GRULICH, Josef – ČERNÝ, Václav: *Od syna k rekrutovi, od vojáka k vysloužilci : Služba v armádě a její vliv na venkovskou rodinu : Jižní Čechy na přelomu 18. a 19. století* [*From Son to Recruit, from Soldier to Veteran : Military Service and Its Impact on the Rural Family : South Bohemia at the Turn of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*]. Praha: NLN 2025, 324 pp. ISBN 978-80-7422-540-6.

Historical demographers at the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Josef Grulich and Václav Černý, have published a book on a somewhat unusual topic: military service and its impact on the rural family. This represents a certain shift away from strictly historical-demographic themes towards historical, or rather socio-historical, research; however, this does not mean that the authors have abandoned their core interests in demography. On the contrary, it is quite appropriate today to enrich largely statistical analyses with various issues that may have influenced statistical data. Although a considerable amount is already known about the socio-economic impacts on demographic development, socio-cultural matters have so far been examined primarily within the framework of ethnology (particularly rituals, ceremonies, and customs such as baptism, marriage, and funerals). It is therefore noteworthy that in recent years and decades, research focusing on the family and life cycles has gained prominence, employing a variety of perspectives and approaches.

Czech historical demographers are currently concentrating heavily on the period around the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when society was undergoing significant changes brought about by the Enlightenment, which sought to respond to the demographic situation – population growth and even overpopulation. The changes created a need for better record-keeping and contributed to improved documentation of various phenomena. Quite simply, a greater quantity of sources has survived from this period, and of higher quality, which is linked to processes of bureaucratisation, education, and social disciplining. Josef Grulich and Václav Černý also examine in detail one of the new trends associated with social discipline. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Austrian monarchy introduced military conscription based on certain state-defined criteria. Conscripts were deployed on a larger scale for the first time during the Napoleonic Wars, and it was precisely this conflict that the authors sought to incorporate into their research.

Their study is based on archival sources from 1775–1830 relating to the South Bohemian estates of Protivín and Třeboň. They employed both historical-demographic and traditional historical methods; however, *given the exceptionally rich content of the archival materials* (p. 7, Introduction), they adopted a microhistorical approach, presenting "small stories" against the backdrop of "great events". The main theme, however, remains crucial. The aim was not to write military history, let alone some "battle history", but rather to understand the family life of soldiers before, during, and after military service. Just as recent research has explored childhood, orphans, widowhood, and servants, Grulich and Černý examine soldiers in terms of their family background within the social and cultural environment of the countryside. This is an excellent idea, as military service became a time-limited experience – thus a phase in the life cycle – which eventually ended, and if the soldier survived, he returned to ordinary life and sometimes to his original family. Moreover, soldiers were granted both short- and long-term leave, and they often married on the condition that their future wife had a stable means of livelihood capable of supporting the family in case of difficulties.

To a considerable extent, the authors remain faithful to statistical research, through which they seek to demonstrate quantitative relationships between conscription and families, and/or between military service and marriage. However, their conclusions from such analyses often contradict one another. Some results, such as the age structure of recruits, are informative and confirm expectations; yet even here one might argue, from a purely historical-demographic perspective, that it is difficult to assess the age structure of conscripts without knowing the age structure of the entire population. This is not an insurmountable obstacle, and certain conclusions may still be drawn. However, the analysis of the social status of recruits encounters a broader range of variables that complicate any more general conclusions. The finding that recruits and conscripts most often came from the peasant (Czech: sedlák, German: Bauer) stratum is interesting and may serve as a useful starting point for further inquiry. However, it does not necessarily follow that the authorities did not primarily seek soldiers from lower social strata, since the social structure of the countryside (particularly in South Bohemia) was fundamentally based on the peasant stratum. Had the research focused on a rural yet proto-industrial region, there would likely have been far more cotter families available. This objection, however, is not the most important one. The authors themselves note that height and physical fitness were key criteria for conscription. They further explain that, owing to better nutrition in peasant families, these requirements were most likely met mainly

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by peasants' sons. Yet if these variables are unknown, one can only propose such a hypothesis without being able to verify it statistically. The situation would differ if the sources included data on the height of both conscripts and non-conscripts.

Even more problematic is the claim that the predominantly peasant origin of conscripts contradicts the notion that conscription served as a tool of social discipline, since rural society did not thereby rid itself of "undesirable groups" of the population (p. 58). In the conclusion, however, the authors themselves undermine this claim by citing a lack of sources: *On the basis of the sources examined, it was not possible to verify whether estate administrations preferentially sent 'undesirable individuals', who caused problems for officials, into military service* (p. 235). Nowhere is it stated that peasants' sons were not problematic. On the contrary, given large properties and extensive family networks (and strategies), as described by Alice Velková[1] for this period, early and irresolvable disputes could arise among heirs to peasant farms. In the countryside where proto-industrialisation did not develop opportunities to secure a livelihood sufficient to establish a family were indeed very limited, except through inheritance or the purchase of a homestead.

On the other hand, the research by Václav Černý and Josef Grulich clearly demonstrates another consequence of this socio-economic reality. Young men with little chance of inheriting their father's farm were conscripted into the army, which offered them a new life-cycle option, enabling them to secure a livelihood for themselves – indeed often for longer than as farm servants. Upon returning from military service (or even during it), soldiers entered into marriage. The authors appear somewhat ambivalent on this point and again contradict themselves. In the conclusion, they clearly state that most returning conscripts successfully reintegrated into rural society. Immediately afterwards, however, they express concern that the transition to civilian life was difficult for most of them, only to explain subsequently that veterans could in fact gain relatively good financial means. The essence may lie in a simple conclusion at the end of the paragraph containing these various statements (p. 236), where the researchers hit the nail on the head: both quantitative analysis and individual stories show that most returnees spent the rest of their lives as inmate-lodgers (Czech: podruh, German: Inwohner). Why should this have prevented them from starting a family? Perhaps they had not learnt to manage a farm effectively during childhood. But what use would that have been? Neither large nor small farms were readily available. In these circumstances, even as inmate-lodgers, they could represent quite attractive matches for women who otherwise had little chance of marrying. Although the authors cast doubt on this in the main text, in the conclusion they acknowledge that these men might have had savings from their military pay and, above all, might have received an inheritance share. If they came from peasant families, this share was unlikely to have been insignificant. In the introduction, the authors suggest avenues for further research; in connection with inheritance shares, I suggest one more option: probate records. A considerable number of these have survived for soldiers, both for those who died in service and for discharged men, as they could bequeath inheritance shares and other property.

The research suggests that problems were more often associated with individuals, while the majority of veterans reintegrated into village communities or found a place elsewhere. In essence, one might say: *Nihil novi sub sole*. Yet something new does emerge here. According to Černý and Grulich, the assumption that conscription served to rid society of "undesirable" individuals does not hold. But who, in fact, was considered undesirable at the time? Put simply, in Enlightenment thinking, anyone who was not educated, disciplined, and capable of integration posed a problem. The modern term "maladjusted" might be used here. Whereas until recently such a label applied to marginal groups, at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it applied to the majority of the population of the monarchy. In an overpopulated society, many people had little chance of making a living from agriculture – yet what alternatives did they have? Their knowledge was still limited. What, then, could they build upon? Once this is understood, the efforts of authorities to "rid society of undesirable individuals" become clearer. Military service functioned as a form of social disciplining not only by teaching discipline, but also by rendering large masses of people useful. Soldiers were useful in war and subsequently reintegrated into civilian life. For a minority – both soldiers and non-soldiers – whom neither school nor the army helped, prison remained. Over time, other means of employing and disciplining the masses of "unproductive" people emerged, such as factories or coal mines, but these required further discoveries and technological advances.

As is evident, the book by Václav Černý and Josef Grulich has prompted me to reflect and to ask questions. In my favourite Czechoslovak television series *F. L. Věk*, the main character remarks that books do not provide answers, only further questions – and then realises that such books are the good ones. I could comment on many other analyses presented in this publication, but I would merely accumulate additional questions and problems, just as the authors themselves do. And that is as it should be. I may question certain results, but this only means that further research

[1] VELKOVÁ Alice: *Krutá vrchnost, ubozí poddaní? : Proměny venkovské rodiny a společnosti v 18. a první polovině 19. století na příkladu západočeského panství Štáhlavy*. Praha 2009, p. 134.

is needed. Some quantitative analyses would likely benefit from incorporating a much larger population sample, in which unknown variables would become negligible and the calculations more meaningful.

We must turn to additional sources. A great quantity of them has survived from this period, and by combining them we may arrive at even more surprising findings. The basic demographic development will not be overturned, but may be understood far better. Historical demographers are particularly well suited to this kind of research, because they are like hand-pickers of blueberries. The work is extremely laborious, yet they persist until it is complete. At times, the level of detail may be excessive, but this is never truly detrimental – at worst, it may affect readability, something to which historical demographers are accustomed. The South Bohemian scholars have produced a detailed and, moreover, highly readable work. Most readers will probably appreciate particularly the connection it draws between military history and the history of the family.

Radek Lipovski

DEMMEL, József: *Mladý Štefánik : Uhorské roky Milana Rastislava Štefánika od narodenia po maturitu 1880–1898* [*Young Štefánik : The Hungarian Years of Milan Rastislav Štefánik from Birth to School-Leaving Examination, 1880–1898*]. Bratislava: Slovenské literárne centrum, 2024, 224 pp. ISBN 978-80-8119-158-9.

The topic of the new book by Hungarian historian József Demmel focuses on an intriguing subject, the life of Milan Rastislav Štefánik. The author attempts to illuminate little-known information about the renowned Slovak patriot. Building on his successful monographs about Ľudovít Štúr, the nobles from Turiec, the Just family, and the deputy governor of Zvolen, Béla Grünwald, Demmel prepared another book dedicated to one of the most important figures in Slovak history. This would be an ambitious goal in itself, as Štefánik is one of the most famous and frequently analysed figures of Slovak historiography. It should be noted that just five years ago, Michal Kšiňan, the foremost expert on his life, published a highly acclaimed biography of Štefánik. Therefore, it might seem that the current understanding of Štefánik's life is comprehensive.[1] However, in his book, J. Demmel has utilised new sources and reinterpreted previously accepted claims. As a result, he succeeds in providing new insights into Milan R. Štefánik during the first two decades of his life. The book primarily focuses on his years of studies at Hungarian grammar schools, the period leading up to his school leaving examination, and his subsequent departure for Prague.

Demmel decided to analyse the early years of Štefánik's life using a microhistorical approach, through which he introduces readers to the social ties and environment that shaped the main character of his research. The book provides insight into Štefánik's family background, whose roots stretched back to the Lutheran extended families on his father's and mother's sides, namely the Štefánik and Šulek families. Against the backdrop of these relationships, the author identifies the forces that influenced the family of the future pilot and general in the French army. These were evident in their strong national identity, personal integrity, and blood ties and shared values with figures from the revolutionary events of 1848/49, especially Viliam Šulek and Jozef Miloslav Hurban.

The book includes a special section devoted to Štefánik's native village, Košariská, and the circumstances surrounding how Milan Rastislav's father, Pavel, became the first parish priest there and how local realities defined the identity of the entire family. In a separate section of the book, J. Demmel focuses on the life circumstances of the Košariská parish priest, his studies, his first years as a chaplain alongside J. M. Hurban, and finally his election as parish priest. Through this story, readers are given a glimpse into the Štefánik family's private life, which illustrates the household's difficult financial situation. The author explains that Košariská was not an ideal destination for a priest who was the father of twelve children, since their financial demands were constantly increasing as they left for their studies. Therefore, at a certain point, Pavel Štefánik was looking for a place where he could earn money. Gradually, however, he discovered that none of the parishes he was interested in met this requirement.

Demmel fascinatingly presents the practice of Pavol Štefánik, who chose modern nationalist first names for his children, which was already a relatively common phenomenon in his generation. It is a pity that the author does not delve deeper into the issue in this section; he could have analysed the reasons why specific names were chosen for individual children. It would be interesting to find out whether this was a random inspiration from the national calendar or whether the choice of a specific name was influenced by the godparents or some other motivation. Another unanswered question is the relatively high number of children born to the Štefániks. Other research confirms that so many children were not usually born in Evangelical Lutheran parish families in this period.

The book does not reach Štefánik's own education until almost halfway through, which might seem like an overly long introduction to the manuscript's topic. On the other hand, it can be stated that in the open-

[1] KŠIŇAN, Michal: *Milan Rastislav Štefánik : Muž, ktorý sa rozprával s hviezdami*. Bratislava 2021.

ing pages Demmel brings the environment closer that shaped Štefánik's world and formed his personality. A more complex interpretation of Štefánik's everyday life can be identified in the topics that analyse his first school years in his native Košariská. Other subchapters continue in a similar manner, reflecting the young student's departure for high school in Pozsony (Bratislava) and other high school destinations, in Sopron and especially in Sarvaš.

In addition to analysing the sources reflecting the life of Štefánik and that of his ancestors and companions, J. Demmel manages to create in the monograph the context of the time and society in which the events took place. In this way, the reader learns what it meant to study at a Hungarian high school and what motives led Slovak parents to choose a grammar school in the Hungarian Kingdom, or why others preferred Moravia. Using the example of Štefánik and his classmates, the author manages to show what it meant for a young student to be a member of a non-Magyar nationality in the central Hungarian Kingdom at a time of increasing Magyarisation. Using a microhistorical approach, the author presents readers with additional partial themes that interpret the circumstances of Štefánik's life and those of his siblings and contemporaries, effectively illustrating a picture of the times.

The reader also learns about the differences between the Štefánik brothers, of whom the third in line, Milan Rastislav, was the most gifted and, it seems, the most diligent. A very engaging part is the description of Štefánik's resistance to the Magyarisation tendencies at the grammar school in Sarvaš, through which he expressed his own national identity. The author's interpretation shows that it was here that his passion for observing the night sky was born, and the first roots of his later profession – astronomer – also appeared. The reader may also find interesting the relationships between Štefánik and his grammar school professors, whom he contacted even years after graduating, especially after significant career successes, for example, after his first ascent of Mont Blanc.

Demmel also devotes himself in detail to reconstructing Štefánik's first love, a platonic, or rather unrequited, feeling for a girl from Sarvaš, Emília Chovancová. Although it is not an unknown episode from his life, the author manages to interpret this relationship in the context of other social ties in the central Hungarian town, where the young student built a solid network of friends and acquaintances. This part of the chapter concludes the reconstruction of the first years of M. R. Štefánik, which have been, to a large extent, unknown to the reader until now. This was a period that constituted Štefánik's last years spent in his homeland, as he subsequently studied in Prague, from where he moved to Paris, and later to increasingly distant world destinations.

In conclusion, it can be stated that J. Demmel's monograph is truly excellent and offers new information about such a well-known and well-researched personality as Štefánik. Another contribution of the monograph, which the author himself points out in the Epilogue, is that the work refutes several myths that have circulated in Slovak historiography for decades about the main character of his book. It is necessary to appreciate that the author also admits his own mistake, which he took from older literature and corrected only through deeper historical research.

In his acknowledgements, Demmel states that the story about Štefánik interested even his own children so much that they imagined him as the superhero Captain Slovakia, an adaptation of the comic book hero Captain America. The parallels between the real and fictional characters in the children's interpretation become strong mainly because they saw in Štefánik a figure from the periphery who became a significant figure in the fight for his homeland. Demmel thus manages to fulfil the book's mission by arousing interest not only in Štefánik, but also in history in general among the youngest generation. It can be assumed that this mission will be further fulfilled through the book, and that his research and new findings about the native of Košariská will spread to future generations of the professional and lay public.

Ján Golian

STEHLÍK, Michal – GROMAN, Martin: *Přepište (místní) dějiny* [Rewrite (Local) History]. Brno: Jota 2025, 424 pp. ISBN 978-80-7689-699-4.

Historian Michal Stehlík and journalist Martin Groman, best known as the authors of the podcast *Rewrite History*, follow up on their previous popular history books devoted to modern Czech history with their new publication. In their work, they draw attention to lesser-known or neglected connections between historical events and reinterpret topics that are often presented in a simplified manner in the collective memory. The authors' previous books have been very well received by readers. The first three volumes even formed a symbolic tricolour on their spines, which the authors humorously refer to in their live performances. The book *Rewrite (Local) History* develops this approach through specific locations and "places of memory", which the authors use to illustrate the transformations of Czech society in the 20th century.

The 424-page book is divided into seven thematic chapters and supplemented with rich visual material. The text also includes shorter thematic inserts presenting selected personalities, monuments, or literature related to the given topic. At the end of each chapter, the authors provide a list of recommended literature and also refer to academic theses devoted to specific places or events. The publication thus provides readers not only with a coherent account, but

also with a basic orientation in the relevant literature. The green cover of the book symbolically depicts personalities and motifs from Czech history, specifically Edvard Beneš, a nun, and Karel Schwarzenberg, complemented by the silhouette of the Dukovany nuclear power plant, whose selection also indicates the thematic focus of the publication on various "places of memory".

The first chapter deals with the events at the end of World War II in the Bohemian lands. The authors note that the liberation in May 1945 was not only a symbol of the joyful end of the war, but was also accompanied by violence, bombing, and excesses on both sides of the conflict. In addition to the events themselves, they also discuss the ways in which these moments were later interpreted in post-war and communist propaganda.

The second chapter focuses on the issue of the expulsion of the German population. The authors use the term "expulsion" to emphasise the violent nature of these events. Using Karlovy Vary as an example, they point to the dramatic transformation of the city after 1945 and mention, for example, the contemporary exhibition *Why We Don't Want Them Here*, which the German population was required to visit. The chapter also draws attention to the significant demographic changes in the border regions and their broader social and political consequences. For example, by 1947 only about 1,700 new inhabitants had arrived in the Jeseník region from Bohemia, whereas nearly 20,000 had come from Moravia and Silesia.

The third chapter, entitled *Laboratories of History*, focuses on the transformation of industrial regions and their impact on local society. The authors show how industrial development and the subsequent decline of mining and metallurgy affected the identity of local communities and the landscape. In addition to well-known examples from the northern Moravian industrial region, they also highlight the specific environment of the Třinec region, including its complex ethnic background. Attention is also paid to the fate of Old Karviná and the tragic events in Životice.

The fourth chapter is devoted to prisons. The authors present several important prison sites, such as Valdice, the Brno Cejl prison, and the prison in Uherské Hradiště, and trace their transformations throughout the 20th century. At the same time, they point out the need for an interdisciplinary approach that combines historiography with law, sociology, and psychology when studying this issue.

In the fifth chapter, the authors focus on the stories of entrepreneurs whose activities were marginalised or interpreted negatively during the communist regime. They mention, for example, entrepreneur Marie Fiedorová, the Wichterle & Kovářík company, and the Schicht family. Through these examples, they show the broader context of economic changes in the Bohemian lands in the 20th century.

The penultimate chapter deals with the communist regime's relationship with churches. The authors point out that although church institutions were significantly restricted after 1950, religious life continued in various forms. They focus, for example, on the locality of Bílá Voda, which became a symbol of the internment of nuns. They also use specific examples to show how religious memory is reflected in the form of local cemeteries and memorials.

The final chapter deals with the fates of aristocratic families in the Bohemian lands after 1945. The authors point out that after World War II, the nobility was not only subjected to the confiscation of property, but also to a significant change in its public image. In addition to better-known families such as the Schwarzenbergs and Sternbergs, they also focus on lesser-known personalities and family histories that illustrate the complex fate of the aristocracy in the 20th century.

The publication by Michal Stehlík and Martin Groman is an accessible popular account of regional history in the Bohemian lands. Through specific locations and stories, the authors draw attention to broader historical contexts and the ways in which the past is reflected in the present-day landscape, memory, and identity of individual regions. Although the book is not conceived as an academic synthesis, it may serve as an inspiring stimulus for further research into local history.

At the same time, the publication can be situated within a broader current of popular historical writing, which in recent years has sought to link regional history with the concept of "sites of memory". From the perspective of professional historiography, it lies on the boundary between popular history and historiographical essay writing. The authors work primarily with existing literature and publicly available sources; their ambition is not to present new archival findings, but rather to reinterpret familiar topics in a broader social context. A certain limitation of the publication may be its popularising character, which sometimes leads to a greater simplification of some historical issues.

In addition to its popular dimension, the publication also has significant didactic potential. The thematic division of chapters, accompanying textual inserts, and lists of recommended literature can serve as inspiration for teaching modern and regional history at secondary schools and university settings. The book also shows how specific locations and "places of memory" can be used as a starting point for a broader interpretation of historical processes and for incorporating regional topics into history teaching and broader historical education. The publication thus fulfils the authors' motto, which also appears on the book cover: *There are no small histories*.

Vít Janalík

SOMMEROVÁ, Kateřina: *„Jsou to přece taky lidi“: Zajatecký a internační tábor v Německém Jablonném 1914–1923* [*“They Are People Too, After All” : The Prisoner-of-War and Internment Camp in Německé Jablonné, 1914–1923*]. České Budějovice: Veduta – Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2025, 216 pp. ISBN 978-80-53075-03-9.

Monographs devoted to prisoner-of-war camps from the period of the First World War located in the territory of the present-day Czech and Slovak Republics have appeared more frequently on the book market in recent years. Following publications such as Lajos Horváth, Attila Nagy, László Varga: *Cisárske a kráľovské zajatecké tábory na Žitnom ostrove (1914–1918) : Dunajská Streda, Veľký Meder, Šamorín* (2016) and Michal Spevak, Nenad Stevović: *Veľký Meder 1914–1918 : Zajatecký tábor a cintorín internovaných osôb z Čiernej Hory* (2020), a monograph on the camp in what is now called Jablonné v Podještědí has been published. Chronologically, following the Foreword and Introduction, it is divided into four chapters, an Epilogue, and a Conclusion, supplemented by Notes, lists of abbreviations, sources and literature, as well as illustrations, together with a Name Index and a Summary in both English and German.

The opening, relatively brief chapter, *An Overview of the Historiography of Prisoners of War and Prisoners in Jablonné*, describes the existing literature on the presence of prisoner-of-war camps in the Central European region. The following chapter, *Prisoners of War and POW Camps During the First World War*, examines in greater detail the conditions under which prisoners of war were placed in camps during the conflict of 1914–1918. Among the earliest legal regulations concerning prisoners of war are the Lieber Code, adopted in the USA in 1863 during the American Civil War, and the Brussels Declaration, approved in Europe in 1874. From an international perspective, the First Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field (1864), as well as the Fourth Hague Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land (including the Regulations Concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land) of 1907, also gained importance. With the aim of improving the conditions of prisoners of war, conferences of representatives of national Red Cross societies were held in Geneva in September 1917 and February 1918, convened by the International Committee of the Red Cross (*Comité international de la Croix-Rouge* – CICR). The CICR succeeded in establishing the International Prisoners-of-War Agency (*Agence internationale des prisonniers de guerre* – AIPG), which kept records of almost 5,000,000 prisoners out of a total of 8,700,000 by the end of the war. In addition, two bilateral agreements concerning prisoners of war were concluded in Bern between Germany and France in 1917 and 1918. During the war, there were 106 POW camps in Austria-Hungary, built at a cost of 200,000,000 crowns, in which up to 2,000,000 enemy soldiers were interned (including 1,750,000 Russians). Their administration was handled by a special subsection of the 10th Department of the Imperial and Royal Ministry of War, headed by Heinrich Freiherr von Raabl-Werner (1875–1941). Within the Danubian monarchy, there were also the Information Bureau for Prisoners of War (*Auskunftsstelle für Kriegsgefangene*) and censorship offices established separately for each part of the state. The War Supervisory Commission (*Kriegsüberwachungskomission*) operated in Hungary, while the War Supervisory Office (*Kriegsüberwachungsamt*), headed by Leopold Freiherr von Schleycher, fulfilled a similar role in Austria.

The most extensive chapter, *The Russian Village – the Prisoner-of-War Camp in Německé Jablonné*, deals in detail with the lives of prisoners during their forced stay in northern Bohemia near Liberec. Německé Jablonné was a small town of approximately 4,000 inhabitants, predominantly German-speaking, with a railway connection essential for the functioning of the camp. Its construction was decided upon in October 1914 by the 8th Construction Department of the Imperial and Royal Ministry of War and was completed by March 1915 at a cost of 400,000 crowns. Alongside this large camp, a neighbouring officers' station was also established for Entente prisoners of higher rank. Streams of prisoners began to arrive in November 1914; the camp commandants were reserve Colonel Moritz Thilen (1914–1915), Major Ferdinand Bauer (1915), and reserve Colonel Gustav, Edler von Kirchstätter (1915–1918). Militarily, the camp was subordinate to the command of the 9th Army Corps in Litoměřice and legally to the divisional court in Terezín. By the end of the conflict, a total of 121 prisoners—mainly of Russian nationality—had died in the camp, predominantly from disease, including tuberculosis. In 1915, many of the nearly 10,000 prisoners were engaged in labour activities according to the German model, some of them working even in distant parts of the monarchy. The author also describes the provisioning of the camp, the establishment of its own bakery, and the prisoners' agricultural and livestock production. As part of leisure activities, Austria-Hungary sought to encourage separatist tendencies among minority members of the Russian army, for example by distributing readers, songbooks, and textbooks in Rusyn. Religious services were held in accordance with the religious diversity of the prisoners—Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, and Protestant—and sermons were delivered in Russian, French, Italian, and English. The chapter also contains sections on camp coins and banknotes, as well as on inspections of prisoners by members of the armed forces of neutral states.

It also describes barbed wire disease (*Stacheldraht-Krankenheit*), contacts with the local population, and unsuccessful escape attempts. The camp also included a hospital (or an auxiliary hospital) and a cemetery with burial mounds of the 121 deceased prisoners. The repatriation of Russian prisoners following the armistice of 15 December 1917, beginning in February 1918, applied to the sick, the wounded, and those over 55 years of age who had spent at least half a year in captivity. After the conclusion of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Russia in March 1918, it was possible in June 1918 to negotiate the repatriation of the remaining Russian prisoners as well as interned civilians; a month later, a supplementary agreement to the treaty concerning prisoners was ratified. Towards the end of the conflict, on 18 October 1918, the Imperial and Royal Ministry of War ordered the dissolution of all POW camps in the empire; the camp premises in Německé Jablonné had been vacated by 5 November 1918.

The final chapter, *The Second Life of the Prisoner-of-War Camp in Německé Jablonné*, concerns the presence of almost 5,000 interned members of the Ukrainian Galician Army of the West Ukrainian People's Republic, who came to this location following their defeat by the army of the re-established Polish state. The presence of the Ukrainians in the camp is temporally defined between June 1919 and October 1921; a memorial commemorating their stay has been erected on the site.

The publication under review represents a significant contribution not only to military literature concerning the first global conflict of 1914–1916, but also to the regional history of present-day Jablonné v Podještědí. The author's thorough engagement with the chosen topic is evidenced by the extensive scholarly apparatus comprising 509 references, as well as by the use of numerous primary sources of Czech, Austrian, and Ukrainian provenance. The seven years of the camp's existence have been mapped in remarkable detail, enabling the reader of the monograph to gain a vivid picture of the lives of its involuntary inhabitants during the First World War and the subsequent military conflicts.

Rudolf Manik

MAJLINGOVÁ, Zuzana: *Šiel som po meste a na ulici stálo : Umenie Banskej Bystrice v období socializmu 1948–1989* [*I Walked Through the Town and It Stood in the Street : The Art of Banská Bystrica During the Socialist Period, 1948–1989*]. Banská Bystrica: Literárna bašta 2025, 186 pp. ISBN 978-80-8283-107-1.

At the end of 2025, Slovak bookstores welcomed a new publication released as part of the regional project Literárna bašta, based in Banská Bystrica. The book is modest in format, almost pocket-sized, but this does not apply to its content. From a historical perspective, Banská Bystrica is a city that could fill many works, and its rich historical twists from the Middle Ages to the 20th century have been equally reflected in artistic creation and the shaping of public space. Despite the nostalgic optimism of some witnesses, however, society drew a thick line after 1989, beyond which many do not wish to look. Everything, or almost everything, created before this historical milestone is often considered bad, outdated, a symbol of political repression and an ideology we do not want to remember. The remnants of socialism tend to be seen as backward, as something to be erased, or as a stain we overlook. This is often seen in literature. The verbal art of so-called real socialism acquired attributes such as programmatic, tendentious, constructive, party-driven, or schematic. Compared to authors who created against the regime, it was considered less valuable, almost superficial, and today is mentioned only as an example without much artistic licence.

A similar fate befell visual, sculptural, and architectural art. Anyone with a keen eye can easily recognise it. At first glance, it resonates with traditional monumentality, which to many appears as concrete disfigurement of otherwise beautiful urban spaces. However, this is not always the case. Certainly, these are large works occupying large spaces, and the cold grey materia – concrete, iron, glass, or marble – does not easily win our hearts today. Yet art is always, in some way, a product of its time. It follows trends – whether political, ideological, fashionable, or simply financial. It reflects the taste, beliefs, and ideas, but also the current artistic-architectural preferences of the era. Its stereotypical evaluation is the result of a contemporary perspective. What will historians one day write about our flagpoles at the castle, billboards along the motorway, shopping centres, and "traditional art" in the devastated Slovak National Gallery?

Zuzana Majlingová, an art historian and curator at the Central Slovak Gallery, invites us on an intriguing journey to discover socialist art, known as sorela, in Banská Bystrica. If I were a bookseller, I would hesitate a little over which category and shelf to assign her book. It is certainly a scholarly work with a historical theme. The excellent and richly represented photographs by Ján Viazo would recommend it for the art section. And the overall character of the book, which is a perfect combination of both areas, ultimately classifies it as an excellent guide to the forgotten monuments of Banská Bystrica from 1948 to 1989. The author herself set the goal of her work to prevent cultural amnesia, primarily by popularising art and building a relationship with Banská Bystrica through works of art that can be better discovered with a book in one's pocket (p. 186). This exploration is divided into four chapters, organised thematically rather than chronologically.

The first chapter, *Stalinist Socialist Realism*, focuses on the initial constructive years and its characteristic manifestations of art in public spaces. The still preserved and existing monuments are divided into statues, reliefs, stained glass, and sgraffiti. Some of them greet visitors immediately upon entering the railway station building, although it must be admitted that this is currently a rather risky form of transport in Slovakia. However, those who dare to travel by train can view not only the monumental statues of the miner and worker at the station entrance but also the mosaic-stained glass with the theme of the Slovak National Uprising in its interior. In contrast, reliefs and sgraffiti must be sought with a more attentive eye on old panel blocks of flats in the Fončorda estate or on some older buildings in the city centre, such as the post office building.

The second chapter, *Late Socialist Modernism*, moves into the period of the 1960s–1980s and, interestingly, besides perhaps more traditional statues and sculptures, maps the influence of socialist art on children's playgrounds. The probably best-known and oldest playground in Banská Bystrica is Hexagon, situated in the park below the Memorial – Museum of the Slovak National Uprising. Once broken and half-ruined pieces of concrete, seemingly randomly scattered in the park, regained their original shape after reconstruction a few years ago. Thanks to Zuzana Majlingová's book, I finally discovered their original purpose. Children's climbing frames made of concrete and iron components in the form of geometric shapes, without soft surfaces, safety features, or bright colours, which so strongly dominate our modern days. Yet there were children who spent hours on them, happy. Hexagon was not the only playground creation of socialist modernism. The Labyrinth by Stanislav Balko and City Meadow by Mikuláš Palko, created in the mid-1970s, still stand in the inner block of the Fončorda estate and have been naturally incorporated into modern playgrounds and relaxation zones. Within this chapter and its artistic categories, the author also includes another city landmark under Urpín. It is the monumental expressive group sculpture *Victims Warn* from 1969 by sculptor Jozef Jankovič. Today a traditional stop at the Memorial – Museum of the Slovak National Uprising by the eternal flame, the sculpture underwent several life changes during socialism. During the period of normalisation, this statue at the memorial was considered an example of so-called "harmful formalist art" and was moved to the village of Kalište (burned down by the Nazis during World War II). Several other sculptural works are scattered across city housing estates, parks, and school grounds. Today, we often just pass by them without stopping or reflecting. We have become used to perceiving them but not seeing them. Nevertheless, they are a natural part of the space in which we move daily.

The third chapter (*Slovak National Uprising*) is strictly thematic, focused on the reflection of the Slovak National Uprising in public spaces through monuments and memorials from 1945 to 1989. An interesting feature of this chapter is that it extends beyond the city limits. Although Banská Bystrica was the centre and heart of the Uprising, it took place across the region, which is reflected in the location of individual monuments and memorials outside the city itself. Certainly, the largest, most famous, and most tourist-attractive landmark is the Memorial – Museum of the Slovak National Uprising. In the city centre, on SNP Square, there is also the Monument to Fallen Soldiers of the Soviet and Romanian Armies, created according to the design of Red Army Lieutenant Samuel Vajnštein above the graves of fallen soldiers who liberated the city in 1945. In the 1950s and 1960s, the obelisk was the starting point for the celebrations of the Uprising; today, it is a traditional meeting point for many locals. The monumental, idealised statue of a partisan in a larger-than-life size, located at the small Banská Bystrica-mesto station at the foot of Urpín Hill, also has an interesting history. In 2015, it underwent several involuntary coats of paint in rainbow colours (first pink, then green) due to vandalism. Those wishing to discover architectural reminders of the Uprising beyond the tourist circuit of the city centre can visit nearby villages such as Kremnička, Nemecká, or Uľanka. In Kremnička and Nemecká, memorials were built on the sites of mass graves of World War II victims. Among the exhumed victims were partisans, members of foreign missions, racially persecuted citizens (Roma and Jews), as well as their relatives and other sympathisers of the anti-Nazi resistance. Their sacrifices were honoured by the creation of memorial sites by architects Dušan Jurkovič and the author trio Marián Beluš, Alexander Bél, and Eduard Stančík. Several concrete sculptures with the theme of the Uprising are also installed at the very entrance to the city. Unfortunately, none of them are accessible on foot and can only be glimpsed from a car, as they are located by the road. These include the concrete relief Sculptures for the 35th Anniversary of the Uprising (1981, Mikuláš Palko) and the monument entitled Legacy of the Uprising to Our Joyful Present (1984, Ladislav Berák).

Majlingová's book concludes with the chapter *Psychology of Water in the City*. As the title suggests, in this part the author focuses on fountains in the urban environment of Banská Bystrica. Water has always had, and still has, an important place in urban architecture, whether for humanising, aesthetic, or practical purposes. Rome could tell us something about this, not only as the Eternal City but also rightly called the "City of Fountains". And as recent news from the world suggests, one must now pay to see the most famous one – the Trevi Fountain. Fortunately, fountains in Banská Bystrica do not – yetl – require

any tourist fees, so let us join Majlingová in exploring them. Many of the so-called socialist fountains in the city are now non-functional or have been preserved only in fragments and serve more as memorials than for their original purpose. Like many previous statues, sculptures, reliefs, or monuments, fountains are located not only in the city centre but also in housing estates and surrounding parts of the city. Perhaps the only functioning fountain still serving its purpose is the Water Flower (around 1950) in the oldest housing estate, Fortnička, near the city centre. It is situated in the middle of a small rose garden opposite the excellent local café The Fleck Coffee Roasters, which I definitely recommend including in your itinerary when visiting Banská Bystrica. The only aesthetic flaw of this fountain is the blue paint on its inner part, which, I cannot help but say, evokes memories of the concrete summer swimming pool of my childhood. Several, unfortunately non-functional, fountains (or their remnants) can be found while wandering the city – in the Sásová housing estate, in front of Hotel Lux at Freedom Square, at the beginning of Dolná Street towards the centre (so-called Hušták), or in front of the Faculty of Law of Matej Bel University on Komenského Street. Due to the ongoing extensive reconstruction of the F. D. Roosevelt Hospital complex, the fate of the fountains there is uncertain. The complex contained two: Flower of Life (1981) and Mirror of Water (1981) by Štefan Imrich and his sons. The latter is complemented by the group sculpture Silent Presence by Pavol Tóth. Regarding the fountains built in Banská Bystrica in the second half of the 20th century, Zuzana Majlingová notes at the end of the book: [...] *they represent a unique synthesis of architecture, visual art, and urbanism. Their creation was conditioned not only by the aesthetics of the time but also by the overall societal effort to humanise public space and cultivate the living environment during the construction of the socialist city* (p. 160). I cannot but agree with the author. This statement also refutes the stereotype mentioned at the beginning about socialist art as a concrete intervention in urban development.

Zuzana Majlingová's book has found a deserved place in my library, and I believe it will enrich some of yours as well. As I approach the finale, allow me to add a few formal observations to complement the high-quality and rich content. This book is an excellent companion for discovering some perhaps already forgotten artistic elements of Banská Bystrica. Its format is practical, portable, and the introductory texts of the chapters provide an excellent entry to selected monuments, combining historical context, artistic perspective, and a tourist guide. The reader becomes acquainted with architectural and artistic monuments and, in a relatively small space, receives answers to basic questions: What? Who? When? Where? How? and Why? The names of statues, sculptures, and memorials are colour-coded in the text and numerically refer directly to specific photographs placed after the textual part of each chapter. A minor drawback of the otherwise very high-quality photographs is their placement on the page. Occasionally, the captured sculpture or memorial unfortunately appears right at the junction of two pages, which disrupts the visual effect (e.g. photos nos. 7, 37, 44). There is also a slight criticism regarding the design of the book cover. The plastic cover protects the book, published as a paperback, and looks very impressive, but its effectiveness is somewhat diminished. The title of the publication is printed on the cover itself, not on the paper page beneath. With use, the letters on the surface wear off and disappear. This is not the most suitable visual solution, as the book is intended as a guide for a handbag or backpack and is expected to be used frequently. On the positive side, I appreciate the list of all photographed monuments in a separate Register of Photographic Works at the end. The register includes the name of the work, the author, and the address. All works are numbered in the order in which they appear in the chapters.

Finally, just one last thought. Art is diverse. Classical. Modern. Abstract. Political. Old and new. Stolen. Forgotten. Art is not rational. We do not need to define it. We need to feel it. We create it as much as art shapes us. Our feelings, memories, impressions, fleeting moments of something we cannot name. It is all around us. We are mutually part of each other. And not everything created in a time of oppression is automatically bad.

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