

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.

Of the multitude of examples, one may cite his references to the record of President Beneš's 1943 conversations in Moscow. According to Král, the document proves the Czech leader's effort to sabotage any close collaboration with the Soviet Union—the very opposite of what the document really conveys. Similarly, the well-known evidence about the voluntary cessation of the United States military advance into central Europe in the spring of 1945 is used to support the absurd contention that the American imperialists wanted nothing more than to double-cross the Red Army by beating it to Prague but that their weakness foiled this evil design.

Above all, the book is calculated to repair the ideological damage done in the 1960s by those Czech and Slovak historians who dared to cast doubt on the absolute purity and selflessness of Moscow's motives as well as on the constancy and infallibility of its policies. Most readers are likely to find Král's recurrent innuendos against the culprits of these heresies in poor taste. But even more repulsive is his eagerly servile adoration of anything Soviet—to a degree rarely to be found any more even among Soviet writers themselves. Still, the book is well worth reading—not as serious history, to be sure, but rather as an eloquent document of the plight of scholarship in a part of Europe where *détente* is yet to reach.

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DIE PROTOKOLLE DES ÖSTERREICHISCHEN MINISTERRATES, 1848–1867. PART 3: DAS MINISTERIUM BUOL-SCHAUENSTEIN, vol. 1: 14. APRIL 1852–13. MÄRZ 1853. Edited by *Helmut Rumpler*. Compiled by *Waltraud Heindl*. Introduction by *Friedrich Engel-Janosi*. Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1975. lxxx, 580 pp.

This volume contains the protocols of the Austrian Ministerial Conference for the period April 14, 1852 to March 13, 1853. It is part of a multivolume series being published in Austria which will eventually include all of the protocols of the various ministerial councils from 1848 to 1867. A similar project is also under way in Hungary to publish the protocols from 1867 to the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918.

The 102 protocols printed here seem at first glance to confirm the judgment of one of the participants, Foreign Minister Count Buol, that the discussions of the ministerial conferences were a waste of time. With few exceptions, the issues under consideration were minor ones; and the conclusion is inescapable that, for this period, at least, the Conference was a powerless organ, whose only function was to coordinate and carry out the decisions made by Emperor Francis Joseph.

The protocols are nevertheless an important source for the study of Austrian neoabsolutism in the 1850s. As Waltraud Heindl indicates in her excellent introduction, they provide evidence to suggest that not only was Francis Joseph himself the principal architect of the neoabsolutist system, but also that he consciously attempted to re-create the pre-March regime of his grandfather, Francis I. During the period covered by the protocols in this volume, he completed the destruction of the powerful *Ministerrat* of Felix Schwarzenberg and replaced it with a cumbersome and inefficient system which concentrated all decision making in his own hands. Against a willful young ruler and the skillful intrigues of Kübeck, Metternich, and other prerevolutionary figures, the attempts of Alexander Bach and the other post-March ministers to preserve even a shadow of real authority were pathetically unsuccessful.