

"apprehensions about socialism, its humanistic mission and its human face." Later on Dubček, following others, took over this battle cry.

The weaknesses of this generally excellent and well-written book are the weaknesses of the author, for whom Czechoslovakia was foremost, if not exclusively, a Czech affair. He presents penetrating portraits of the leading personalities—but they are mostly Czechs and some Slovaks. The German problem hardly existed for him: he devotes just a few pages with a rather superficial content to this basic difficulty of the state. More attention is paid to the country's other Achilles heel, the problem of the Slovaks, but one feels that it is regarded as more a nuisance than a real dilemma. Discussing the "Pittsburgh Agreement" between American Slovaks and Czechs (May 1918) about a future common state, the author fails to point to its decisive sentence: that the internal organization of the new state will be freely determined by the representatives of the liberated Czechs and Slovaks at home. Some interesting sidelights on Communist policies and tactics are presented, but Korbel seemed (like Beneš before him) unaware of the interconnection between the Communist insistence on getting rid of the Germans (1945) and their firm determination to subjugate the state to their dictatorship.

The author has great (and well-founded) admiration for T. G. Masaryk, but Beneš is treated with a mixture of reverence and of carefully formulated skepticism. Yet actions for which Beneš was open to criticism are not even mentioned, for example, his often repeated declaration in 1946–47 that "Czechoslovakia was not between the East and the West, but between the Soviet Union and a reactionary Germany," and his unfortunately successful attempts to convince U.S. diplomats that the Czechoslovak Communists of the Gottwald type were "in reality good Czechoslovak patriots."

All in all, Korbel's swan song is a very valuable book which can be recommended to all students of modern history.

J. W. BRUEGEL
London

MY MIND ON TRIAL. By *Eugen Loebel*. New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976. xiv, 235 pp. \$8.95.

This is a very important book whose profound significance has not yet been adequately recognized or assessed. It may not be a great contribution to literature but it is invaluable as primary source material for anyone who wishes to understand the mechanics of thought control in the judicial systems of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Some new light is thrown on the tortuous psychology of the decent believer who becomes a pitiful victim of the faith to which he was prepared to sacrifice his life and the lives of others.

This is the story of Eugen Loebel, the former deputy minister of foreign trade in Communist Czechoslovakia in 1949 and erstwhile friend and confidant of Clement Gottwald, the then head of state, and of the principals in the spectacular Slansky show trials of 1952. The prearranged verdict of guilt resulted in the execution of eleven of the defendants, and the sentencing of three, including Loebel, to imprisonment "until the end of life." Loebel's lying testimony, wrung from him after almost three years of solitary confinement through psychological and physical torture (compelled to stand or walk for eighteen hours on end, deprivation of sleep, iron rations, and so forth), was instrumental in the prosecution's well-rehearsed case. Loebel not only was made to write out in advance the answers to the questions put to him, but, like a dramatist, had to compose the questions and dialogue between himself and the prosecutors, including the judges. He remained in jail for eight years after his sentencing; Stalin's death and Khrushchev's revelations were of no help to him. His sentence was commuted only in 1960

as part of a general pardon in celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia from Nazi rule. Loebel's rehabilitation only came at Dubček's hands in 1963. After the latter's downfall, Loebel chose exile in the West.

Loebel's book is noteworthy for a number of reasons. First, it provides firsthand evidence of the detailed way in which the Kremlin exercised its mastery over its satellites. Working behind the scenes, the Soviet security police apparently were in absolute control of Czechoslovakia from the beginning of the Communist coup. While Slansky, Clementis, and others were still nominally in power, the Soviet agents with the help of their Czech underlings were preparing the case against them. The Czech interrogators, according to Loebel, referred to the Soviet agents who were actually on the scene and who stage-managed the confessions and trials as "our teachers." Second, we learn a great deal about the techniques of Communist juridical frame-ups. Many surmises of the past are confirmed. The Soviet agents ran things like a macabre theater. They had invited the Czech security men to attend the Rajk trials in Hungary to observe how a finished performance was carried out without any danger of public recantation by the defendants. We begin to understand the grisly fact that sustained psychological torture with the accompanying agonizing muscular cramp of enforced immobility can be more effective in coercing the will than bestial physical tortures that are limited by the body's protective lapses into unconsciousness. In this respect, Loebel, and not he alone, believes that the inquisitors of the Kremlin were worse than the brutes and sadists of the Nazi Gestapo, for over the years, on the basis of a vast experience that preceded Stalin's rise to power, they had perfected torture into a fine art. Finally, although Loebel claims to speak for no one but himself, we are offered some arresting insights into the motives, rationalizations, and desperate hopes of men about to die, conscious of their innocence, and yet willing to lend themselves to the infamies of their tormentors who must have been aware of the innocence of their victims. As seems to have been the case with some of the defendants of the Moscow Trials, Loebel hoped that the very absurdity of the concocted tales to which he confessed—which outraged common sense and the laws of probability—would convince the public, especially those aware of his distinguished past services, of his innocence, and backfire into the faces of his tormentors. Alas! At his trial, where the performance was letter perfect, it had no such effect. To his amazement, he discovered that even after his release there were many who still gave credence to the fantasies to which he had confessed. Fear seems to expand the limits of human credulity. Loebel failed to give proper weight in his expectations of a skeptical reaction to his bizarre testimony to the fact that he himself had accepted the Moscow Trials at their face value.

My Mind on Trial is a painfully honest book. Loebel insists he was not brainwashed, nor does he attempt to absolve himself of his false confession by pleading that the pressures against him were beyond human endurance, although many readers will wonder that he held out so long. "What made me confess was not fear of death but a lack of willpower to act on my own. . . . When I confessed, I knew exactly what part I was playing . . . I still have a feeling of guilt. I wish I could have been stronger and not given in." There is something deeply moving in this recurrent refrain. Only someone who has endured what Loebel did would have the right—although I doubt he would exercise it—to judge him. Loebel's life—and this searing book—is a judgment on the system from which he finally escaped. That he refuses to picture himself merely as a helpless victim is a tribute to his moral courage. Loebel is no Solzhenitsyn, but if many copies of this work could find their way across the Iron Curtain the show trials of the future would have to take a different form.

One puzzling feature still remains, despite Loebel's attempt to clarify it. Why is it that not a single one of the defendants at any of these staged trials in Moscow, Budapest, or Prague—men whose past life showed no fear of prison, exile, and death—publicly recanted, except for Krestinskii who recanted his brief recantation? Even

granting that those who refused to confess or who planned to recant were executed when they failed their "rehearsals," it does not explain the behavior of those who remained steadfast in their self-denunciation and, what is worse, in their glorification of their executioners. It was as if all the defendants were carrying out a posthypnotic suggestion. Assume that a promise was made that in exchange for their degradation, the lives of their loved ones would be spared. How could they believe that these promises would be kept, especially after the first Moscow Trial? Loebel dismisses with impatience Koestler's inspired guess that men like Bukharin and others immolated themselves as a last act of piety toward the party. His interrogators, Loebel protests, were no Gletkins, but "simple-minded, uneducated and unsophisticated people who could not convince anyone of anything." But his own account of Kohoutek, his chief hateful interrogator, shows him to be anything but simple-minded. On the contrary, psychologically he seems very shrewd. In the same breath as he abuses Loebel as a spy and traitor, he pleads with him, according to Loebel, "Your duty [*sic*] to the party is to prove your guilt by giving us the facts." What kind of duty does a spy and traitor owe to his party? But surely this perverse loyalty could hardly have operated in the case of *all* the defendants. Some of them must have felt that a party capable of such monstrous crimes was unworthy of any further allegiance, that it was no longer *their* party. Why, then, did none of them speak the words that would have exposed the whole business as an unbelievable farce? One wonders whether every defendant was promised a remission of his formal punishment. The interrogators could promise anything, even ultimate rehabilitation. The final decision, after the trials, was not theirs. But here, too, it is difficult to believe, as strong as the desire for life might be, that all these men would be taken in by the assurances of their inquisitors, especially in the light of what had occurred in the early trials. Some day, if the record of all the interrogations is made public, we may find the answer to this puzzling phenomenon.

That Loebel could have survived his ordeal is a tribute to the resiliency of the human spirit. But there is more than enough in his account to give pause to anyone who is too hopeful about the human prospect. For some reason I found the most disheartening detail in this grim book Loebel's report of what happened after he had been sentenced to imprisonment until the end of his life. "In the Ministry of Foreign Trade [where Loebel had served with distinction] there had been a protest meeting against the leniency of my sentence. A resolution demanding that I should be executed with the others was passed."

SIDNEY HOOK
Hoover Institution

CZECHOSLOVAKIA. By *William V. Wallace*. Nations of the Modern World series. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1976. xvi, 374 pp. Illus. Maps. \$24.00.

After reading Professor Wallace's book on Czechoslovakia, my reaction was somewhat mixed: I had the highest admiration for his synthetic ability and power, for the factual wealth and his apparent fairness. His grasp of the political, socioeconomic, and cultural developments in the historic crown lands of Bohemia and Moravia, as well as in the "upper Hungarian province" of Slovakia since 1848—their common history since 1918, their short-lived separate status between 1938 and 1945, and, again, their mutual experiences under Communist domination up to 1968–69—is most impressive. Yet, in my judgment, the book lacks a certain quality: in spite of all its objectivity it does not catch the "spirit" of the events covered. Especially in the chapters about Slovakia, approximately one-third of the book, one gets the impression that the moving forces behind the history and aspirations of this small nation were not really understood or "digested." And, perhaps more important, the symbiosis of Czechs and Ger-