

Charmian Brinson and Marian Malet, eds. *Exile In and From Czechoslovakia During the 1930s and 1940s. The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, Vol. 11. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009. 303 pp.

The title of this book is ponderous yet precise, since the topic of ‘exile and Czechoslovakia’ in the given period encompasses three distinct historical phenomena. First is the role played by the first Czechoslovak republic as the recipient of exiles from Germany (and later Austria) after Hitler came to power. As a neighboring state with a relatively functional democracy, a sizable German-speaking population, and established German-language cultural institutions, Czechoslovakia was an obvious and attractive option for many of those fleeing the Nazi regime, at least until early 1938. Second is the wave of exiles fleeing Czechoslovakia after the demise of the first republic and especially after the Nazi occupation in early 1939. These exiles came from all of the various ethnic and linguistic groups of interwar Czechoslovakia: Jews, German-speakers, and Czech-speakers were most prominent, but Slovaks, Ruthenians, and Hungarian-speakers were also represented, as well as many Germans and Austrians who had fled *to* Czechoslovakia in the 1930s and then were forced to flee *from* Czechoslovakia shortly thereafter. Third is the wave of exiles from post-war Czechoslovakia following the Communists’ ‘Victorious February’ of 1948.

This volume contains sixteen essays originally presented at a conference held in London in 2008. The three waves of exile described above are not represented equally: post-1948 exile from Communist Czechoslovakia receives by far the briefest treatment, coming up only in a few essays, for the most part tangentially; the topic of German and Austrian exiles to the first Czechoslovak republic in the mid-1930s comes next in prominence and is the subject of the first four essays; and the remaining essays (the bulk of the volume) focus on exiles from Czechoslovakia after the Nazi occupation. These latter essays cover topics ranging from the ethnic and linguistic profile of the exile population, the institutions created in the host country to accommodate and assist these people, various aspects of political, cultural and social life in exile, as well as profiles of a few particularly prominent cultural or political figures (such as Eleanor Rathbone, Ludwig Winder, Johannes Urzidil and Eduard Goldstücker). Presumably because of the location of the conference these essays focus almost exclusively on exiles to the United

Kingdom during the war; the substantial flow of exiles to North America, Australia, and other destinations (often following an interim stay in the U.K.) makes the occasional appearance but receives no thorough treatment in this volume.

Taken together, the volume provides much useful information, especially on the structure and dynamics of the exile community from Czechoslovakia in Britain during the war. The essays for the most part fall into two groups. The first group provides information more or less obscure about overlooked institutions or individuals; there are essays addressing, for example, the structure and activities of the Czech Refugee Trust Fund in Britain, the challenges preceding the establishment of Edvard Beneš's Czechoslovak government in exile, and the activities of German artists in Czechoslovakia in the mid-1930s or of the (often forgotten) Czech musicians active in the U.K. during the war. Much of this detail is valuable, although often enough one wishes for further analysis or broader conclusions. The second group of essays focuses on well-known figures forced into exile. Thus the volume opens with an essay on arguably the most famous such figure, Thomas Mann, who, together with other members of his family, received Czechoslovak citizenship in the 1930s (although he spent barely any time in the country). John Heartfield and Oskar Kokoschka are among the other major cultural figures discussed here who took refuge in Czechoslovakia before the outbreak of the war.

The main criticism to be raised is the standard one for conference volumes: a certain random element or lack of system in what has been presented. This is notoriously difficult to control, but there are some surprising gaps given the relatively tightly demarcated topic of the volume. One of the most prominent names one might expect in this context—Milena Jesenská, whose dangerous work helping exiles into and out of Czechoslovakia played a role in her later internment (and death) in Ravensbrück—never occurs in the volume. Similarly, the writer Anna Maria Jokl, who spent several years in exile first in Prague and then in London, and thus seems to represent an archetypal figure for this context, is never mentioned. Among significant figures who left Czechoslovakia for exile in the U.K. but are not discussed here one could mention the writer H. G. Adler (who emigrated to London shortly after the war yet seems far too important to overlook in this context), the Surrealist and psychoanalytic theorist Bohuslav Brouk, or the writer and prominent graphologist Robert Saudek (who even did diplomatic work for the

Czechoslovak government in exile in London). A second criticism would be the absence of any more broadly conceived essay that might pull together the details and elaborate broader questions or issues this topic raises. One essay, concerning the *Kindertransporte* from Czechoslovakia to Britain shortly before the outbreak of the war, does indeed reflect on questions of forgetting and identity, invoking terms from Homi Bhaba in the process; but this could be developed further, and, more surprisingly, W. G. Sebald's magisterial novel *Austerlitz*—surely the best known treatment of the *Kindertransporte* and related issues of memory and identity—is never mentioned. So the volume misses a few opportunities to open up its topic and draw connections that might interest more readers. None the less, much valuable detail is presented here, and scholars working on exile during this period will certainly want to consult this book.

—Peter Zusi, *University College London*