

Prague in a Renewed State – The Country Metropolis as the Capital of a New Republic

Veranstalter: Prague City Archives; Institute of History of Academy of Science of the Czech Republic; Faculty of Humanities of the Charles University; Historical Institute of the J. E. Purkyně University, Ústí nad Labem

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The Prague City Archives and its partner institutions held another international conference on urban history on the 16th and 17th October 2018. This conference took place in the representative halls of the Prague's Municipal House, i. e. on the exact place where the dealings were held from the summer of 1918, which led to the birth of the independent Czechoslovak state, and where its first acts were passed. The main topics were thus the creation and establishment of capitals of the new republics, which brought about the break-up of the Habsburg monarchy; development of political, administrative, economic, cultural or religious aspects – not only in metropolises, but also in regional centres – were presented by 1938.

The conference opened with the keynote presented by JIŘÍ PEŠEK (Prague). He briefly outlined the dynamics of the interwar period, characterized by such features as modernisation of cities, development of urban agglomerations, along with settling of the issues of the previous war years and many different problems. Two more papers were presented within the opening session, focused on Prague self-government of the interwar period. VÁCLAV LEDVINKA (Prague) expounded the circumstances of the creation of the Great Prague in 1922 and the role played by the two leading representatives of the city – Přemysl Šámal and Karel Baxa – in this process. VERONIKA KNOTKOVÁ (Prague) presented paper on bureaucratic educated elites of the Prague's Municipal Offices (lawyers), their careers, official activities and living standards.

One of the key points of the conference re-

lated around the issue of the cities dealing with their new statuses. Krakow, one of the traditional centres of Poland, was overshadowed by Warsaw, after the proclamation of the independent Polish republic. HANNA KOZIŃSKA-WITT (Krakow) presented both the transformations and positions of these two cities, along with their approach to numerous Jewish community and modernisation of Jewish quarters. Krakow and its musical aiming were then discussed by ANNA G. PIOTROWSKA (Krakow).

Unlike Prague and Warsaw, Vienna and Budapest, though capitals of new states lost their post of centres in the former Transleithanian countries. Plans for modernisation and development of Budapest, with regard to its spa and commercial potential, were presented by ANDRÁS SIPOS (Budapest). As the key commercial element was the Danube river, MÁTÉ TAMÁSKA (Budapest) not only introduced Budapest as a port, he further dealt with former controversies between Vienna and Budapest on utilization of its flow; Czechoslovakia entered this field as another player, by creating ports in Bratislava and Komárno.

The third session of the first conference day was dedicated to the interwar Vienna. ANDREAS WEIGL (Vienna) mentioned the difficulties that the city had to deal with during the first years after the creation of the republic, along with the era of the so-called Red Vienna. ALFRED PFOSER (Vienna) took up on cultural backgrounds of the Austrian metropolis. CHRISTOPHER BRENNAN and ALMA HANNIG (Bonn) then tracked the fates of the former members of the imperial court, its loyal officials and soldiers in the interwar period.

Comparative method was used in the research presented by JIŘÍ PEŠEK and NINA LOHMANN (Prague), who compared the political situation in Vienna, Prague and Warsaw. They summarized the common issues that had to be solved by these cities, the differences and their reasons in these issues' development. Although different in these terms, all the three cities managed to keep up with the serious after-war situation, as well as to create specific conditions for modernisation and relatively regular functioning. BLANKA SOUKUPOVÁ (Prague) compared the above

mentioned cities from the perspective of formation of national identity within the public space, along with dealing with the symbols that had characterised previous systems of government. SIMONA SLANICKA (Bern) brought about several observations on the Czechoslovak-French relationships within the first half of the 20th century.

The last session of the first day of the conference was dedicated to social and health cares. HANA SVATOŠOVÁ (Prague) dedicated her paper to the issues of housing shortage in the interwar Prague. OLGA FEJTOVÁ (Prague) focused on the background of one ambitious social project of the Prague Municipal Council – i. e. the construction of 'Masaryk-Homes', which were intended as a central care giving institution of the Capital of Prague. JÖRG VÖGELE and KELLY G. WAAP (Düsseldorf) introduced the health care system of Düsseldorf, particularly in terms of suckling care and fight against tuberculosis. It was the 1926 exhibition 'GeSoLei' that was intended as one of the ways of prevention. TOMÁŠ JELÍNEK (Prague) then presented a paper on the Prague Municipal Office and local politician's support of sports.

The second day of the conference began with presentations dedicated to the construction and development of Czechoslovak provincial towns. MIROSLAV JEŘÁBEK (Brno) focused on the architectural transformation of Brno – a city which, from its former position of a suburb of Vienna, became the Moravian metropolis; ANDREA POKLUDOVÁ (Ostrava) similarly concentrated on both economic and cultural conditions of transformation of a former small town of Ostrava and KAREL ŘEHÁČEK (Pilsen) brought his insight into this topic with regard to Pilsen.

The following block of presentations moved into the sphere of fine arts in Prague. TOMÁŠ SEKYRKA (Prague) introduced the 'Association of the Fine Artists „Mánes“' into broader contexts of the Czechoslovak cultural scene. VÍT VLNAS (Prague) followed up by a more detailed treatise on two galleries specialised on arts – the Modern Gallery of the Bohemian Kingdom along with the Picture gallery of the Association of the Patriotic Friends of Arts in Bohemia. Private

galleries, their development and aiming, were illustrated by MILAN PECH (Prague) in his case study on the „Topič's Salon“.

The conference program proceeded with the topic of religious issues of the Czechoslovak capital. Changes within the ecclesiastic structure of Prague, which were related to the origin of new minor Christian Churches, were presented by ZDENĚK R. NEŠPOR (Prague), together with proportional changes in people's denominations. Even though the Roman Catholic Church lost its privileged status, new churches were still being built in connection with the city's expanding territory and a growing number of inhabitants. As MICHAL SKLENÁŘ (Prague) demonstrated on the case of the construction of several selected churches, it was no coincidence that the twelve churches were intended to be built in newly connected communities; on the contrary – the project was supposed to present an act of atonement for the destruction of the Old Town Square St Mary's Column. JOSEF MÄRC (Ústí nad Labem) showed Prague as a destination for Czech minority school trips from the Aussig-region.

The last conference session focused on both construction development and Prague's public transport infrastructure. Thus were sketched problems of building sites for state offices by JAN KOBER (Prague), particularly in terms of the Parliament's proposed site on the Letná field. The efforts and involvement of the Association of Builders in Prague in the relationship with construction activities and town-planning of the Greater Prague were described by JIŘÍ VLASÁK (Prague). JAN ŠTEMBERK (Prague) dedicated his paper to the motoring and public traffic, from whose development the traffic regulations, technical facilities for the traffic operation and new facilities for car maintenance were being derived. In conclusion, JIŘÍ PEŠEK summed up the conference dealings, highlighted the progress having been made in the research of the interwar period and appreciated wide ranges of impulses for further studies in the urban history.

With regard to the recent centenary of the Czechoslovak Republic, most of the presented papers dealt with the Czech lands. Nevertheless, a sufficient number of papers dedicated

to other cities, both in the Czech lands and abroad, enabled a comparison with the neighbouring states and the situation of Prague could be seen in the context of Central Europe.

The interwar period brought about a growth of metropolises' population. Consequently, sufficient housing, health care and social care had to be provided. The conference offered an opportunity to follow the plans of particular cities and towns on managing these difficult tasks and their different – even amongst one state's territory – outcomes. Significant changes were started by the falls of monarchies and the subsequent formation of new republics. These new states had to deal with the placement of their central offices as well as the transfer of cultural (and other) institutions from the hands of the former ruling structures. Yet, the hasty development had not lasted long, with the arrival of the Great Depression; many of the projects have been terminated, for the lack in financing. These projects were buried for good during World War II. However, this short period laid grounds for the formation of future metropolises of the Central Europe.

Conference Overview:

Welcoming Adress: Petr Jíša (Prague) / Martin Holý (Prague) / Michaela Hrubá (Ústí nad Labem) / Jiří Pešek (Prague)

Introduction: Jiří Pešek (Prague)

Panel 1:

Moderation: Martin Holý

Václav Ledvinka (Prague): Die Gestalter des Groß-Prags? Die Rolle von Přemysl Šámal und Karel Baxa beim Aufbau der Metropole der Tschechoslowakischen Republik (1919–1929)

Veronika Knotková (Prague): Die Eliten der Prager Selbstverwaltung während der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik

Panel 2:

Moderation: Jörg Vögele (Düsseldorf)

András Sipos (Budapest): „The Marvellous Pearl of the Remains of our Country...“ Visions and concepts for positioning Budapest as a prominent international urban center after 1918

Máté Tamáska (Budapest): Wettbewerb um den Fluss. Neue Hafenanlagen in der Stadtstruktur von Bratislava, Komárno, Budapest und Wien

Hanna Kozińska-Witt (Cracow): „Schwarze Kontinente“ in den modernisierten Großstädten der Zweiten Polnischen Republik?

Nina Lohmann – Jiří Pešek (Prague): Prag – Wien – Warschau: Drei Hauptstädte der neuen Republiken im ersten Nachkriegsjahrzehnt

Panel 3:

Moderation: Zdeněk R. Nešpor (Prague)

Andreas Weigl (Wien): Von der sterbenden Metropole zur sozialdemokratischen Musterstadt? Demographische, ökonomische und sozialpolitische Konsequenzen des Zerfalls der Donaumonarchie für die ehemalige „Haupt- und Residenzstadt“ Wien

Alfred Pfoser (Wien): Brot und Kunst. Anmerkungen zur Kulturmetropole Wien in den Gründungsjahren der Republik

Christopher Brennan – Alma Hannig (Bonn): Von der Großmacht zum Kleinstaat: Die Umgestaltung Wiens nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Politik, Diplomatie und Militär

Blanka Soukupová (Prague): Die nationalen Metropolen in den neuen Nationalstaaten (Prag, Bratislava, Warschau, Krakau und Wien)

Panel 4:

Moderation: Andrea Pokludová (Ostrava)

Hana Svatošová (Prague): Sozialer Wohnungsbau der Hauptstadt Prag

Olga Fejtová (Prague): „Masarykovy domovy“ – ein Sozialprojekt der Hauptstadt Prag

Jörg Vögele – Kelly G. Waap (Düsseldorf): Gesundheit im Spannungsfeld von Stadt und Staat am Beispiel der Rheinmetropole Düsseldorf während der Weimarer Republik

Tomáš Jelínek (Prague): Prag als Zentrum der Leibes-erziehung und des Sports im „erneuerten“ Staat

Panel 5:

Moderation: Jan Štemberk (Prague)

Kryštof Drnek (Prague): „Die Umgestaltung Prags ist die Bedingung für seine Prosperität.“ Die nicht realisierte Regulierung Groß-Prags in der Zwischenkriegszeit und die Probleme, die sie lösen sollte

Miroslav Jeřábek (Brno): Brünn 1918–1938: Der Aufbau der zweiten tschechischen nationalen Metropole

Andrea Pokludová (Ostrava): Im Glanz der Millionen und im Schatten der Fördertürme. Mährisch Ostrau in den Jahren 1918–1938

Karel Řeháček (Plzeň): Pilsen in der Zwischenkriegszeit: Licht und Schatten der Vorzeigestadt der tschechoslowakischen Sozialdemokratie

Panel 6:

Moderation: Jiří Pešek (Prague)

Simona Slanicka (Bern): Das französische Prag: Inspirationen von Frankreich in der Gründung der Tschechoslowakischen Republik und in der Prager Zwischenkriegszeit

Tomáš Sekyrka (Prague): Der Verein bildender Künstler Mánes – Diskussionsbeitrag

Milan Pech (Prague): Der Prager Salon Topič im Kunstbetrieb der Zwischenkriegszeit – Diskussionsbeitrag

Vít Vlnas (Prague): Die Prager Kunstmuseen in der Zeit der Republikgründung

Anna G. Piotrowska (Cracow): Looking into the future without forgetting the past. On musical life in Krakow round 1918

Panel 7:

Moderation: Simona Slanicka (Bern)

Zdeněk R. Nešpor (Prague): Die Metropole der Religionspluralität: Säkularisierung und Aufbau nichtkatholischer Kirchenstrukturen in Prag der Zwischenkriegszeit

Michal Sklenář (Prague): Acht von zwölf Sternen. Der Bau neuer römisch-katholischer Kirchen in Groß-Prag in den Jahren 1930–1938

Josef Márc (Ústí nad Labem): Schulausflüge und andere Reisen insbesondere der tschechischen Schulen (aus dem Aussiger Gebiet) nach Prag in der Zeit der Ersten Tsche-

choslowakischen Republik

Panel 8:

Moderation: Andreas Weigl (Wien)

Jan Kober (Prague): Das ungebaute Herz des Staates. Die Bemühungen um den Bau eines neuen Parlamentsgebäudes und Regierungsviertels in Prag während der Zwischenkriegszeit und ihr Scheitern

Jiří Vlasák (Prague): Die Genossenschaft der Baumeister in Prag und ihr Anteil am Ausbau der Hauptstadt während der Zwischenkriegszeit

Jan Štemberk (Prague): Das Automobil erobert Prag

Jiří Pešek (Prague): Schlusswort

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