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**Peter Salner: MINULÝ ROK V JERUZALEME. [Last Year in Jerusalem.]**

Bratislava: Marenčin PT, 2010, 256 pp.

The new book by the Bratislava ethnologist Peter Salner, published in a beautiful format by Marenčin PT publishers in a Bratislava-Pressburg edition, follows up on Salner's previous title *Budúci rok v Bratislave alebo stretnutie (Next Year in Bratislava or a Meeting)* (Albert Marenčin PT 2007),<sup>1</sup> paraphrasing the blessing connected with the Jewish seder, which is, in its importance, comparable to Christmas Eve in the Christian tradition. Last year's title is dedicated to the already-300-member group aged between 55 and 70 years old, socially and religiously heterogeneous, centralized around the Internet forum *Meeting* (founded in 2004; in 2009 renamed *Light*) and one moderator, who also includes in the Web pages (in Slovak) information about happenings in Israel, interesting events, books, television and radio broadcasts, Slovak anti-Semitism. This forum connects Slovak Jews who emigrated after August 1968, mainly to North America, Israel and Germany, Switzerland and Austria, and the Slovak version of the *Czech Children of Maislovka*. Its original core (Bratislava Jews meeting in a Kitchen) gradually spread, however, to more Slovak and Czech Jews – descendants of victims of the Shoah with experience of the August occupation in 1968.

<sup>1</sup> A review of the book appeared in *Urban People*, 12, 2010, 2, pp. 445–446.

The book reflects (and not only in the text, but also by means of tens of authentic photographs) preparations for the meeting and the meeting itself of the group at the Dead Sea in Israel in 2008. However, it simultaneously recalls a previous meeting (the first and most emotional in Bratislava, 2005), in Košice, where today the second most numerous Jewish community in Slovakia lives (in 2006, more than 200 participants) and in the Low Tatras (Tále, 2007, 180 participants). This text was also constructed by Salner, primarily on an abundance of e-mails exchanged by the members of the group before and after the meeting and, further, interviews with them and the participant observation of the researcher and, at the same time, interested participant. Salner attempts to grasp the identity of the specific group, which is constantly developing.

If, in the past, Judaism was the pillar of Jewish society, today it is, as Salner and his informants correctly repeatedly emphasize, mainly the experience of the catastrophe to which the Jews give the Hebrew name Shoah. The primary aim of Salner's work, however, shows how the group gradually welded together (it became a family) and how it began to fill its social function (including complementing knowledge about relatives of their members). But as Salner convincingly showed in his analysis of the texts, the main topics on the Web pages are today cornerstones of the postmodern Jewish identity of *children of the Holocaust*. Beside the theme of the Shoah (including the constant investigation into the fate of murdered relatives, the monitoring of cultural documents with the

Shoah thematic, mainly, then, "reprises" of the journeys of Jewish children on the so-called Winton trains), there is Judaism (differently experienced primarily in the attitude toward Jewish holidays), worries about the fate of the state of Israel, which, also for non-Israeli Jews, fills a function of great significance (primarily potentially safe asylum) and lands of origin (Czechoslovakia, Slovakia). In relation to Slovakia, at the same time nostalgic memories of childhood and youth (entertainment, games, food, outstanding Jewish personalities) are mixed with negative experiences of life under the totalitarian regime, which continue reflections about the insufficient care of the synagogues and cemeteries in today's Slovakia. A wave of emotion was induced by the death of the popular singer Waldemar Matuška, who was perceived as an erstwhile idol of respondents and/or a symbol of their youth. The axis of the identity of this group is also, however, the experience of occupation and the subsequent emigration which is today perceived positively by those successful and cosmopolitan people. The erstwhile trauma was entirely overlaid by the experience of a better life in democratic states of the Western type compared to communist Czechoslovakia, better property security; in addition a feeling of difference from the Slovak surroundings lasts. The final pages of the book, then, zoomed in on the subjective experience of the meeting in Israel which, in 2008, celebrated the sixtieth year of its existence.

What to write in conclusion? Anyone who takes this book in his hand will immediately be attracted to the rivet-

ingly related story of one specific group, mediated mainly through its main language. A specialist, then, will value the highly interesting material about the problematics of the rise of group solidarity, social networks and also, of course, Jewish identity, however much he will regret that the book does not develop certain outlined theses into greater theoretical depth and breadth. However, Peter Salner does not write only for theoreticians of minorities but – primarily – for all who are interested in the history of Bratislava and the thinking of Slovak and Slovak-Jewish society. And the great reader success of his works proves that this strategy is, to a great extent, right.

*Blanka Soukupová*

**Helena Nosková, Eva Tošovská:  
KAPITOLY O PROMĚNÁCH  
POHRANIČÍ SE ZŘETELEM  
NA KRÁLICKO. [Chapters  
about Changes on the  
Borderland with Regard to  
Krállicko (the Králiky area).]**

Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR (Prague: Institute of Contemporary History, Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic), v.v.i., 2010, 255 pp.

The new book by Helena Nosková, an ethnologist and historian, senior researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, and her colleague Eva Tošovská, a lawyer and economist, came about in the framework of a project

of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, which is dedicated to the development of borderland regions. At the same time, however, it presents some sort of finalization of the long-term archival and field research of borderlands realized by Helena Nosková, one of our best field ethnographers and, simultaneously, one of the key workers of the former Institute for Ethnography and Folklore Studies of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. After her discharge from the Academy as a result of its badly thought-out restructuralization, Nosková was forced again to fight her way to scientific work through her position of high-school teacher. She never lost her love for the field of borderlands and, after 1989, she “discovered” a new microfield – the microregion of Krállicko. Despite the voices of the unenlightened, the borderland remained, after the so-called Velvet Revolution, an extremely interesting anthropological laboratory; at the same time, however, because of its complicated historical development (before 1947 it was an area with a Czech minority as a result of the postwar expulsion of the Czech Germans, with an interruption of continual development) and because of its peripheral position bringing economic vulnerability and cultural backwardness it remained the Achilles’ heel of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. The transition to market economics after 1989 could both worsen and reduce these handicaps.

The highly up-to-date work of both authors consists of a macro-analysis devoted to borderlands and a micro-analysis focused on the concrete micro-region of Krállicko. The first study by Helena