

zu entscheiden. Sie selbst kontrolliert ihre Machtposition, die sich nicht auf Autorität, Qualifikation, Vertrauen oder Erfolg gründet, sondern auf Kraft, Gewalt, Drohung und Zwang. Die soziale Lage, in der sie sich befindet, unterscheidet sich wesentlich von den Kriterien und Klassifikationen anderer sozialer Eliten oder Gruppen in ähnlichen Positionen. Hier handelt es sich um die höchste Stufe innerhalb der Machthierarchie, deren Teilnehmer ihre Position mit Hilfe der Mechanismen gewinnen, die für ein totalitäres System typisch sind.“ Der Autor faßt die Analyse des politischen Systems mit folgenden Worten zusammen: „Unser Sozialsystem ... war und ist weder ein Volksstaat noch die Diktatur des Proletariats. ... Weder das Volk, d. h. die Bevölkerung, noch der Kern des Volkes, die Arbeiterklasse, sind tatsächlich Inhaber der Produktionsmittel. Sie haben auch keine Möglichkeit ... über den Umgang mit dem Volkseigentum zu entscheiden. ... Die herrschende Elite disponiert nicht nur mit dem stattlichen Eigentum, sondern sie beurteilt auch, was zum Vorteil des Volkes und der Gesellschaft ist.“ (S. 168 f.). Kľofáčs aufgrund empirischer Materialien angestellte Analyse stimmt mit den Überlegungen von Norbert Elias über die realsozialistischen Systeme durchaus überein<sup>2</sup>.

Zum Schluß bringt der Autor die Funktion der Ideologie eines bedrohten einheitlichen Systems mit den systemimmanenten Widersprüchen und Konflikten zusammen. Da die Realität von ideologischen Entscheidungen bestimmt werde, könne sie nicht Maßstab für falsche oder richtige politische Entscheidungen werden. Jede Kritik an ihr werde zum Ausdruck feindlicher Ideologie. Darin liege der Grund, warum die Ideologie einer einheitlichen Gesellschaft wichtig sei. Sie sei die Waffe gegen die Opposition, die dennoch existiere. Die politische Macht reagiere darauf mit dem Ausbau ihrer Macht und des Zwangsapparates. Je größer der Unterschied zwischen Herrschenden und Volk, desto unüberwindlicher werde der Antagonismus, der bereits ein Konfliktpotential darstelle. Die soziale Situation gleiche einer Zeitbombe. Der Autor läßt den Ausgang offen: „Es ist schwer zu sagen, wie und wo der Konflikt kulminieren wird.“ (S. 167).

Tübingen

Libuše Volbrachťová

*H e n e k a , A. / J a n o u c h , Frantisek / P r e c a n , Vilem / V l a d i s l a v , Jan (Hrsg.): A Besieged Culture. Czechoslovakia Ten Years after Helsinki.*

The Charta 77 Foundation and International Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Stockholm-Vienna 1985, 300 pp., US\$ 10,—.

This is an anthology of declarations, letters and reports written between 1968 and 1985 mainly by Czechs or Slovaks, but the odd foreign writer also appears. It also contains Jiří Kolář's imaginative series of patchwork-photographs, "Kafka's Prague" (pp. 32—43). The volume was produced for the European Cul-

<sup>2</sup> Notizen zum Lebenslauf in: Macht und Zivilisation. Frankfurt 1984 (Materialien zu Norbert Elias' Zivilisationstheorie 2).

tural Forum held in Budapest in the autumn of 1985. In the Introduction Jan Vladislav states that it is "nothing like the countless propaganda brochures to be found at every conference, which attempt [...] to conceal or dispel [*sic*] the real state of affairs" (p. 9).

*A Besieged Culture* is, however, as its title indicates, propaganda. I do not know whether it actually attempts to conceal the real state of affairs. It certainly occasionally succeeds in so doing. But that might be the result of good old-fashioned *Schlamperei*. The émigré editors conceive of Czech and Slovak culture in Czechoslovakia as a struggle between good, 'dissident', activity and evil, 'official', activity and they have constructed their anthology accordingly. A large part of the book (pp. 60—122) consists in an *enquête*. The editors' arrogance is manifest in the way they instruct the writers they send it to what the situation in Czechoslovakia is. It is "a crisis situation" (p. 61) — actually, like most years or periods in Czech history, if not Slovak, since the beginning of the 1890s, I blame Masaryk for the Czech love of crises —. In this cultural crisis "all kinds of manipulation by the state have made freedom of intellectual [*sic*] life impossible, preventing communication between the creative people and the rest of the population and blocking the development of creative powers among new generations" (p. 61). That is just silly. The editors, however, are with this book presumably preaching primarily to the converted, to other émigrés and to groups of individuals in the East and West who accept information on Czechoslovakia only from 'dissidents' and émigrés. *A Besieged Culture* is of no use to the serious student of Czech and Slovak literature and of very little, if any, use of students of Czechoslovak history.

Some of the information, though already printed in émigré periodicals or in books, may be new to a few students, though, for reasons which will become clear, those students might be wary. For example, Shakespeare's sonnet 66 "from time to time [...] is censored" (p. 174) or, more seriously, theological faculties have since 1980 apparently not been "considered a part of the higher education system" (p. 76). Some accounts are emotionally powerful like Iva Kotrlá's "Around the Abyss" (pp. 157—60) or the description of a police raid on a home for elderly nuns (pp. 223—25). Some statements are emotional and misleading. The régime in Czechoslovakia is said to be "illegitimate" (p. 9), which is not true. It is said that the present régime tried "to impose a radical reform of Czech grammar" (p. 11). The writer is referring to the rationalisation of the use of *i* and *y* in Czech, a spelling reform which had been proposed long before 1968 and which is quite consistent with other spelling reforms. Once a nation accepts spelling reforms or, rather, accepts the notion of an academy which imposes rules of language, such reforms seem inevitable. Most European countries have academies which try to prevent the natural development of language, phenomena like *franglais*. So even such a propagandist as Vladislav should not have cited the *i/y* reform.

Sometimes the reader finds what amounts to falsification. An example of that, where a responsible editor really should have added a gloss or footnote, appears in Ivan Klíma's 1985 letter to Philip Roth. Klíma states that the "greatest living Czech prose writer", Hrabal, "is allowed to publish again after years on the

black list" (p. 57). Hrabal recanted in 1975 and had a new book published in 1976. Havel says Hrabal's published works are emasculated, but, if they are, then they are emasculated by Hrabal himself. The editors claim also that his works are not banned, but that "his important work is published mostly in SAMIZDAT" (p. 289) — which is plain stupid. Certainly his name does not belong on the list of 230 writers "who cannot publish in Czechoslovakia" (p. 282). Allegedly this list, dated March 3rd 1982, was sent by Charter 77 to the Congress of the Czechoslovak Writers' Association. This list is ridiculous. Especially perhaps an Englishman like me finds it difficult to accept that any writer living abroad should not publish in his own country. On the other hand, we all know that Czech, like Soviet, writers living abroad have only very rarely indeed been able to publish in Czechoslovakia since 1948. Many writers on this list live abroad. Of those some appear in the only volume so far published, A-G, of the Czechoslovak Academy's *Lexikon české literatury* (1985, i. e. 1986). This lexicon concerns only writers who first published in or before 1945. For example, Ivan Blatný is there, though the émigré selection of his verse is not included in the bibliography. Another example is Viktor Fischl. Of the writers still in Czechoslovakia more appear in the *Lexikon*, for example, Bedřich Fučík and his émigré publication, *Sedmero zastavení*, appears in the bibliography. Indeed Václav Černý is the only major writer not to appear in the A-G volume of the *Lexikon*, and that does not mean that his name does not appear in bibliographies to other headings. Apart from Hrabal other writers on the Charter 77 list who I know are not banned include Lumír Čivrný (in *Lexikon*), Miroslav Hanuš (included in the less generous new work which comprises writers publishing mainly 1918 to the present, *Čeští spisovatelé 20. století*, ed. Blahynka, 1985, i. e. 1986), Milan Jankovič, Oldřich Mikulášek (in *Čeští*), Karel Ptáčník (in *Čeští*), Jaroslav Seifert (in *Čeští*), Jan Skácel (in *Čeští*), Milan Suchomel, Miroslav Topinka, Jan Vodňanský, Jiří Weil (in *Čeští*), Ivan Wernisch and Josef Zmr. The Charter 77 document of 30th June 1977 claims one has to belong to the Writers' Association to publish "in periodicals and through publishing [*sic*] houses" (p. 192), which is untrue. The editors say that Ota Ornest (whose date of birth, 1912, they seem to miss out simply because it would indicate that he was an old age pensioner) has had no "possibility of professional work since 1970" and that he is "Constantly harassed and persecuted by the State Security police" (p. 292). This last point seems unlikely, given the nature of his television appearance after his reprieve. Again I do not know whether all this results from the editors' *Schlamperei* or the desire to produce convincing propaganda.

Though the book is not without its sober moments (for example, Havel, p. 132, Bondy, p. 70), the general tone is melodramatic to hysterical. We hear, for example, that what is going on in Czechoslovakia "is an undeclared and yet persistent and systematic total war against the very roots of Czech and Slovak spiritual life" (Vladislav, p. 10) or "cultural genocide" (Benda, p. 62). Philip Roth has been gulled into believing that "most of those who remain sealed up inside totalitarian states are, as writers, destroyed by the system" (pp. 52—53). No one is going to suggest that Czech literature (as against Slovak) has been

particularly exciting recently, but statements like Zvěřina's that the "majority (seen from the standpoint of quality) of our artists and thinkers are living in exile, the best of the minority here have been silenced" (p. 112) or Y. Z.'s that "not one of the 30 most prominent Czech writers has been abroad in the last 15 years" (p. 121) constitute, at best, unsubtle obfuscation.

The sloppy thinking which characterises much of *A Besieged Culture* is epitomized by Kohout's sentence, "Even though Czechoslovakia is one of the oldest and most highly developed of European countries, linked with the rest of Europe by history, civilization and culture, only a very short time was needed forcibly to sever these ties" (p. 180). Kundera manifests either ignorance or hysteria when he says: "I am weighing my words carefully: in its duration, extent and consistency [*sic*], the massacre of Czech culture [*sic*] following 1968 has had no analogue in the country's history since the Thirty Years' War" (p. 128). That reflects the uncritical acceptance of myths invented mainly during the 19th century, though some 17th-century exiles like Rosacius or Hartman did help Revivalists and neo-Revivalists to create those myths. Serious Czech historians and literary scholars have been trying to demolish those myths for nearly a hundred years now. It is an eloquent testimony to the editors' isolation that they leave this passage in their Kundera excerpt. They clearly have not read, say, Father Jan Kučera and Jiří Rak's study of Balbín, Pešina and the Czech Baroque, which was published in Prague in 1983. Kučera and Rak's book is more important for scholars and ordinary Czechs than anything in *A Besieged Culture*.

*A Besieged Culture* has so many printing errors that it is frequently difficult to read. It also has a few schoolboyish spelling mistakes like "seasure" for "seizure" (p. 103) or "publically" for "publicly" (p. 140). Sometimes errors are, no doubt, mere slips, as when VLK is called an "auditioning" instead of "auditing" organisation (p. 147). Some errors constitute sloppy mistranslation, like "loges" for "boxes" (p. 171), but some are simply the result of understandable ignorance. A *dům kultury/osvěty* is a village hall or assembly hall; a *filosofická fakulta* is an arts faculty, and *kultura* itself may only rarely be translated as "culture"; usually it is either "the arts" or "entertainment". It would not have been difficult for the editors to have found an English native speaker to go through their anthology. That would have curbed the impression of *Schlamperei*.

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Robert Pynsent

Havel, Václav: *O lidskou identitu* [Towards a Human Identity]. Edited by V. Prečan and A. Tomský.

Rozmluvy, London 1984, 397 pp.

This volume of essays, feuilletons, interviews and polemics written (or uttered) by Havel between 1969 and 1982 contains mostly pieces which have already appeared in the Czech émigré press or in foreign languages. Only eight pieces have never appeared in print before. Nevertheless it is useful to have all these