

hätte, sieht sie nicht. Es wäre spannend und verdienstvoll gewesen, genauer zu untersuchen, wie nationalistische Identitätskonstruktion literarisch und sprachlich verfährt.

Überhaupt ist Textanalyse Sache der Autorin nicht – sie verbleibt zumeist auf Ebene inhaltsorientierter Betrachtung der Figurenpsyche, die beurteilt wird wie die realer Menschen. Textphänomene werden wie Wirklichkeit behandelt. Das schwächste Kapitel der Arbeit ist denn auch das den Einzeluntersuchungen vorangestellte über „Das Subjekt im Spannungsfeld zwischen Individuum und Kollektiv“, das in zwei Unterkapiteln einerseits gängige Identitätskonzepte vorstellt und andererseits und vor allem die „Korrelation von Thematik und Struktur der Texte“ zu untersuchen verspricht, aber auch hier zumeist inhaltsorientiert verfährt und einigen Romanen gemeinsame Motivstränge nennt. Dass wir es des Öfteren mit unzuverlässigen Erzählern und Ironie-Signalen zu tun haben, wird zwar gesagt, bleibt aber bei den konkreten Textanalysen, oder besser: Textbetrachtungen unberücksichtigt. „Exklusion durch Sprache“ wird aufgezählt als innerfiktionales Verfahren mit „hate-speech“ (S. 199) operierender nationalistischer Agitatoren, die Sprachlichkeit der Texte selbst bleibt aber völlig unberücksichtigt. Könnte es nicht sein, dass die eigentlichen Identitätskämpfe nicht auf Ebene der Handlungen stattfinden, sondern auf Ebene des Gebrauchs der Sprache, in der diese Handlungen erzählt werden? Inwiefern betreiben die jeweiligen Romane sprachliche Exklusion, inwiefern sprachliche Inklusion? Stil und Textstruktur sind niemals unschuldig – sie erst konstituieren die eigentliche Bedeutung des Textes.

Die Textauswahl wird nicht begründet. Dass die Mehrzahl der behandelten Romane von Autoren jüdischer Herkunft stammt, wird zwar erwähnt, aber nicht erklärt. Natürlich ist jede Auswahl legitim, doch wüsste man als Leser gern, welchen Zwecken sie dient – insbesondere dann, wenn ihr einleitend ein repräsentativer Anspruch für das Gesamtfeld der deutschsprachigen Literatur aus Böhmen und Mähren zugeschrieben wird.

Marburg

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**Patrick Crowhurst: A History of Czechoslovakia between the Wars.** From Versailles to Hitler's Invasion. (International Library of Twentieth Century History, Bd. 56.) Tauris. London u. a. 2015. XII, 301 S. ISBN 978-1-78076-343-9. (£62,-)

Was interwar Czechoslovakia a paragon or a parody of democracy? Posed in these stark terms by Peter Bugge over a decade ago in a seminal review essay, the question itself feels like a provocation.<sup>1</sup> After all, Czechoslovakia managed to hang on to its constitution and respect for minority rights at a time when the rest of Central and Eastern Europe was giving way to chauvinistic nationalism and varieties of dictatorship. The image of Czechoslovakia as an 'island of democracy' has nonetheless come under scrutiny. A revisionist historiography questioning the quality and quantity of Czech democracy, best represented by Andrea Orzoff's *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948* from 2009, emphasizes the manipulation and management of the political system by leaders of the five largest parties, the *pěťka*, and the coterie of men surrounding president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, a group collectively referred to as 'the Castle'. Other contributors recall those instances in which the country failed to make good on its democratic promises, for example in regard to gender equality or questions of national belonging.<sup>2</sup> The most contentious instance of this critical turn has surely been Mary Heimann's *Czechoslo-*

<sup>1</sup> PETER BUGGE: Czech Democracy, 1918-1938: Paragon or Parody?, in: *Bohemia* 47 (2006/07), 1, pp. 3-28.

<sup>2</sup> MELISSA FEINBERG: *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1950*, Pittsburgh 2006; TARA ZAHRA: *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948*, Ithaca 2008.

*vakia: The State that Failed* from 2009, the subtitle of which gives clear expression to the book's blunt thesis. Heimann rejects as Czech self-flattery the narrative of an intrinsically democratic people sabotaged by enemies within, attacked by neighbours without, and betrayed by its allies abroad. In this way, these and other recent authors have called into question longstanding narratives of Czech democratic exceptionalism.

Considering the traditional support shown by British and American historians for Czech idealizations of their interwar past, beginning with the sympathetic writings of contemporaries such as R. W. Seton-Watson and Henry Wickham Steed in Britain and Robert Kerner in the United States, it is remarkable that the most sustained revisions in recent years have come from the pens of scholars writing in English. One might expect that the most recent contribution, the book under review here, would engage with these recent debates about the reach and limits of democracy in the First Czechoslovak Republic. Patrick Crowhurst is the author of two older books about the imperial British and French trade policies and a more recent volume about Czechoslovakia under German occupation during the Second World War.<sup>3</sup> The present work can be understood as a prequel to the latter, treating the history of Czechoslovakia 'from Versailles to Hitler's Invasion'. In his introduction, C. promises to give equal weight to Czech and non-Czech perspectives on the period, in particular to that of the Czechoslovakia's largest ethnic minority, German-speakers who made up some 23 percent of the country's population. According to the author, the majority of historians, be they Czech, British or American, continue to 'deny' the significance of Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia and still refuse to recognize German speakers as a legitimate part of the country's history between 1918 and 1938 (p. 2 ff.). The point of *A History of Czechoslovakia between the Wars* thus consists in returning Germans to their rightful place in Czechoslovakia's interwar history.

It must be said that the book's title is not entirely accurate. Anyone searching for a history of Czechoslovakia between the wars, a subject at least hinted at in the title, will be disappointed. Neither Slovaks nor other non-German minorities such as the Hungarians, Poles, or Ruthenes (Ukrainians) receive treatment in the work, nor are foreign relations addressed beyond descriptions of Nazi meddling in Sudeten German affairs. Nevertheless, even this more limited focus on Sudeten German politics might offer potential for a critical rethinking of Czechoslovakia and the nature of its democracy between 1918 and 1938. C. covers all the main points in his six chapters, from the settlement of Versailles that turned a ruling nation into a national minority to the rise of Konrad Henlein's Sudeten German movement in 1933, from the electoral victory of the Sudeten German Party in 1935 to Reich-German interference in Sudeten German affairs and the final dismantling of Czechoslovakia by Hitler following the Munich Agreement. It must be said that no overarching argument emerges in book. Frustratingly, rather than bringing his narratives to a close with analysis and generalization, the author frequently becomes distracted by pet topics whose relevance to the matter at hand is not always clear. For example, more than one chapter ends with drawn out descriptions of Czechoslovak aircraft or tank production without contributing to any broader interpretation. On the whole, C. appears to adopt two conflicting, though not necessarily contradictory, views. On the one hand, he blames Czechs and their political leaders for alienating the Germans (although the latter, we read, could never have been reconciled to the status of a national minority in a Czech state, anyway). On the other hand, the author adopts a rather unimaginative take on Henlein and the Sudeten Germans as a fifth column in the pocket of Berlin bent from the very beginning on the Republic's destruction. The book's final pages are devoted to a reflection on whether things could have turned out any differently. Probably not, he concludes.

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<sup>3</sup> PATRICK CROWHURST: *The Defense of British Trade, 1689-1815*, Dawson 1977; IDEM: *The French War on Trade: Privateering, 1793-1815*, Aldershot 1989; IDEM: *Hitler and Czechoslovakia in World War II: Domination and Retaliation*, London 2013.

Readers familiar with the subject will know the general lines of debate as laid down in the 1970s. It was at that time that the academic discussion divested itself of the emotionally and ideologically laden debates that inevitably characterized the immediate post-war decades. Probably more than anyone else it was Ronald Smelser who reoriented academic discussion on the subject with his classic *The Sudeten Problem, 1933-1938: Volkstumspolitik and the Formulation of Nazi Foreign Policy* in 1975. If historians had previously viewed history through a moral lens, portraying the one nation or the other as wholly a victim or perpetrator, Smelser differentiated between 'traditionalists' and 'radicals' in the Germandom movement, the former displaying a *volklich* interest in ethnography and advocating cultural autonomy while the latter forwarded *völkisch* demands for annexation by a Greater German Reich. In this way, Smelser's study went beyond the polarized (and polarizing) accounts given by the *Landesmannschaften* on one side of the political spectrum and more scholarly works by respected historians such as Johann Bruegel and Radomir Luža on the other side. If both the latter figures saw in Henlein and his followers the 'faithful henchmen of Hitler' from the beginning,<sup>4</sup> Smelser detailed Henlein's ambivalent relationship to the German Reich and his gradual shift from the traditionalist to the radical camp. Of the most recent histories to deal with the Sudeten problem, mention should be made of Mark Cornwall's insightful biography of Henlein's most important collaborator Heinz Rutha, which builds upon Smelser's nuanced interpretation.<sup>5</sup>

The main problem with the present volume is that the author fails to engage with any of this literature. One or two recent titles from the scholarship about interwar Czechoslovakia is cited in the bibliography (Orzoff's book is named), but none of the major debates are addressed in the text itself. Even in the more limited boundaries of Sudeten German politics, the reader is deprived of essential debates on the topic that have taken place since the 1970s. Surprisingly, neither Smelser's decisive volume from 1974 nor Cornwall's most recent monograph appear in the bibliography. One gains no sense of the evolution of Henlein's opinions and ambitions over the period or of the split within Germandom politics between traditionalists and radicals, the waning influence of the former and the growing confidence of the latter. Nor does the author draw from more recent approaches informed by cultural history, the history of religion or sexuality. When, at the very outset, the author maintains that 'there is little historical research being done in the Czech Republic', which he supposes to be the result of the 'Marxist straightjacket' that once bound history writing (p. xi), one wonders if he has read any of the interesting and important literature produced over the last quarter century. This neglect of the basic literature, a fault exacerbated by a lack of editing and poor composition, is all the more a pity for a publisher that according to its website aims to bridge the gap between the academic and commercial presses. More than anyone else, it is the intelligent non-expert who needs an overview of current debates and the reasons behind conflicting opinions.

A new history of Czechoslovakia between the wars, one that takes account of the diverse and excited literature produced in recent years, would be much welcomed. Unfortunately, the present work does not deliver that which is advertised on the cover. Those desiring to read a scholarly overview of Sudeten German politics in English will do best with Smelser's classic account. Anyone wishing for a synthesis of recent approaches to East Central Europe's singular interwar democracy will continue to wait.

Praha

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<sup>4</sup> J. W. BRUEGEL: *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, Cambridge 1971, p. 109; RADOMÍR LUŽA: *The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans: A Study of Czech-German Relations, 1933-1962*, New York 1964.

<sup>5</sup> MARK CORNWALL: *The Devil's Wall: The Nationalist Youth Mission of Heinz Rutha*, Cambridge 2012.