me, a gross simplification.

Finally, I cannot subscribe to the notion, even when put forth as cautiously as it is on page 127, that the early appeal of the interrogations, which were to result in anti-Trinitarianism, derived from a revolt of the ministers against the noblemen. I think that here Mr. Jobert has allowed himself to be deluded by a social bias—one which he is not guilty of himself, but one which motivates the greatest authority on the subject at the present time, Henryk Barycz. It is difficult to imagine that a host of men of that earlier time could have come to question the divine nature of Christ under the influence of some plebeian intellectual's acrimony. The debate is, of course, of wider scope, for what underlies this hypothesis is a pejorative judgment on the predominance of the laymen, a characteristic of the organization of the Evangelical church in Poland. Nor does it suffice to say that, *illuc et tunc*, it was bound to happen. This predominance of laymen, on the contrary, appears to me to have been manifestly what is most valuable in the *spiritual* heritage bequeathed by Polish Protestantism, namely, to use K. E. J. Jørgensen's term, its ecumenical—although I would prefer to say "irenical"—vein.

This book is directed toward all readers interested in the religious crisis of the sixteenth century, not to specialists alone. It is, therefore, very fortunate that the author has included in it figures on the extent of Calvinist penetration into the various regions and into different classes of society, maps (those of the school networks [pp. 242–45] are outstanding), family trees, and synoptic lists of the Catholic and Orthodox hierarchs. The aesthetic aspect of the volume is no less attractive, for Mr. Jobert has managed to secure many portraits which have never been published before. He has also rediscovered and quoted from some ancient French translations from Hosius and Łaski, thus giving his report a very attractive patina of the age.

The reader will guess immediately that, on page 4, it is the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus which is mentioned, and that 1597 should be read at the beginning of the fourth paragraph on page 187. On the other hand, it may be useful to point out that Jan Łaski the younger died early in 1560 and not in 1561 (p. 120). Also, the locality where the Polish Brothers founded a school is in all probability Beresteczko and not "Beresko" (p. 323).

Despite a few flaws, the volume does make an excellent up-to-date contribution to the knowledge of a fascinating theme.

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A HISTORY OF THE CZECHS. By *A. H. Hermann*. London: Allen Lane, Penguin Books, 1975. x, 324 pp. Maps. \$12.00. £6.00. Dist. by Rowman and Littlefield, 81 Adams Drive, Totowa, N.J. 07512.

This is a synthesis of the history of the Czech people from their appearance on the stage of European history to the present.

In his acknowledgments, the author, who is a Czech exile living in London where he is a member of the staff of the *Financial Times*, states that he originally

intended to write only about Czechoslovak events which he had personally witnessed, but that Peter Carson of Allen Lane Company persuaded him to write a complete history of the Czech people instead. It is a pity that Hermann did not follow his own inclination; he might have written, if not an especially profound book, at least a perceptive one. What is of most value in this book is Hermann's commentary on Czechoslovak social and economic developments, which he himself had occasion to observe. His observations on Czech cultural trends also show a freshness of view. The task of writing a synthesis of Czech history in its entirety, however, simply exceeds his ability. He does not include a bibliography and has apparently read little in the field of Czech historiography, which is quite extensive. He gives an unsystematic, highly impressionistic account of Czech history. The book is full of factual errors and debatable interpretations. With a dilettante's brashness, he disposes of points long and inconclusively debated by professional historians. Although the book is expressly devoted to Czech history, he includes in it a chapter on the history of the Slovaks and a paragraph on the Ruthenians. Now, if his grasp of Czech history is often insecure, his knowledge of Slovak history is negligible. The chapter is made up mainly of legends. Surprisingly, he omits the most famous of these fables, namely the one about Slovak tinkers (*dráteníci*).

Historical synthesis is a genre more often and perhaps better cultivated in Britain than in the United States. Hermann's book is unfortunately not a good example of it. The late Professor Robert W. Seton-Watson's brilliant *History of the Czechs and Slovaks* (London, 1943), though dated, remains unsurpassed.

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OSVOBOZENÍ ČESKOSLOVENSKA: STUDIE O MEZINÁRODNĚ POLITICKÝCH ASPEKTECH. By *Václav Král*. Prague: Academia, 1975. 428 pp. Kčs. 64.

Under the different conditions of duress prevalent in Eastern Europe, distortion of the past may take different forms. Some historians may propagate official myths because they have come to genuinely believe in them. Others know better but pay at least the necessary obeisance to the required line while otherwise trying to make the best of a bad deal. Finally, there are the few who, while well aware of the difference between the lie and the truth, seem nevertheless to seek intellectual fulfillment in attempting a metamorphosis of the former into the latter. The author of the present book belongs to this curious category.

Václav Král figures prominently in Czechoslovakia's new historical establishment, whose most notable achievements so far have consisted of hunting down former colleagues implicated in the 1968 reform movement. Now he has produced a substantial book on the ever-controversial subject of his country's liberation at the end of World War II. His is a very detailed and at first sight quite factual account which abounds with footnotes, testifying to the author's familiarity with the pertinent sources. These sources include the unpublished diplomatic papers from the London Public Record Office and microfilms from the Washington National Archives.

Yet the considerable effort that went into the book serves no other purpose than to provide a mantle of respectability for some of the most palpable untruths that have ever been uttered about the subject. These are not of the crude kind that used to be the standard fare in Stalin's days. Rather, Král operates with facts and sources, which, however, he twists and turns at will to suit his dubious purpose.