

full names, and important dates) that makes this volume a lesser work than it could have been.

There are no blatant errors of fact, and the translations of prose and poetry are indeed excellent. The author's account of Nezval's role in bringing together experimentalists, traditionalists, and "neorealists" is perhaps worthy of inclusion in any volume on the history of socialist realism. Nezval and his fellow poets were determined not to bring art down to its knees but rather to elevate people to the level of art, so that it would improve the quality of their lives. It was with this idea in mind that Nezval joined the Czech delegation to the Congress of Soviet Writers in Moscow in August 1934. During this meeting he realized the futility of trying to bring alien forces together. The surrealism of the French surrealists was in direct conflict with the social realism of the Soviet socialists. Zhdanov, on the one hand, and Hitler, on the other, proved to be too much for Nezval and his colleagues to combat.

A half-century ago the Czech poet Karel Teige pleaded for art based on the beauties of modern machines and for poetry based on film techniques, so that art in the traditional sense would cease to exist. Teige's poetic credo, so controversial during his lifetime, has now become almost a cliché. What remains forever modern, however, is the political situation and the intellectual climate which spawned these ideas. French's conclusions about the generation of poets between the wars could easily be applied to the recent generation of Czech poets before 1968: "They were full of frustrated energy and weighed down by frustrated hopes, for the times were against them. They did not inherit the earth nor witness the millennium, and the extravagant banners under which they marched in cheerful disarray were to lead them not to a promised land, but to a fresh catastrophe which was itself a new beginning."

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA SINCE WORLD WAR II. By *Tad Szulc*. New York: Viking Press, 1971. 503 pp. \$14.00.

While serving as the *New York Times* foreign correspondent in Prague in 1968, Mr. Szulc was an eyewitness to Czechoslovakia's exciting experiment with "socialism with a human face" as well as its subsequent suppression by the Soviet invasion and occupation of the country. It is the firsthand information he gathered in this capacity that constitutes the main part of the present volume. In it the author gives a detailed yet vivid and highly readable account of the hectic developments that triggered, and provided the substance of, the famed "Czechoslovak spring" of 1968. He records in a similarly detailed fashion the Soviet invasion, its aftermath, and the stubborn Czechoslovak reaction thereto. And he concludes with a brief summary of further Czechoslovak developments subsequent to his expulsion from Czechoslovakia in December 1968.

To tell the absorbing story of the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968 was evidently the author's principal purpose in writing the book. However, in a commendable search for historical perspective and an endeavor to explain what happened in 1967 and 1968 in terms of the Communist sins of the past, Szulc felt it necessary to preface his account of the 1968 events with a long historical survey covering the entire period of 1945-67. As a result the book consists really of two parts, which,

though united by their basic subject, are nonetheless different in the way in which they have been handled. The story of 1968 is a personal and intensive eyewitness account bristling with details. On the other hand, the coverage of the 1945–67 period, even though it occupies almost half of the volume, is necessarily sketchy in places. It might have been better if the author had introduced the story of 1968 merely with a succinct summary of the main factors of the past needed to explain the events of 1968 rather than attempting a historical compilation of the entire preceding span of twenty-two years. Moreover, it is in the historical part that the author has committed a number of factual errors, such as listing General Prchala as the “non-communist President” of the committee leading the Czech uprising of 1945 (p. 12) or referring to General Ludvik Svoboda as having been a “veteran” Communist as early as 1945 (p. 14).

Written from a standpoint that is highly sympathetic to the Czechoslovak reformers' cause, the book views their experiment as “the beginning of a fundamental metamorphosis of Communism” (p. 6) and labels as a tragedy for Marxism and socialism its destruction before it could be fully and freely tested. Nor does the author conceal his bitter disappointment with “Washington and the NATO capitals,” whose main concern appeared to be “how quickly Czechoslovakia might be forgotten as an inconvenient element in the big-power games” (p. 400).

In spite of some of the shortcomings of its historical part, *Czechoslovakia Since World War II* ranks among the best volumes on Czechoslovakia written in recent years.

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SMETANA. By *Brian Large*. New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1970. xvii, 473 pp. \$16.50.

The English-reading public at last possesses a definitive study of the most important and historically significant Czech composer. Rarely does a single work achieve such a high level of scholarly accuracy (based on manuscript material in Prague, including unpublished diaries, letters, contemporary reviews, programs, daguerreotypes, photographs, and paintings) along with such a sound perspective in describing historical and cultural developments and such a good evaluation, both technical and aesthetic, of the music in question. This fortunate amalgamation makes the book useful on several levels. The casual reader will find whatever information meets his needs or curiosity, thanks to a well-organized presentation. The specialist will discover a wealth of previously unknown material with its exact documentary source. The book avoids irrelevant detail, yet it cannot be considered superficial or oversimplified. When supporting evidence is lacking, the author is careful to qualify his surmises.

As an example of Mr. Large's felicitous approach one might refer to his background sketch of musical conditions in Prague, Göteborg, and Weimar during Bedřich Smetana's lifetime. In a few lines he conveys a distinct impression, pointing out aspects of excellence and provincial weakness, and offers a convincing explanation of how these conditions came into being. Similarly he furnishes a succinct account of the political and spiritual forces prevalent during the revolution of 1948–49. In musical matters he goes beyond nebulous generalities to quote excerpts relevant to his comments, even from minor unpublished sketches; these analyses are refreshingly readable.