

story of Emperor Rudolph II Habsburg and his stay at the court of Philip II in Madrid, which had a strong impact on Rudolph's life and his future interest to the arts and alchemy.⁴

The book of essays by Pavel Štěpánek is an eminently important resource for in-depth research. It is mainly intended for art historians who are interested in the Hispanic world and its links to Bohemia. Although for readers who lack a sound knowledge of Spanish art in general this book could be sometimes confusing and overwhelming, I can heartily recommend it to all people who would like to expand their knowledge beyond the standard of Czech academia. It is also a useful tool for students who focus on Spanish art and its connections with Bohemia from the Middle Ages until the present day.

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(Written in English by the author)

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Vendula V. Hingarová, *Česká a slovenská periodika v Argentině* [Czech and Slovak Periodicals in Argentina], Praha: Univerzita Karlova, 2021, 246 pp. ISBN: 978-80-7571-078-9

Benedict Anderson's memorable work *Imagined Communities* had shown us that we can view national consciousness also through the lens of indirect relationships between the nation and its people, such as the links created by the printing press and circulation of periodicals in vernacular languages.⁶ While Anderson's ideas were inspired by an analysis of the emergence of Creole nationalism in America, they are also relevant to a better understanding of the publishing activities of migrant communities that settled in the Americas and their wider implications.

Vendula Hingarová's book is dedicated to the Czech and Slovak press in Argentina. Czech and Slovak immigrants formed but a small fraction of

the fast-expanding immigrant population in Argentina; in early twentieth century, about 30% of that country's population had been born abroad. In this multiethnic and multilingual country whose government was actively trying to attract (white) immigrants to populate the allegedly empty pampas, growing diasporas took pride in publishing periodicals in their national languages.

As noted above, the Czech and Slovak diaspora was small. In 1907, the first Czech journal, *Slavia*, was printed in 250 copies while the Italian daily *La Patria* had a circulation of 40,000.⁷ Although the Czech and Slovak publishing efforts were initially something of a 'Cinderella' among the larger foreign diasporas with their own press (p. 26), they spanned a century and jointly form a unique testimony about the cultural and political history of Czechs and Slovaks living on the other side of the Atlantic.

Vendula Hingarová's book is the result of a pioneering research conducted in archives in Argentina, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, USA, and Germany. In its second part, the volume offers a systematic overview of 45 periodicals produced in Argentina by Czech and Slovak immigrants and their offspring from 1907 until 2003. The periodicals are introduced in an alphabetical order (Part II, pp. 113–222) and each entry contains bibliographical details, names of the main editor(s), and a reproduction of the cover page. What is especially praiseworthy is that Hingarová managed to find several previously unknown titles, thus expanding our knowledge of publication activities of Czechs and Slovaks in Argentina. Accompanying indexes of periodicals, people, places, and institutions make the book easy to use for further research (Part II, pp. 233–241).

But this publication is much more than a systematic reference guide to periodicals produced by the Czechs and Slovaks in distant lands. This is mainly thanks to the opening essay which introduces readers to wider historical, political, and social circumstances of the century in the course of which the titles in Czech and Slovak came into existence in Argentina (Part I, pp. 13–110). This

⁴ Ibidem, pp. 165–204.

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⁶ Benedict ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: 1983.

⁷ Samuel L. BAILY, "The Role of Two Newspapers in the Assimilation of Italians in Buenos Aires and São Paulo, 1893–1913", *The International Migration Review* 12/3, Autumn 1978, pp. 321–340.

essay opens a window to a better understanding of Argentinian Czechs and Slovaks in a broader geopolitical context, such as the establishment of an independent Czechoslovak state in 1918, the outbreak of Second World War, creation of an independent Slovak state, or the Communist coup d'état in 1948 and its aftermath. The author also takes into consideration the political context in the country of origin, Czechoslovakia, and the host country, Argentina, where the publishing activities took place. We can thus follow the evolving relationship between the official representation of the Czechoslovak state and its migrant communities as well as the impact of the increasingly suspicious stance of the Argentinian government towards foreign-language press and community organising. Hingarová also mentions some of the leftist members of the Czech and Slovak community: their periodicals were banned in Argentina in the 1930s and some of these activists faced jail or even expulsion from the country (p. 44).

The main subject of the book is, however, 50,000 strong diaspora of people of Czech and Slovak heritage who settled in Argentina. Through their publishing efforts that spanned nearly a century (1907–2003), we can understand some of the challenges they faced in the new country, which may have depended on their ethnicity (Czech, Slovak, Jewish, Ruthenian) but also their identification with the Czechoslovak state. Hingarová shows that the process of immigrant assimilation in Argentina was uneven and that the agendas of urban and rural communities, such as the Czech and Slovak enclave in the remote Chaco region, had significantly differed (p. 48).

The book can also be read as a testimony of vibrant migration flows from the Czech lands, Slovakia, and Ruthenia to Argentina (and sometimes back). This subject had been studied by this author (as well as other scholars) before,⁸ but in the present volume Hingarová pays special attention to the

transnational mobility after the Second World War. In this context, she describes the Argentinian exile of a group of influential Slovak separatists who decided to emigrate just as the Cold War was starting. It is a fascinating reading (Part I, sections 5.1–5.3).

After the Second World War, about one thousand Czechs and Slovaks have responded to the active re-immigration policy of the Czechoslovak state and left Argentina to re-settle the Sudeten region after the expulsion of the German-speaking population (p. 73). In the opposite direction, several hundred new Slovak immigrants came to Buenos Aires from Italy. Compared to the existing diaspora in Argentina, they formed a radically different immigrant group: most were former high officials and sympathisers of the war-time Slovak State, such as Ferdinand Ďurčanský and Rudolf Dilong. Immediately after the end of the war, they found refuge in Italy and in 1947, they headed to Argentina, the Peronist regime would shield them from prosecution for their war-time activities.

Hingarová demonstrates how these postwar arrivals, mostly Catholic and nationalist radicals, caused a disruption in the existing Slovak associations in Argentina. They wasted no time and started attacking the Slovak periodicals that had a clear pro-Czechoslovak stance (pp. 87–88). At the same time, the political engagement and transnational networking abilities of these new arrivals brought about a boom in Slovak publishing activities in Argentina: no less than a dozen Slovak-language journals were launched in Argentina in 1945–1958 (p. 93).

All in all, the results of new research presented in the form of a systematically ordered registry of periodicals published by Czechs and Slovaks in Argentina and the accompanying essay form a significant and laudable contribution to the existing knowledge with a clear analytical potential. Thanks to this book, we are now aware of a large body of source materials that would deserve further and deeper analysis and interpretation. And while Chapter 6 (pp. 103–110) presents a brief sketch of possible future research agendas, the present volume leaves this analytical potential largely unexploited.

This, I believe, will be a task for the next stage of research in this area. The range of potential topics is broad. For instance, it would be interesting to conduct a discourse analysis of periodicals as a way of understanding the shifting forms of belonging among Czech and Slovak immigrants to Argentina and the process of gradual assimilation,

⁸ Vendula HINGAROVÁ, “La emigración checoslovaca a Argentina en el Archivo de la Cancillería Checa – estudio de fuentes”, *Ibero-Americana Pragensia, Supplementum* 37, 2014, pp. 241–263; idem, “The Czech and Slovak Emigration to Argentina in the Archive of the Náprstek Museum in Prague”, *Ibero-Americana Pragensia, Supplementum* XLV/1, 2017, pp. 101–118.

which might eventually lead to a comparative study of Czech and Slovak diasporas in Argentina and in the USA (which were previously analysed by Alena Jaklová).⁹ Worth a deeper exploration are also the evolving attitudes of urban and rural papers vis-à-vis the host society and to the prospect of naturalisation in Argentina in the course of the twentieth century or the intergenerational shifts between the first, second, and later generations of Czech and Slovak immigrants in Argentina as mirrored through the papers published in Argentina. Finally, it might be worth investigating to what extent the agendas set by *Čechoslovenský zpravodaj*, *Noticioso checoslovaco*, *Juhoamerický Slovák*, *Slovenské zvesti pre Slovákov v Južnej Amerike*, and *Naša zem* mirrored the agenda of the Czechoslovak state, of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, or Slovak separatism.

It is safe to conclude that the communities of Czechs and Slovaks who engaged in a variety of publishing activities in Argentina in the course of the twentieth century prove Anderson's thesis correct. Publications in the national languages helped them forge a sense of unity and shared identity far away from their land of origin. The periodicals published in Czech and Slovak in Argentina between 1907 and 2003 are a clear testimony of the continued sense of the 'imagined' national belonging of their editors and readers spanning several generations and stretching beyond the immediate geographical boundaries of interaction.

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⁹ Alena JAKLOVÁ, *Čechoamerická periodika 19. a 20. století* [Czech-American periodicals of the 19th and 20th centuries], Praha 2010; idem, *Národnostní a sociálně-ekonomická sebereflexe českých přistěhovalců v čechoamerických periodikách 19. a 20. století* [National and socio-economic self-reflection of Czech immigrants in Czech-American periodicals of the 19th and 20th centuries], Praha 2006.

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Lukáš Perutka, *La sociedad checa y México, 1821–1939* [Czech society and Mexico, 1821–1939], Prague: Karolinum, 2023, 398 pp. ISBN 978-80-246-5801-8¹¹

The distance between London and Prague is just a little over 1,000 kilometres but that did not deter Neville Chamberlain, the ill-famed British prime minister, from uttering one of the most unfortunate and ominous statements of the twentieth century: "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing."

On the other hand, while there are almost 10,000 kilometres between Mexico City and Prague, this geographical and cultural gap did not prevent prominent members of President Lazaro Cárdenas's brain trust, such as Ramón Beteta or Isidro Fabela, from taking keen interest in the distant Central European republic as a conceivable political, economic, and cultural partner amidst a sea of international hostility, crass imperialism, and rising totalitarianism. So much so, that in 1936 the main avenue of Polanco, a posh district of Mexico City, was named in honour of President Masaryk, then recently deceased first president of the Czechoslovak Republic.

Nevertheless, the Czech historian Lukáš Perutka debunks the romanticised notion that Cárdenas's administration bravely defended Czechoslovakia from Nazi aggression, and sets the record straight. Aside from this, however, Czech-Mexican relations stretch back almost half a millennium, as Perutka painstakingly and impressively shows in the present volume. The relations go as far back as the Conquest of Mexico, when Johann Berger, a soldier from the Silesian town of Hotzenplotz (present day Osoblaha) who was known to his comrades as 'Juan Alemán', actively participated in Hernán Cortés's exploits.

This is most decidedly a highly ambitious work that fulfils its promise. It is an important contribution to our knowledge of the ties between the two countries. While building on and contributing to a growing corpus of works on this subject, it also brings many novel insights (as will be shown).

¹¹ Accesible de: <https://karolinum.cz/knihy/perutka-la-sociedad-checa-y-mexico-1821-1939-29761>.