

**Peter Salner: BUDÚCI ROK
V BRATISLAVE ALEBO
STRETNUTIE. [Next Year in
Bratislava or a Meeting.]**

Bratislava: Albert Marenčin PT,
2007, 200 pp.

The publication, whose title paraphrases the words of the Passover hagada (“Next year in Jerusalem”) (the book about the exodus of the Jews from Egypt which the father reads at the seder, the family religious service) relates the story of a meeting in May 2005 of young former inhabitants of Bratislava who are emigrants after the occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. The unusually elegant book, in an edition typical for the Albert Marenčin publishing house (a blue jacket, art paper) with many photographs of the meeting and with period photographs of Bratislava, describes both the idea for the origin of the four-day commemorative holiday of today’s sexagenarians (the first impulse came from Toronto), and the half-year of preparations for this meeting, including disputing over the location of the Bratislava meeting, the course of the event itself and finally also its aftermath and preparations for another event. In May 2005, finally, there met in the city of their childhood and youth 200 Jews from 18 countries along with members of the local Jewish community, mainly children of the Holocaust. The meeting, inspired by regular get-togethers after 1989 of the so-called Children of Maisel Street – Czech parallels of the Slovak youth movement group, took place in the courtyard of the Jewish Community,

in a former Jewish kitchen, in Limbach, in a synagogue, on Dėvín, in the Hotel Carlton, in the Chatam Sofer memorial and always, in the evening, in the U Rolanda café. The author of the book is Peter Salner, a successful publisher of many professional works and books for the general public, a Bratislava ethnologist and president of the Jewish Religious Community of Bratislava. In May 2005, being the host, he described the atmosphere of the meeting and the immediate memories of it as an extraordinarily emotional affair. However, if the importance of the text consisted only in relating the story as a sort of ethnography of one event, it would be hard for us to recommend it to someone other than its participants, for whom it would have documentary value. Fortunately, however, Salner, in this case, also shown himself to be a professional anthropologist: a perceptive and sensitive observer and reader who sees below the surface of phenomena. As one of the first researchers he used e-mail as the main source of his investigation (11,000 e-mails from the Fórum website, which was founded by participants of the meeting). Salner’s text thus has a second plan: he brings a great amount of material, which presents original testimony about what Bratislava means to an emigrant after 40 years, with which places he connects, which attributes have Bratislavan childhood and youth. Virtual contacts, however, also brought original memories of the year 1968 and the Soviet occupation, just like the period of totalitarianism. What seems to me most interesting are the experiences of the phenomenon of emigration, home

(which can also have the appearance of a Slovak kitchen or a place of origin of a Slovak Jewish family), homeland (including relation to Czechoslovakia and to Israel), religionism, just like views of Slovak Jews who stayed home. Salner's aim was not to subject these experiences to qualified analysis (for which, besides, he would need an abundance of works of foreign literature and many more pages). The resulting reflex thus remains to the reader who, however, can lean on the author's historic sketch of the development of the Jewish community after 1945 (with emphasis on the fact of the post-August 1968 emigration). But here Salner's overview is completed with annotations of his informants. A careful reader, among others, will also find the voice of the daughter of Žo Langerová, whose husband was sentenced in the Slánský trial. As an anthropologist, though, he follows with the greatest astonishment how one large meeting kicked off a chain of smaller meetings all around the world and the preparation of a new large undertaking in Slovakia. It attests primarily to the fact that the longing to belong somewhere and to someone is a basic anthropological constant and that the organizational principal of society can be a city of childhood and youth and/or the sum of similar experiences.

Blanka Soukupová

**Přemysl Mácha (ed.):
LIGHTING THE BONFIRE,
REBUILDING THE PYRAMID.
Case Studies in Identity,
Ethnicity and Nationalism in
Indigenous Communities in
Mexico.**

Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita 2009,
184 pp.

The reviewed collective monograph represents the result of a long-term interest of the youngest Ibero-American Studies generation in different manifestations of ethnicity of some contemporary Mexican Indian groups. Five authors territorially covered a substantial part of Mexico: from the northwest regions (the Rarámuri, Yaqui and Toboso peoples), via central and mid-western regions (the Purépecha and Aztec peoples) and down to today's apparently politically most distinctive area – the federated state of Chiapas in the south of the country (the Tzeltal, Tzotzil and eventually Chol peoples).

The monograph opens with a short study by its editor Přemysl Mácha. In his text he writes about news in political manifestations of ethnicity in the attitude of the Mexican state and ways of writing about it. In the latter he draws upon argumentations of a North American anthropologist Les Field, who compares the attitude of the state to the Indian question in the USA and Mexico. It seems that Fox's administration (since December 2000) has started or rather speeded up the reform process, which should result in a significant change in the attitude of the political center, or, in the case