

der Mühseligen und der Leichtfertigkeit der Reichen: „Ein Jahr versinkt ins ew'ge Meer der Zeiten / vom Chaos ringt ein neues Jahr sich los. / Was es auch bringt in seinem dunklen Schoß, / wir wollen mutig ihm entgegenschreiten ... Ich grab den schwarzen Diamant / und fördre ihn zum Licht / füll Andrer Kassen bis zum Rand, bleib selbst ein armer Wicht, / bis einst dort unten in dem Schacht, / sich endet meine Not, / bis mich umhüllt mit Grabesnacht, / mein bester Freund, der Tod.“

Teuchert wird in diesem Zusammenhang nicht philologisch interpretiert, nicht als Lyriker untersucht oder in seiner proletarischen Mentalität gedeutet. Die Gedichte folgen dem Schicksal der böhmischen Bergarbeiterbewegung, die 1875 offenbar ihren Weg von Dux nahm, unter sächsischer Anregung, und später führend wurde für die gesamte Monarchie. 1890 gab es in Wien einen ersten österreichischen Bergarbeiterkongreß, ein Jahr später erschien in Prag als Fachblatt der Bewegung 14tägig die Zeitung „Glückauf“, bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg in 23 Jahrgängen. Teucherts Beiträge in dieser Zeitschrift lassen sich mit dem der Bergarbeiterbewegung in Verbindung bringen, mit ihren Erfolgen und Niederlagen, und diese Geschichte skizziert der Verfasser und belegt sie mit dem Echo aus der Feder des Arbeiterdichters. Um 1882 im Erzgebirge geboren, zehnjährig in einer Baumwollspinnerei beschäftigt, 17jährig Mitglied eines Arbeiterbildungsvereins, publizierte Teuchert früh seine sprachlich gewandten Anklagen im Reichenberger „Arbeiterfreund“, wurde daraufhin behördlich gemaßregelt, entlassen, schlug sich als Wanderarbeiter durch, seit 1881 in Dux als Bergarbeiter. Nach dem Militärdienst und anderen Arbeitsverhältnissen, die er aber ständig mit Publikationen zur Notlage der Bergarbeiter und ihren sozialpolitischen Forderungen begleitete, arbeitete er erst 1899 wieder unter Tage. Gleichzeitig wurde er Funktionär in der Bergarbeiterbewegung. Mit Kriegsausbruch brechen seine Publikationen ab, seine Lebensspur verliert sich im Ungewissen.

Die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft in den böhmischen Ländern hat sich bisher kaum mit der Arbeiterbewegung beschäftigt, auch nicht in den Jahren des sogenannten volksnahen nationalen Existenzkampfes. Auch die tschechische Historiographie wich dem Thema jahrzehntelang aus, ehe sie sich ihm unter marxistischem Vorzeichen widmete. Vereinsgeschichte und Interpretation der insgesamt gut zugänglich publizierten Quellen bieten hier eine bedeutende Aufgabe. Dazu liefert die Arbeit von Norbert Englisch eine dankenswerte Anregung.

Bochum

Ferdinand Seibt

*Přehled dějin Československého Odborového hnutí [Ein geschichtlicher Überblick über die tschechoslowakische Gewerkschaftsbewegung].*

Příruční knihovna ROH, Prag 1984, 680 S., geb. Kčs 35,—.

This is an exemplary book. That is, it is a perfect example of the wastefulness of the socio-economic system of contemporary Czechoslovakia. 5 years — years which saw the rise and fall of the independent „Solidarity“ trade union move-

ment in neighbouring Poland — and a platoon of academics festooned with awards and titles and backed up by powerful state institutions have been expended on the production of 13,000 volumes of 680 pages of text so boring and uninformative that it is likely that I will be the only diligent reader they will ever have.

The stifling tedium of the book is not the result of the subject matter nor of some intellectual deficiency in the authors, many of whom have produced interesting books and articles on aspects of the history of the Czech and Slovak workers' movement. It stems from the fact that the book is an ideological textbook based on an absurd premise: that the aspirations for self-determination expressed when wage labourers establish collective organisations — trade unions — which challenge the prerogatives of the employing class, have found their fulfilment in a system which, instead of extending self-determination to the economic sphere, has suppressed its every manifestation throughout society.

In order to demonstrate that in all their endeavours the Czech and Slovak working class were in reality searching for Gustav Husak, the authors employ a 2 stage process. Firstly, elementary expressions of working class protest, events such as international congresses or the Paris Commune abstracted from history and claimed to lead inexorably towards February 1948 or even August 1968, and the existing system of rule are loosely juxtaposed. The connection between the three is then made by stretching words, phrases and concepts to cover quite different meanings and thereby assimilate them one to another. Thus "internationalism" is applied both to the aspiration of Czech and German workers to create a working basis for united action and to the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia, while the resolve before the First World War to preserve peace is assimilated to support for current Soviet political and military policies.

In order for this verbal manoeuvre to have any hope of credibility, however, it is essential that the real content of historical events is drained away. The section dealing with the impact of the First World War for example provides no account of the crisis of the European social order at that time and of the specific dilemmas facing the Czech and Slovak nations. All you find are generalities about betrayal and the correctness of Lenin's line.

Where the narrative does condescend to include a few items of information it only serves to highlight the reason why facts have to be kept well out of sight the rest of the time. Thus we discover that the war was the occasion for the Habsburg authorities to restrict such basic democratic rights as "the right to personal freedom, inviolability of the home, freedom of the press, of association, of demonstration, of assembly and of travel" (p. 108). The reformist misleaders of the trade unions and socialist parties of the Habsburg lands are castigated for failing to wage a militant struggle against all this.

Where events cannot be fitted into the framework they are simply ignored. The account of the last 35 years — the very reason why this volume has been issued to supersede the previous official history of the Czechoslovak trade unions which appeared in 1963 — offers no serious discussion of the developments leading up to and during the Prague Spring and say nothing at all about the most recent

occasion when Czech and Slovak labour intervened directly into the flow of historical events, through the general strike which greeted the entry of the Warsaw Pact forces in August 1968 and the subsequent participation of the unions in the movements of resistance which persisted throughout the subsequent months.

Despite the indignities inflicted on the concept of internationalism the authors fail to place Czech and Slovak events in their international context. The ideological proximity of resolutions passed by various bodies of the Czech and Slovak labour movements to those emanating from various authoritative international gatherings is mentioned, but there is no sense of the real historical problems which Czech and Slovak workers or committed socialists confronted. The reason for this is clear enough. Those dilemmas have lost none of their complexity or urgency to this day and it is inevitable that their future working out will throw the present political arrangements in Central Europe into question; arrangements which the authors are intent on presenting as the end of history.

But although it is a travesty of history, this book does fulfill one function with a degree of efficiency; to convince people that there is no alternative to present realities. Labour movement history is all about the working out of the conviction — or at least the assertion — that a peaceful, free and egalitarian social order is possible, if necessary in the teeth of the logic of existing systems. The present rulers of Eastern Europe have every interest in distorting such an inherently subversive and dissident history beyond all recognition. Somewhere or other Trotsky describes the experience of reading works produced by the Stalin school as being like eating sawdust and mashed bristles. Here the sawdust and mashed bristles stretch to the horizon in every direction and there is nothing else. Bereft in the historical desert people can be distracted by tales of the consumerist paradise awaiting them in the hereafter. But even in the most arid regions there is some form of life. On page 20 remarks made by Engels in *The Condition of the English Working Class* are summarized to the effect that in the early years of industrial capitalism in England “the most conscious and effective form of protest was stealing”. 120 years and 477 pages further on we discover the officials of the ROH (Revolutionary Trade Union Movement) resolving to combat such unwelcome features of working class behaviour and consciousness as “an erroneous populist policy, the remains of reformism, false solidarity (Solidarity?) and a bad attitude to socialist property”. As Engels understood, when such an attitude has become an accepted part of popular culture it reveals a conviction that the property in question has in fact been stolen from the workforce. Locked between the covers of this book are resources both material and cultural which have been stolen from the productive classes of Czechoslovakia. Let us hope they can find the ways and means to reclaim this important part of their heritage. In any such process scholars living in the West have an important part to play. They can only play it however if they retain an awareness that the Czech and Slovak labour movements were and will be capable of producing more than the present system.