

wurde, bereitet unter unseren gegenwärtigen politischen Verhältnissen dem einzigen kommunistischen Mitglied der Autorenreihe unverhohlene Mühe. Wolfgang Ruge greift also Stresemann wegen seiner Revisionspolitik scharf an, weil sich die Sowjetunion zu jeder Revisionspolitik nach 1945 ganz anders stellte, als sie sich nach 1918 gestellt hat. Das ist Geschichtsschreibung unter dem eindeutigen Gesichtspunkt politischer Konvenienz. Wie aber leitet Ruge seinen Beitrag ein? „Das nahezu unerschöpfliche Reservoir der Historie hat der Politik seit jeher zur Begründung ihrer Ziele, zur Legitimierung ihrer Ansprüche, zur Rechtfertigung ihrer Methoden gedient.“ Ruge meint aber offensichtlich nicht sich selbst, sondern die Apologeten Stresemanns im Westen, insbesondere in der Bundesrepublik.

Als ein Mangel des Buches erscheint das Fehlen biographischer Angaben über die Verfasser. Jedenfalls hätte der Autor dieser Besprechung solche Hinweise als hilfreich empfunden.

München

Peter Kritzer

*Sviták, Ivan: Velký Skluz, Jan Masaryk v kritické dekadě československých dějin 1938—1948 [Die große Rutsche, Jan Masaryk im kritischen Jahrzehnt tschechoslowakischer Geschichte 1938—1948].*

Národní Politika, München 1984, 163 S.

Ivan Sviták, now a resident of California, was, during the Prague Spring, an unorthodox but not uninfluential philosopher. He was one of the inspirators of KAN (the Club of Engaged Non-Party People) and was, moreover, instrumental in bringing the unresolved violent death of Jan Masaryk to the attention of the Czech public. Incidentally, circumstantial evidence which emerged in the West gradually after 1948 and in Prague in 1968 strongly suggests that Masaryk had been murdered by Soviet agents.

The concise book *Velký Skluz* [*The Big Slide*] is a historical analysis without references or footnotes, but hardly less impressive for that. Presented in a readable, even thrilling manner, it is in the first place a warning to western liberals intended to demonstrate that appeasement policies toward bureaucratic dictatorships are a road to capitulation, sovietization, in the long run even possibly to national annihilation. It is also a polemic with officious Czech exile historiographers who tried and to an extent still try to demonstrate that all the blame for Czech misfortunes and failures should be primarily attributed to „the West“.

Sviták begins with the Czechoslovak capitulation of 1938 when Edvard Beneš unwillingly accepted the Munich Agreement, thus refusing to risk an armed defence of his country. Beneš never forgot this failure and projected the „guilt“ to the West, particularly to the British, even after the appeasers Chamberlain and Halifax had been replaced by Churchill and Eden. Though he had to resign from office, he did not lose hope. He was sure that a world war was inevitable. The greater part of the Czech nation and a decisive segment of the political elite continued to trust him in the following years.

After the Munich Agreement and more vocally after March 1939 Beneš predicted that appeasement by the western powers would not stop Hitler. His foresight was correct and the 2nd World War began a year after the Munich Agreement. In spite of the Nazi-Soviet collusion of August 1939 about the spheres of influence and the division of Poland, Beneš did not cease to predict that the Soviet Union would enter the war side by side with the western democracies. In June 1941 Hitler fulfilled Beneš's prediction. And the (former) Czechoslovak President was also sure that the United States would participate, as they did since December 1941. All this strengthened Beneš's position further, both within the Czech exile and in relation to allied governments.

The main, one might say traumatic, preoccupation of Edvard Beneš was the effort to have the 1938 Munich Agreement declared null and void *ab initio*, a juridical step which would ensure that his own subsequent resignation from presidential office was invalid too. Understandably enough, the pragmatic British hesitated to comply with this lawyer's trick and did not want to commit themselves prematurely to a recognition of the pre-1938 Czechoslovak borders either. All this strengthened Beneš's antipathies. Later on the British were also far from enthusiastic about the Czech governmental proposition to expell the major part of the ethnic Germans from postwar Czechoslovakia. As of the summer of 1941 the Soviets did not entertain such compunctions.

Sviták's book lucidly describes the setup of world politics and the overall military situation at every relevant stage. The author does not hesitate to outline the limitations and misconceptions, particularly of the U. S. presidents and top military commanders vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. At the same time, however, he shows that the Czechoslovak exile government and Edvard Beneš in particular had their own options at each crossroad. And, unfailingly, at every instance they chose a pro-Soviet course.

Beneš did not do so out of any pro-communist or even pro-Soviet sympathies, but on the basis of a cool calculation. He expected that the USSR would play a major role in postwar Central Europe, and trusted that Stalin would reward his co-operation by conceding to the Czechs adequate internal freedoms in return for a faithful co-operation in foreign policy. Obviously, this belief was founded on a mistaken expectation of a lasting friendship between the major victorious powers, and especially on a fateful misapprehension of Stalinism.

The Czech president began to co-operate with Soviet representatives in London at a time when the USSR still maintained a benevolent neutrality toward Nazi Germany. Soon after Hitler's attack on the USSR Beneš initiated the 1941 Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship and mutual assistance treaty. At a time difficult for the Polish exile government in London he squashed the British-sponsored plan of a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation which was disliked by the Soviets. A climax was his Moscow visit in December 1943 which Beneš prepared against outspoken British misgivings. „The Moscow treaty (of 1943) definitely undid Munich, this western betrayal of the Czechs. But by the Moscow treaty, the Czechs' betrayed the West“ (p. 89).

In March 1945 Beneš hurried to Moscow again, accompanied by most of his

ministers. Instead of maintaining his freedom of action at the conclusion of the war when he might have accomplished the possibly crucial liberation of Prague by U.S. troops or by the Czechoslovak Armoured Brigade from the West, he found himself isolated in a Soviet trap. He wanted to return home via the Soviet Union and expected Soviet gratitude. „In spite of persistent myths that the West had written off Czechoslovakia, the truth remains that the Czechoslovak exile government has itself written off the ČSR as a part of the West“ (p. 95).

During the 1945 negotiations in Moscow Beneš acted as a non-party president and left the discussions and decisions to his ministers from London, urging them only to come to an agreement with the Czech communist group in Moscow headed by Gottwald. The result was the Košice Program and a governmental setup which gave several crucial posts to the communists.

The „big slide“ continued by presidential decrees, especially those concerning nationalization, the national committees, the prohibition of the Agrarian Party, monopolization of power within an oligarchic party setup, and by the expulsion of the Germans. Sviták comments: „... the most powerful stimulus of the slide was where nobody would have sought it at the time — in the expulsion of the Germans ... they lost (everything) as a result of carefully prepared actions of a liberal humanitarian and democrat, Edvard Beneš“ (p. 120). As a consequence, similar violations of basic human rights were to become the fate of the Czechs themselves within a couple of years.

Sviták recapitulates the known events of 1945—1948 which culminated in the total defeat of the „democrats“ and Edvard Beneš himself in late February 1948. They were followed by the violent death of Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk a fortnight later. The author considers the tragic fiasco of February 1948 to have been a logical consequence of the previous collaboration with the Soviets on the part of the „liberal democrats“. Under worse conditions than the Czechs, Sviták argues, the Finns, the Israelis and the Yugoslavs succeeded in protecting their state independence. He concludes that the state and the nation, if confronted with expansionist and bureaucratic dictatorships, must be prepared to defend their independence and their freedom even by force of arms.

A political analysis of this kind can hardly avoid some mistakes in detail, some statements or theses which would be hard to verify, or an occasional intermixing of facts and judgments. To the first category belongs, e. g., the reference to Edward Kennedy as a U.S. president (p. 51), or the statement that Jan Masaryk had visited the Czechoslovak units in the Middle East (p. 54). The only Czech ministerial visitor there was Defense Minister Sergěj Ingr who made a brief, strictly formal appearance in June 1942. The reviewer finds it impossible to verify some particulars about the activities of Soviet agent Otto Katz, alias André Simone, in the West, in particular his alleged influence on Jan Masaryk. If the later was really the case, it would surely be a testimony of Masaryk's surprising political naiveté. Unverifiable seem also the speculations about Sikorski's death (p. 79) and a few other passages pertaining to Jan Masaryk (e. g. p. 109—110).

In this context the only major question mark has to be mentioned, relating to Sviták's brilliant exposé. Throughout the major part of his book Sviták suggests

that Jan Masaryk pursued, or tried to pursue, different courses of policy from those of his superior Edvard Beneš, that he had substantial reservations and occasionally voiced open criticism of the official pro-Soviet policies and even of the Soviet Union. Only in the last chapters beginning with the 1947 Marshall plan fiasco does the author expand on the tragic dilemma and the failure of the popular Foreign Minister.

The reviewer shares Sviták's sympathy for this „entertaining cosmopolite and playboy“ (p. 18) or, more seriously, for this well-meaning humane personality imbued with western humanitarian traditions. Yet, one should not fail to ask: why did Jan Masaryk serve throughout the war, after the war and even after the communist coup in a function carrying official responsibility for Czechoslovak foreign policy? He must have known from the beginning that major foreign political decisions in wartime were bound to be taken by Beneš. They were after all his lifelong specialization, and Jan Masaryk saw in him the great experienced statesman anyway. Sviták himself shows how restricted Masaryk was after the war, not only by the decisions of the National Front but, in the last analysis, by the Moscow center. Masaryk's own remarks show how painfully he registered this fact.

Jan Masaryk could — should — have retired from his post of Foreign Minister after Beneš's December 1943 Moscow visit. It would not have been necessary for him to join the ineffectual anti-Beneš opposition of Hodža, Osuský or Prchala. He could have retired in honor, as Bechyně or Nečas were forced to do. He could have asked for a transfer to a post of minor governmental responsibility, as was occupied for instance by another critic of Beneš's policy, Ladislav Feierabend. Or he could have resumed his earlier diplomatic career, be it in London, Washington or elsewhere. But Jan Masaryk labored on, in spite of his mounting inner revulsion, in spite of his bitter jokes, up to and even beyond February 1948. Hence he cannot escape his share of responsibility. For whatever reasons, this gentle and kind man proved unable to leave Edvard Beneš up to the bitter end. He paid for it by his life.

München

H a n u š H á j e k

*H a h n, Karl Josef: Standplaats Europa. Memoirs van een christendemocraat.*

Verlag de Haan, Utrecht 1984, 217 S., hfl 27,50.

Karl Josef Hahn gehört zu jenen sudetendeutschen Intellektuellen, die sich in den dreißiger Jahren in der Welt zurechtfinden mußten. Er promovierte 1935 mit einer Arbeit über Stefan George. In Karlsbad aufgewachsen, hatte er die Weltläufigkeit im Kleinen in der Atmosphäre dieser Bäderstadt in sich aufgenommen, die drei böhmischen Komponenten, einen deutschen Vater, eine tschechische Mutter und eine jüdische Ehepartnerin, mit ins Leben genommen und zugleich den immensen Bildungs- und Lesehunger eines vitalen Intellekts genährt, seine sprachliche