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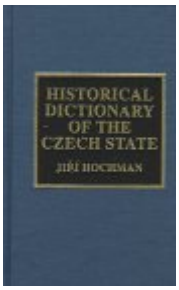

Jiri Hochman. *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State.* Lanham, Md., and London: Scarecrow Press, 1998. xxxix + 203 pp. $46.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8108-3338-8.

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Defining the

Jiri Hochman's *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State* is a volume in Scarecrow Press's series of European historical dictionaries, four of which have been reviewed previously on HABSBURG.[1] Hochman holds a Ph.D. in history from Ohio State University and has published books and scholarly articles in both English and Czech. He is the author of *The Soviet Union and the Failure of Collective Security* and editor and translator of *Hope Dies Last: The Autobiography of Alexander Dubcek.*[2] Although Dr. Hochman possesses the qualifications to write an historical dictionary, this one is compromised by conceptual flaws and significant gaps in its coverage.

In the front matter, Hochman presents a pronunciation guide, list of acronyms and abbreviations, chronology stretching twenty-three pages to include events from the earliest times to June 1997, maps, and a fifteen-page introduction which includes a general historical narrative. Although the pronunciation guide and chronology are useful, the map section is all too brief, consisting of a poorly reproduced map of the Czech Republic with its current political boundaries, major rivers, towns, and highways. The second map, entitled "Dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, 1938-1939," provides only a shading of regions lost to Germany, Poland, and Hungary without further points of geographic reference (i.e. towns, mountain ranges, etc.) There is a short description of the physical geography of Bohemia and Moravia in the introduction, but this can only be associated superficially with the maps. There are no maps reflecting the territorial changes or administrative divisions of the "Czech state" prior to 1938-1939. Neither of the maps indicates the names of mountain ranges, smaller towns, or historic German names.

Following the dictionary are a bibliography and appendixes. The twenty-eight-page bibliography includes a note on libraries, listing the addresses, and where available e-mail addresses, of the leading academic libraries and academic information centers; and a selected bibliography focusing on academic works of the last twenty years. These works are thematically organized under the following headings: Arts, Culture and Cultural History, Economy, Geography; History, Law, Memoirs, Philosophy, Politics, Society, Statistics, Technical Literature, and Principle Czech Academic Journals. The bibliography includes works in French, German, English, and Czech, with the overwhelming majority in the latter two languages. Although the bibliography lists many of the necessary English-language monographs, missing are excel-

lent works by Hugh Agnew, Gary Cohen, Bruce Garver, Hillel J. Kieval, Lawrence D. Orton, and Stanley B. Winters and the recent Czech works by Arnost Klima, Jiri Koralka, and Ferdinand Seibt. There are also important omissions in the presentation of general works on the Habsburg Monarchy. Although English-language classics by R.J.W. Evans, Robert Kann, and C.A. Macartney appear, there are no corresponding German-language works such as the multi-volume *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918* of Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch. Another oversight is the absence of non-Czech journals (i.e. *Bohemia* and the *Austrian History Yearbook*) which are devoted to or frequently include articles on Bohemia and Moravia. The appendix consists of three parts: a list of princes, kings, and presidents who have presided over the Czech lands, and the texts of Charter 77 and the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of January 1, 1991.

>From the preceding comments, it should be clear that the dictionary's most serious weaknesses relate to pre-twentieth century issues. Indeed, sixteen of twenty-three pages in the chronology are devoted to the twentieth century. Thirteen of those pages are devoted to the post-1938 period. Treatment of pre-eighteenth-century issues is limited to short paragraphs in entries on geographic locations and themes such as agriculture and sculpture, entries on personages such as Jan Hus and Jan Amos Komensky, ruling dynasties, and cultural icons such as the Charles Bridge and Pilsner Urquell.

Treatment of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century cultural figures is also remarkably thin. Although there are entries for Jan Evangelista Purkyne, Josef Jungmann, Frantisek Palacky, Frantisek Rieger, Antonin Dvorak, and Karel Havlicek Borovsky, there are none for Jan Kollar, Josef Dobrovsky, Pavel Josef Safarik, Vaclav Matej Kramerius, Frantisek Ladislav Celakovsky, Josef Kajetan Tyl, Jan Neruda, Bedrich Smetana, or Bozena Nemcova–to name only a few. There is also no mention of two other seminal women of Czech letters, Karolina Svetla and Eliska Krasnohorska.

The depth of coverage is much better for the twentieth century, but it is dominated by political issues. Entries focus strongly on the major political parties and leading individuals. Once again, however, notable omissions indicate an overwhelming preference for the most recent times. Although all of the current major political parties are listed, there are important omissions related to the interwar period. Leading figures such as Antonin Svehla, Alois Rasin, and Jan Sramek all receive entries, but the National Democrats and the People's Party do not. Also omitted is Rudolf Bechyne, although there is an entry for the Czech Social Democrats. The Czech National Socialist Party is included, but Jiri Stribrny is not. The *Petka* is never mentioned in either these entries or the author's introduction.

More vexing is the treatment of twentieth century cultural and intellectual issues. These are limited to synthetic articles on literature, music, etc. and entries specific to a scant twenty-three individuals.

With so many omissions, we might assume that the author's interest is in political affairs and that the conception of the "Czech State" employed is limited to the period following the emergence of the first republic in October 1918. That this is not the case, however, is evinced in the author's introduction where he writes that "the Czech state belongs among the oldest continuous statehoods in Europe, dating its origins back to the ninth century (Greater Moravia)" (p. 1).

The geographic extent of the "Czech state," however, is never clearly defined. In the introduction, Hochman lists Bohemia and Moravia among a number of territories ruled by Greater Moravia (there is no discussion of the possibility that Greater Moravia was centered much further south) but Prince Borivoj of the Premyslite dynasty is given as the "first historically recorded Czech ruler" (p. 5). The thread is then picked up with Prince Vaclav I ruling Bohemia in the tenth century, and Premyslite rule is extended to Moravia at the end of that century. The entry on "Bohemia" states that "by the 11th century, the Czechs had united all Slavic tribes in Bohemia and Moravia" (p. 26). The entry "Czech Kingdom" identifies the Czech kingdom as the "form of the Czech state" from 1158 to 1918 (p. 46). Apparently, the "Czech state" is a generic term for any political institution ruling over some of these lands and the Slavic peoples residing therein.

The question of which territory and people constitute the Czech state is important to an understanding of the author's conception of its history. It is not clearly a land, but a people he refers to as "Czechs," which specifically does not include "Germans," "Jews," "Roma," or "Slovaks."

Each of these other groups is discussed in a separate entry. There is no mention of Germans in Bohemia in the introduction until the statement that attempts to expand the use of Czech in public administration during the late nineteenth century "ran into strong opposition from the German minority in Bohemia. Ethnic strife was to mark the political life in the Czech lands for many years to

come" (p. 9). The only entries referring to "Germans" in Bohemia and Moravia are those entitled "Heydrichiade," the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia," "Munich Dictate," "Case Green," "Sudetenland," and "Transfer of Germans from Czechoslovakia, 1945-1947." In the Sudetenland entry, the "Germans" are described as having been "a part of the Czech state since the tenth century" (p. 134), but then as having been "transferred back to Germany according to the decision of the Potsdam Conference in June-July 1945" (p. 135).

According to the entry "Jews in the Czech Lands," "Jewish communities are documented since the tenth century; indirect evidence attests to a Jewish presence since as early as the second century A.D." (p. 73). One might very well ask in which or whose lands these second-century Jews were present. Other entries devoted to specific Jewish topics are "Golem," "Rabbi Jehuda Ben Becalal Maharal Loew," "Mordechai Maisel," "Old-New Synagogue in Prague," and "Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague." In the entry "Roma in the Czech Republic," the Roma are reported as present in Bohemia from the thirteenth century (p. 121-2). The entry "Slovakia" identifies the "Slovaks" and the "Czechs" as "very close culturally" (p. 129).

Despite the questionable issue of continuity in the history of the "Czech state," it would be unfair to say that the author presents his material anachronistically. There is no anti-German sentiment or anachronistic Czech national language in the author's brief treatment of the Middle Ages and Early Modern periods. The Hussite rebellion is treated as a religious struggle with "strong social undertones" (p. 6), and the Estates rebellion of the seventeenth century is treated as part of the "centuries-old resistance of Czech aristocrats against the absolutist tendencies of their kings" (p. 7). While the importance of the defeat at Bila Hora for the history of the Czech lands is fully reflected, the author succeeds here again in muting the latter-day national perspective.

In this presentation as well as the separate entries entitled "White Mountain Battle," "New Political Order of the Land 1627," and "Thirty Years War," the author clearly juxtaposes the nonrepresentative, nonpopular character of the rebellion with its "far-reaching political, economic and religious consequences for the Czech nation and for the Czech state" (p. 149). The heroic language traditionally used in describing these events is replaced with the statement that "Czech history books view the system imposed in 1627 as a national tragedy" (p. 100).

Likewise, the national revival and revolution of 1848 receive a scant paragraph apiece, but the dictionary entry "National Revival" again juxtaposes a romantic, exclusionist and a wider, sometimes materialistic view of history. Hochman characterizes the national revival as both "a by-product of the disintegration of the feudal society" and a process "to overcome the consequences of almost 200 years of national humiliation during the Counter-reformation…the Czech National Revival had both positive and negative historical aspects" (p. 97-8).

While the absence of heroic, nationalistic language is creditable, the lack of a systematic treatment of ethnic relations and identity is problematic. Despite Hochman's assertion of the existence of an older territorial loyalty, the "non-Czechs" discussed above remain foreigners in this presentation. Similarly, although he presents us with a "modern political nation" in 1848, matters of debate within the Czech national community are left wholly undigested. There is no discussion of the nineteenth-century development of Czech radical thought or the creation of competing Young Czech and Old Czech parties. And although the parting of ways between Karel Kramar, on the one hand, and Thomas Masaryk and Edvard Benes on the other is mentioned, as is the disagreement between Masaryk and Josef Pekar on their conceptualizations of Czech history, neither of these topics is investigated in depth. Similarly, Slovak dissatisfaction with the unitary state is mentioned, but not elucidated. There is no mention of debate about Benes's decisions of 1938 or 1948.

"Czech" culture is also presented in this "unitary" framework. While many of the leading cultural and intellectual figures of the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century receive entries, there is no mention of Czech modernism or the avant-garde. For the second half of the twentieth century, there is again reference to some of the most important individuals, most of whom were (are) involved in politics, but again there are many omissions.

Ultimately very few people will find this 203-page dictionary useful. It does not provide a sufficiently detailed ready reference for either the specialist or the generalist. For the specialist, it is far too general; the majority of the information should be well known to anyone who has seriously studied the so-called Czech lands. The specialist will not find information related to little known figures or themes uncommon to the standard historical works. Such a short dictionary could conceivably be useful to the neophyte or tourist, but here again it falls short. Although there are entries on topics such as "Tourism"

and monumental architecture (in Prague), there is very little information on the artists with whose works one would come into daily contact in the current Czech republic.

Notes

[1]. Kurt W. Treptow and Marcel Popa, *Historical Dictionary of Romania*, European Historical Dictionaries, No. 15. (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 1996) and Steven Bela Vardy, *Historical Dictionary of Hungary*, European Historical Dictionaries, No. 18 (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press,1997), both reviewed at `http://h-net2.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=14201890694461`; Robert Stallaerts and Jeannine Laurens, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Croatia*, European Historical Dictionaries, No. 9. (Lanham, Md. and London: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1995) and Leopoldina Plut-Pregelj and Carole Rogel, *Historical Dictionary of Slovenia*, European Historical Dictionaries, No. 13 (Lanham, Md. and London: Scarecrow Press, 1996), both reviewed at `http://h-net2.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=15176890695730`.

[2]. Jiri Hochman, *The Soviet Union and the failure of collective security, 1934-1938* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984) and Hochman, ed., Alexander Dubcek, *Hope Dies Last: The Autobiography of Alexander Dubcek* (London: HarperCollins, 1993).

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