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Under a cruel star: A life in Prague 1941 -1968 by
Heda Margolius Kovály, Holmes & Meier
Publishers, Inc., 1997

Nathan Harter

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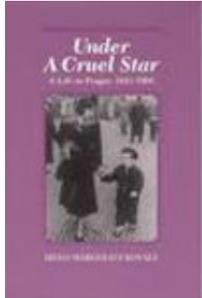
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Recommended Readings



Under a cruel star: A life in Prague 1941 - 1968

by Heda Margolius Kovály, Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc. 1997

Reviewed by Nathan Harter

The anniversary of the Velvet Revolution is a good time to revisit the drama stretching from Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia through Stalinist oppression, leading up to the famous (or infamous) Prague Spring of 1968. This history sets the context for the Charter 77 movement that finally prevailed twenty years ago.

In simple, memorable prose, this Jewish author opens her memoirs becoming a prisoner of the Third Reich, escaping overland for Prague, only to find many doors there closed to her. After the war, Czechoslovakia became a satellite of the Soviet Union, and the author's husband rose quickly to become a significant public official and true believer in the ideals of communism. Increasingly uneasy, however, Heda Margolius felt the strain of politics, until the day when the regime found it useful to prosecute her husband in one of that era's show trials. Bearing the stigma of his falsely obtained conviction, she found life as a single mother burdensome again, retaining little motivation to stay in her homeland after the Warsaw Pact crushed an uprising that had blossomed in the capital city in 1968.

With a poet's voice and a reporter's eye for detail, she offers stunning vignettes of life under unspeakable duress, suffused with a spirit of hope until the very last page

- Nathan Harter is a College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Board of Visitors' member at Butler University.