

THE CZECHOSLOVAK POLITICAL TRIALS, 1950–1954: THE SUPPRESSED REPORT OF THE DUBČEK GOVERNMENT'S COMMISSION OF INQUIRY, 1968. Edited by Jiří Pelikán. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971. 360 pp. \$10.95.

DAS UNTERDRÜCKTE DOSSIER: BERICHT DER KOMMISSION DES ZK DER KPT_{SCH} ÜBER POLITISCHE PROZESSE UND "REHABILITIERUNGEN" IN DER TSCHECHOSLOWAKEI, 1949–1968. Edited by Jiří Pelikán. Vienna, Frankfurt, Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1970. 442 pp. Paper.

PANZER ÜBERROLLEN DEN PARTEITAG: PROTOKOLL UND DOKUMENTE DES 14. PARTEITAGS DER KPT_{SCH} AM 22. AUGUST 1968. Edited by Jiří Pelikán. Vienna, Frankfurt, Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1969. 319 pp. Paper.

Czechoslovakia's impact on the European scene over recent years has been significant—chiefly politically and in the sphere of ideas. In 1968 she had her moment of self-assertion. These collections of documents trace the formation of a vigorous ideology and program that have emerged to justify the need of democratization and spur it on. The editor, Jiří Pelikán, distinguished himself as one of the most redoubtable leaders of the Prague Spring. In his judicious introductory statements and concluding commentaries he attempts to elucidate the significance of the Czechoslovak experiment.

In April 1968, in its third attempt since 1955, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) set up a special commission under the chairmanship of Jan Piller to investigate the background of the show trials of the period 1949–54 under strict rules of secrecy. For the first time in the history of a Communist party in power, access was given to the secret party archives, including the minutes of the meetings of the highest party organs. Evidently there are gaps in the record, because some actions left little or no trace; moreover, there are some aspects of the conduct of the Soviet advisers and the Czechoslovak party and security officials that even the party investigators were unable to probe. The final report prepared by the Piller Commission has never been published. Eventually, on July 10, 1970, it was announced in Prague that this report was not approved. However, German and English versions of this secret document have been made public by Pelikán under the titles *Das unterdrückte Dossier* and *The Czechoslovak Political Trials*. The text has the obvious merit of being an authentic report written by a large group of historians, lawyers, and economists. It is divided into three parts, the first of which gives a description and historical-political analysis of the mechanism of political trials set in motion under Soviet supervision. The second part is devoted to the history of attempts at rehabilitation of the victims in 1955–56 and again in 1962–63. The third part seeks out those responsible, and places the blame squarely on the shoulders of the highest party officials. The most significant portion of the last section reveals the characteristics of the 1968 Czechoslovak experiment.

Unlike procedures followed in other Communist countries, the process of rehabilitation was not limited to a description of the causes of the trials and to the usual rehabilitation of the victims. Not content with merely condemning the illegalities, the commission proposed to build into the system a set of guarantees

that would prevent any repetition of the repressions. What emerges is a fascinating, forthright, inside picture of the working of the Stalinist regime. Quiet, almost icy reasoning based on a wealth of evidence makes this documentary work required reading for any student of contemporary history and politics. As far as this reviewer can judge, the texts present an accurate translation of the Czech original, which was smuggled out of the country. By omitting the draft speech for the commission chairman, which largely duplicated evidence contained in the report and in the draft resolution of the committee, the English translation actually improves on the repetitive Czech original and the German version. However, the English title contains a serious error, since the Piller Commission was a party body and there never existed any "Dubček Government's Commission." Furthermore, unlike the Czech and German texts (1949–68), the title of the English version reads "1950–1954." Unfortunately, footnotes are scarce and not very informative. An extensive list of personalities is appended to both versions.

The Extraordinary Fourteenth Congress of the KSČ was convoked for September 9, 1968, to endorse the basic themes of the post-January development. Instead, on August 22 the congress met illegally in a Prague factory, despite the presence of Soviet troops, to symbolize popular resistance to the Soviet aggression. The most valuable part of the third volume is the minutes of the sessions of the congress, attended clandestinely by more than two-thirds of the regularly elected delegates. The text of the minutes is published for the first time from a transcript of the tape recording. This makes for immediacy, but the final result is disappointingly incomplete, since the microphone did not record the many interventions from the floor. However, the editor has inserted an illuminating group of documents prepared by party experts for the congress. They consist of the theses for the party program (the KSČ had no program of its own), the new Draft Statutes, and the draft of the report on the situation since 1966 that was to form the basis for the address by First Secretary Alexander Dubček to be delivered at the September congress. Of special interest is the comparison of the original version of the party Draft Statutes with the final text modified under pressure of the party bureaucracy. The main theme binding the different topics of the volume together consistently remains that of power: how to formulate the basis for a pluralistic multiparty system allowing no opposition outside the National Front dominated by the KSČ. The addition of a subject and personal index and some explanatory notes would have increased the value of this useful source book.

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DUBCEK. By *William Shawcross*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970. xvii, 317 pp. \$7.95.

William Shawcross, a British expert on Eastern Europe who works for the London *Sunday Times*, has written at the enviable age of twenty-four an outstanding book that would be a credit to any senior author in that complex area which is Communist Europe. He did an unusual research job inside Czechoslovakia. He interviewed politicians, writers, students, workers, and the family and friends of Alexander Dubček, in addition to reading carefully and judiciously everything available on Dubček or by Dubček himself. The result is an excellent political biography by a first-class journalist.

Dubček had what Shawcross calls an "almost perfect pedigree" in the Kremlin's