

cation is the primary determinant. This section surveys in detail tax and benefits reform, calculating how the new system contributes to income inequality. And, finally, it also examines public opinion on taxes and benefits.

The book's third section turns to social structures and examines them from three perspectives. The optics of social stratification is applied to the middle class. A socio-political standpoint serves to elucidate the condition of retirees and the intricacies of pension reform. The latter is a particularly contentious issue not only because the Czech population is aging fast but also because of the obvious implausibility of sustaining a pay-as-you-go pension system while maintaining at least some equivalence between past earnings and current pension benefits. The section concludes with a chapter cast in terms of economic disparities that deals with the poor, the different ways of measuring poverty and some causes of this condition (unemployment, single parent family, number of children, etc).

The final section broaches the sphere of socio-economic values and examines it through a multiple cognitive lens. It describes how work values and job attitudes have evolved over the past decade and portrays the rapid expansion of a consumer society together with the profound impact it is exerting on the values and the behavior of individuals and groups. But consumerism is not, the section suggests, the only force unraveling the fabric of local economic culture. Opening to the world beyond, the section culminates in canvassing "European values" and it ponders the potential consequences of their collision

with the contemporary Czech economy and society.

As is to be expected in such a rich and complex work the individual chapters vary in their compositions, each presenting different ratios of methodological reflections, empirical data, and their interpretations. Anybody familiar with Večerník's scholarly output might detect in some segments of his new book traces of previously published articles. The text is also not entirely proportional in balancing the author's critical attitude toward past developments with his forward outlook. But leaving these petty complaints aside, *Czech Society in the 2000s* is a signal contribution to our understanding of contemporary Czech society and a handy instrument for all foreign students and researchers who might face difficulties in accessing on their own the data Večerník's book presents. It is an indispensable volume for any library concerned with Czech studies.

*Peter Steiner*

**Michaela Ferencová –  
Jana Nosková: PAMĚŤ  
MĚSTA. OBRAZ MĚSTA,  
VEŘEJNÉ KOMEMORACE  
A HISTORICKÉ ZLOMY  
V 19.–21. STOLETÍ.**

**[Memory of a City. Image of  
a City. Public Commemoration  
and Historic Turn of the 21st  
Century.]**

Brno: Etnologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, v.v.i.,  
pracoviště Brno, Statutární město  
Brno, Archiv města Brna, 2009,  
407 pp.

A collective work of Brno, Banská Bystrica and Bratislava ethnologists, a Prague and Opava historian and a German researcher from Oldenburg, Tobias Weger, rather disputably called a monograph, brings out thirteen studies of the problematics of the city and memory. Under the extraordinarily careful editing of Brno ethnologist Jana Nosková and the Bratislava social anthropologist Michaela Ferencová there resulted, on the basis of the conference *Memory of the city. The city and its inhabitants in the 20th century* (Brno 2008) a collection mainly of thoughtful and inspirational texts that is thematically and methodically in accord with the direction of European as well as Czech anthropology and historiography. In the introductory study, its authors Nosková and Ferencová pointed out that it is a frequently discussed topic and attempted to present the most influential theories of memory of the present. Anyone who chooses this road logically reaches for the work of Maurice Halbwachs, the French sociologist and creator of the concept of social memory, the English historian Peter Burke, the author of the thesis of historiography as a construct and of the plurality of memories, French historian Jacques Le Goff and his idea of two mutually interwoven histories (of collective memory and the history of historians) and the idea of memory as a manipulatable pillar of identity, as well as the work of Le Goff opponent Pierre Nora, who divided memory from history. It is possible to call successful the presentation of Halbwachs' and Jan Assmann's own work, whose concept of communicative and cultural memory as parts of collective memory is today also

used in Czech and Slovak anthropology. Further Nosková and Ferencová polemized about the equation of the social group experience being equal to collective (group) memories and they called them strongly problematic. I consider particularly contributive their pointing out the necessity of dialogue of the social-science fields with psychology. On the other hand I consider the outline of the development of Czech and Slovak urban anthropology as insufficient. For example, the dismissal of the influential monograph *Stará dělnická Praha* (Old Blue-Collar Prague) (Prague 1981), a characteristic "anachronism" of the 1950s, does not testify to coherent reflection of that work or monographs of mining regions of the '50s.

The editors divided the texts of the other authors into three thematic units, however aware they were of the permeability of their own borders. The first thematic unit *Memory and image of the city* is made up of four texts. The interesting study of Opava historian Martin Pelc follows the creation of the image of Opava in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by important Opava personalities, but also by tourists, the authors of guides and scientific works and the dominant features of this image: promenade parks with their nationalistic monuments, parks to which Opava town hall devoted extraordinary care [as the author emphasized, it is possible consciously to build an image of a city (p. 57)]. Probably today the best known feature of Opava, the former Little Vienna, Graz North, as a white city, a feature having its roots in the Bezruč poem, was deliberately supported after 1945.

A somewhat methodically more problematic text of the social historian Jakub Machek deals with the old Czech daily the *Pražský Illustrovaný Kurýr* (Prague Illustrated Courier) (1893-1918, but he actually discusses only the year 1898), a mass Czech sensational illustrated publication which, according to Machek, on a mass scale distributed the memory of the city (p. 67). Although the author drew attention to some conclusions of theorists dealing with the influence of the media, the linkage of the Courier and its impact on the *collective memory of ordinary inhabitants of the city* remained unproved. I would rather consider the proposal of the seemingly interesting subjects of contemporary society; I would analyze party interest reflecting in the news service; I would compare the depiction of one event in several periodicals, etc. The topic of interest of Banská Bistrica ethnologist Katarina Košťalová became the image of Zvolen as for 140 years a city of a railroad and railroad workers and further the railroad and its employees as a commemorative topic of the inhabitants of Zvolen. It was actually the railroad, along which the city was constructed, and it was actually the railroad workers who became a qualified personal socio-professional group with inherited (carried over) values, interests and with their own meeting places, a group with a specific memory permeating the city, a group in whose development was reflected the history of states, changes in the ethnic situation and social development in the city. Košťalová's colleague, Jolana Darulová pointed toward how the mining tradition in two Slovak cities Banská Štiavnica (until 1989 it maintained the mining tra-

dition – and Banská Bystrica, where mining ceased to exist 200 years ago. The main topic of her interest became the reflection of this tradition and its use in celebrations, graphic arts, and folklore. The famous tradition is today reproduced mainly by institutions. In the case of the former city, according to researchers it is primarily about nostalgic reflection, while the latter city is revitalizing its image of a mining city mainly for commercial reasons (the development of tourism).

The second portion, *Memory with Identity*, contains three studies. One of the best studies in the anthology from the pen of Tobias Weger is devoted to two neighboring border cities that, after 1945, went through a deep demographic change. Görlitz in Saxony and Polish Zgorzelec served the author as examples of a strained relationship between city and memory. After a historical excursion Weger presented Görlitz as a city which oscillates between Upper Lusatian and Silesian identities. The partner Polish city, on the other hand, amply exploits its Upper Lusatian orientation. Political rhetoric of the type *one city – two nations*, according to Weger, contravenes the reality of persistent mutual isolation caused mainly by dissimilar historic experience. Its expression is anti-Polish stereotypes and different items of memory. The Brno ethnologist Daniel Drápala then concentrated on changes in Rožnov pod Radhoštěm and the role (and its limits) of the open-air Valašské Museum v přírodě institution and their personalities in the formation of local memory. Another Brno researcher Helena Bočková developed, following the traditions of Brno ethnological research, the idea of the importance of folk culture in

the formation of national society in Brno. The main importance was attributed to the Vesna association and Lucie Bakešová. One can only regret that the topic was not presented as an expression of competition with the majority (before the revolution of 1918) of German identity.

The editors grouped five studies of Slovak ethnologists into the third part called *Memory and historic rupture/Transformation*. Katarína Popelková and Juraj Zajonc, both of Bratislava, studied Nitra – an important part of Slovak national mythology (p. 243) after 1918. Popelková analyzed the reflection of extensive political changes in the memory of the inhabitants of the city. The lucidly structured text captured the situation in Nitra before and after the rise of the republic (it contained a compilation of historic literature, complemented with archival sources) and reflections of this situation among contemporaries (unfortunately only seven). From the same sources Zajonc then reconstructed the memory of contemporaries of social life (state and local holidays, religious celebrations and theater) during the First Republic and during the period of the Slovak State. For him also, Nitra is a memorial place in the process of Slovak emancipation. Despite the quantity of valuable data, this study is, however, disturbing to me in that it insufficiently distances itself from the formation that was unambiguously a satellite of the Hitler state of Germany, a state that was emphatically anti-Semitic. The ethnologist Alexandra Bitušiková of Banská Bystrica deals with “her” city in the stage of transformation after 1945. Her paper answers the question of how does the memory of a city have an influence on the name of a public space and its formation

and on urban symbols. The post-socialist city is, however, studied as a city of pluralities and often also of competitive interests, as a city in which a *struggle over memory* takes place. An analogous topic (however only in the case of a monument) was also analyzed by Michaela Ferencová, methodically using the work of Katherine Verdery [reference to the work of Zdeněk Hojda and Jiří Pokorný *Pomníky a zapomínky* (Memorials and Forgetting) (2<sup>nd</sup> edition Prague – Litomyšl 1997) is surprisingly missing in the anthology], in the city of Nové Zámky, where Slovak and Hungarian memories compete, in the years 1918-1945 and after 1989. In the last text, which is the only one dealing with the problematics of socialism, Bratislava ethnologist Monica Vrzgulová analyzes contemporary memories of the city of Trenčín of the 1960s among one group: youths of that time. In all the biographical narratives the topic of spending free time in a city and the topic of August 1968 as an emphatic turning point in the life of young people arises. It is a pity that our colleagues did not take into account the influence of later careers of that generation on their memories. Monika Vrzgulová, like most of the other contributors, defended the concept of group memory.

In conclusion it is necessary to state that the reviewed anthology, despite a range of partial remarks of individual authors, is one of the best that have been published in recent years in Czech ethnology. The concentration of the text rather on the small city and on Slovak, Moravian and Silesian problematics is then something that the editors could hardly influence.

*Blanka Soukupová*