

STALINISM IN PRAGUE: THE LOEBL STORY. By *Eugen Loebel*. Translated by *Maurice Michael*. American edition edited and with an introduction by *Herman Starobin*. New York: Grove Press, 1970. 330 pp. \$6.00, cloth. \$1.95, paper.

A YEAR IS EIGHT MONTHS. By *Journalist M.* Introduction by *Tad Szulc*. Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1970. xii, 201 pp. \$5.95.

LA CHUTE IRRÉSISTIBLE D'ALEXANDER DUBCEK. By *Pavel Tigrid*. Translated from the English by *Jean Bloch-Michel*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1969. ix, 318 pp. Paper.

Few events of the recent past have been so abundantly reported as the Prague Spring and its abrupt end by the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968. So far some ninety-four books—in German, French, English, and Czech—stand witness to the world-wide interest in the Czechoslovak experiment, which was viewed by many observers as a watershed in the history of communism. However, not all of this voluminous literature ranks high in competence, lucidity of argument, and value to the serious reader. Each of the three volumes under review enriches and deepens our knowledge of this tragic event. All offer an account that lies midway between journalism and history. The authors have not attempted a scholarly history with extensive documentation. At the same time they have adhered to a historian's perspective and have analyzed the developments with the assurance of experts thoroughly familiar with their subject.

The political trials of the 1950s, stage-managed by the Soviets, presented a striking example of the total surrender of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC) to Stalinism. The pressure for rehabilitation of the victims thus became an indispensable part of the de-Stalinization drive. (The immensely instructive secret findings of the Rehabilitation Commission set up by the KSC were published by Jiří Pelikán, *Das unterdrückte Dossier*, in Vienna in May 1970.) Eugen Loebel, former deputy foreign trade minister, is one of three Communist defendants of the Slánský trial to survive. In his *Stalinism in Prague* he unveils the decisive role of the Soviet advisers in the preparation of the trial and describes the techniques of interrogation, consisting of a "combination of continual hunger, repeated interruption of sleep, and of having to stand or walk in small, hard leather slippers throughout the day" (p. 22). His account of the pogromlike atmosphere and of the ideology behind the purges incorporates the essentials of his own experience. Loebel knows how to seize on telling details to give his narrative a fresh firsthandness. It is regrettable that his testimony is so short (pp. 17–84); excerpts from the Slánský trial proceedings form the bulk of the text. Those interested in a more complete treatment may consult Artur London's recollections (*L'aveu: Dans l'engrenage du Procès de Prague*, 1968) and the accounts of the widows of two other prominent victims, Josefa Slánská (*Report on My Husband*, 1969) and Marian Štingová (*Truth Will Prevail*, 1968). This reader was annoyed by the omission of diacritical marks (c for č, etc.) in the names of persons and places, a flaw that also occurs in Pavel Tigrid's study. In addition, the introduction contains a few misstatements that no student of Czechoslovak communism ought to make.

In its sober presentation of factual evidence and its stimulating interpretation of that evidence, *A Year Is Eight Months* by "M," a Communist journalist (the original German text bears more properly the pen name of Josef Maxa), represents a manifest effort at balance and fairness. Familiar topics are treated from a fresh point of view, and the complexities of the development between the fall of

1967 and August 1968 are analyzed and meaningfully evaluated. The book shows penetrating historical insight, especially in "M's" explanation of the vacillation and irresolution of the KSČ leadership that was caused by the uneasy compromise reached among the liberals, the Dubček center, and the dogmatists. "M" stresses the spontaneity and gradual nature of the process of liberalization initially carried out, for the most part, by the intellectuals and youth through the mass media. The workers abandoned their passivity in the early summer when the factories became centers of the reform movement. Quite rightly "M" points out some, mostly isolated, ill-considered opinions in the Czechoslovak press that showed little understanding of the delicate international position of the republic. It belatedly became clear that the calling of the Extraordinary Congress of the KSČ for September 9, which was to exclude the conservative forces and approve the new reformist line, was the decisive factor in the timing of the Soviet aggression. According to informed Prague sources, "M" writes, "the main cause of the intervention was . . . the danger that Czechoslovakia would free herself from the strict control that the Soviet regime had exercised for twenty years" (p. 179).

Some uneasiness may be felt about a few inaccuracies in the text, such as in the description of the course of events during the night of August 20–21. Also, the characteristics of the four Czechoslovak reform leaders are rather sketchily described, and at some points do not agree with the experiences of other witnesses. These are, however, small flaws compared with the undoubted fact that this is a lucid and thoughtful picture of the chaos of events.

Few themes rival in historical importance the thesis argued by Pavel Tigríd in his informative, even if somewhat hastily written, volume: was not the Prague experiment condemned to defeat from its very beginning because of the apparent incapability of a Communist regime to reform? The author holds the Dubček experiment illusory and impossible of success because of the basically totalitarian nature of a Communist system. Admittedly this is a provocative statement by the eminently qualified author of the best seller *Le Printemps de Prague* (1968) and editor of the political-cultural quarterly *Svědectví* in Paris. The study is an elaboration of his articles published in this indispensable guide to the Czechoslovak events. Despite the title, this is not a story of Alexander Dubček but an examination of the KSČ policies up to Dubček's tragic and—in Tigríd's opinion—inevitable fall. The reader would do well to compare this view with the concise argument defending liberal communism set forth by Jiří Pelikán, one of the masterminds of the Prague Spring, in *Panzer überrollen den Parteitag* (1969). Actually, because of the Soviet occupation, Tigríd's thesis is impossible to prove or disprove. The book's main value lies in its use of confidential documents smuggled out of the country by Czech and Slovak Communist officials. Minutes of the plenary meetings of the Central Committee of the KSČ and of the Czechoslovak-Soviet conversations throw a pertinent light on the motivations of the Soviet leaders and help us to understand the Soviet actions that preceded October 1969, when the neo-Stalinist Husák regime became firmly entrenched in Prague and Bratislava. Unlike "M," Tigríd indicates that strategic considerations were at the root of the Soviet decision to occupy its ally. Despite its judicious diagnosis of the crisis, the volume suffers from an almost complete lack of scholarly annotation. The author fails to supply information on his sources, there is no index, and the bibliography is inadequate. In fact, the study indicates an overhasty publication effort, inappropriate for this volume of merit. The exposition is also weakened by the failure to present any manifestation of socioeconomic elements.

Evidently only historical distance can allow a more complete scholarly evaluation. Unquestionably such a work of synthesis would have, above all, to assess and integrate the evidence, disclosed by these volumes, revealing the imperialist and profoundly reactionary nature of the Soviet regime.

RADOMIR LUZA  
*Tulane University*

HISTORIA POMORZA. Vol. 1: DO ROKU 1466. In two parts. Edited by Gerard Labuda. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1969. 819, 501 pp. 220 zł.

The long-awaited publication of this two-part volume initiates what will be, upon completion, a monumental four-volume history of Pomerania from prehistory to the present day. This first volume extends to the Treaty of Toruń in 1466; the second will cover the early modern period to 1815; the third, 1815–1945; and the fourth will deal with contemporary history.

As early as 1953 the Division on the History of Pomerania of the Polish Academy of Sciences' Institute of History decided to undertake the preparation of this work. It was designed to be a comprehensive, collaborative study which would be comparable, on a regional basis, to the already projected *Historia Polski*. But a somewhat overoptimistic view of the state of historical research on Pomerania necessitated a great deal of intervening scholarship, which has now been incorporated in this volume. If the mill of learning grinds exceedingly fine, it also grinds slowly.

Before undertaking a brief description of the contents of this work and an assessment of its value in three particular areas, it would be wise to define the geography involved. Pomerania (Polish *po morze* = by the sea) traditionally includes the area stretching on the Baltic between the lower course of the Vistula and the Oder rivers, and bounded on the south by the Noteć and lower Warta. This region is divided into a western (*Pomorze zachodnie*) and an eastern (*Pomorze gdańskie*) part. But the nature of historical development has been such that principalities or states lying outside these boundaries have often played a vitally important role in this region. Thus the *Historia Pomorza* deals also with part of the area west of the Oder and with the history of Prussia (the German *Ostpreussen*), the seat of the Knights of the Teutonic Order. As a result, telling the history of this region is a task complicated by the mixing of ethnic populations in the past two millennia and the number of foreign powers which have exercised domination here at one time or another.

The volume begins with a chapter on historical geography by Gerard Labuda and Kazimierz Ślaski and a penetrating historiographical essay by the editor that is a model of the art. Józef Kostrzewski then provides a long section (135 pp.) on what, in contemporary Polish terminology, is called Primitive Society (to ca. A.D. 600). The Age of Feudalism is then treated in the remainder of the volume by Kostrzewski, Lech Leciejewicz, Labuda, Marian Biskup, Ślaski, and Benedykt Zientara. Until the early twelfth century, the treatment of the text is pan-Pomeranian; after that, separate treatments of east and west are provided. An eighty-page bibliography by Władysław Chojnacki, seventy pages of indexes by Anna Ślaska, and numerous genealogies, maps, and illustrations further complement this outstanding achievement.

From what was said in the preceding paragraph, it is apparent that in terms