

Development Concept of Lower Vítkovice Area – Vision, Plans, Reality

Hana Šústková

The negative stereotype of Ostrava – a dirty, uncultured city, a place of heavy industry and hard physical labour – remains strong to this day. One of the reasons for its persistence – besides the city's historical development, conditioned by the boom in heavy industry – is undoubtedly the poor state of Ostrava's urban fabric. The original town of Moravian Ostrava (Moravská Ostrava), along with several nearby communities such as Vítkovice and Přívoz, did not begin their dynamic expansion until the second half of the 19th century. The development of this conurbation is inextricably linked with the growth in heavy industry and coal mining.

The 'New Vítkovice' project is a unique venture that has captured the imagination not only of local people, but of experts and the general public in the Czech Republic and abroad. A key element of the project is the conversion of old industrial sites in the Lower Vítkovice district into modern, multi-purpose facilities for culture, science, education, leisure and entertainment. Lower Vítkovice will finally thus be integrated into the everyday life of the city as a fully functional urban district; in the future it will also become a residential area. This project – in conjunction with others – aims to reverse the recent trend towards a shrinkage in Ostrava's population. The creation of an improved socio-economic, cultural and educational milieu will hopefully stem the flow of educated young people out of the region. The construction of a new educational base and centres for high-tech progressive manufacturing is of key importance for the successful re-industrialization of Ostrava, a process by which the city is responding to the challenges of the current economic climate and changing economic systems.

A spy from Ostrava at Hitler's 'Wolf's Lair'. The unknown wartime fate of Jan Borovec (1923-1944?)

Mečislav Borák

Jan Borovec's parents came from the village of Hošťálkovice (today part of Ostrava); when the Hlučín region was annexed by the Reich, he acquired German citizenship on the basis of his father's nationality. Although he considered himself a Czech and completed his studies at the Czech-language secondary school in Ostrava-Přívoz, after leaving the school in 1942 he was conscripted into the German army. In his letters from the front he wrote openly of his intention to desert from the Wehrmacht and cross over to the Allied side – which he eventually did in October 1943. From that point on his fate was unknown. However,

documents were recently found in Russian archives revealing that Borovec worked for the Red Army as an intelligence operative for the 'Progress' group, which in August 1944 was dropped into East Prussia near Hitler's military headquarters, the notorious 'Wolf's Lair'. However, he was soon arrested by the Gestapo, imprisoned at Allenstein (today Olsztyn, Poland), and shot. He protected his family in Ostrava from persecution by using the cover name Vrbický.

The Ostrava Gestapo and the fates of its informers

Radomír Sed'a

In 1939–1945 Ostrava had its own branch of the German secret police (Gestapo), whose task was to persecute the political opponents of the Reich and to prevent any activities that might pose a threat to the Nazi regime. The Ostrava branch was controlled by the Brno central office, to which it submitted regular reports on its activities. The Ostrava Gestapo originally collaborated with local Germans; later it recruited informers from the Czech population, who made an important contribution to the defeat of the local resistance movement. The branch was divided into three departments, responsible respectively for administration, persecution of opponents, and defence. The department tasked with liquidating opposition was further divided into ten separate sections. The most active of these was the anti-communism section, which arrested around 3500 people during its existence – of whom 500 were executed or died in concentration camps. The Ostrava Gestapo was by far the most active tool of persecution in the city during the entire 20th century.

The activities of the District Health Insurance Company in Moravian Ostrava between 1889 and 1938

Marianna Grussmannová

The article examines the activities of the District Health Insurance Company (Okresní nemocenská pokladna) in Moravian Ostrava – one of the largest health insurers in the region – between 1889 and 1938. The author focuses on the elections prior to 1918, the strike by the company's doctors in 1921 – 1921, and the inspection of the medical service in 1932. The paper also includes a brief overview of the legislation to which the company was subject.

The social democratic atheist movement in Ostrava between the world wars

Martin Jemelka

Probably the most important apolitical and non-gymnastic associations in inter-war Ostrava were the Association of Czech Atheists (Sdružení českých bezvěrců - 1919) and the Association of Social Democratic Atheists (Sdružení sociálnědemokratických bezvěrců - 1919), which in 1933 became the Union of Socialist Free Thinkers (Unie socialistických svobodných myslitelů) – the largest atheist organization in the region (1925: 7516 members; 1937: 3500 members) and, via its newsletter *Volné slovo* ('Free Word'), the main ideological opponent of the Roman Catholic Church. The development of atheism was caused by modernization, anti-clerical propaganda in the socialist press, the experience of wartime, the anti-Catholic ideology of the Czechoslovak state, and generations of experience of a clergy which failed to reflect the social reality of the industrial conurbation of Ostrava. The association organized lectures and Sunday discussions on humanist morality, as well as holding demonstrations. In 1938 the Union became the Enlightenment Association (Osvětový svaz), which was disbanded in 1940. Post-war attempts to revive the organization failed to restore it to the importance it had enjoyed between the wars.

From the history of the women's emancipation movement in Ostrava during the first half of the 20th century – the first Czech women's associations and the issue of education for girls

Hana Prymusová

The article focuses on the establishment of the first women's associations in the Ostrava region aiming to enable women to undertake higher education – the Dobromila association in Moravian Ostrava, Božena in Mariánské Hory, Libuše in Přívoz, and Vlasta in Polish Ostrava (today Silesian Ostrava). These organizations were founded by women from progressive backgrounds, and they were supported by important national institutions. In the Ostrava area, the Czech associations were set up almost twenty years after similar organizations were founded for German speakers. Their aim was to improve the position of women in society; they pursued their emancipatory goals by establishing vocational and general schools for girls and by holding lectures and courses in cooking and sewing. The associations were also involved in charitable works.

The work of the priest and renowned orientalist Alois Musil in Ostrava (1891–1895)

Petr Přebinda

The Ostrava years of orientalist Alois Musil (1868–1944) are little known not only among the general public, but even among scholars. Musil came to Moravian Ostrava soon after

completing his clerical training in Olomouc (1891), and was employed for four years by the local parish as a teacher of catechism in Czech schools and as an assistant priest (cooperator). During his time in Ostrava, Musil became actively involved in the Czech national movement, marking a stark contrast with his later – and much better-known – close relations with the Austro-Hungarian imperial family. Besides fulfilling his professional duties conscientiously, the remarkably energetic and disciplined Musil managed to complete his doctoral studies during his time in Ostrava. Soon after receiving his doctorate (1895) he left the city and set out on his first journey to the Middle East, where he intended to acquire a deeper knowledge of Biblical studies.

Rudolf Firkušný, an honoured guest on Ostrava's concert podiums 1927–1939

(Commemorating the 100th anniversary of the musician's birth)

Milan Palák

The pianist Rudolf Firkušný (1912–1994) performed in Ostrava a total of nine times before the Second World War. His first appearance was on 12 November 1927 as a 15 year-old student; his last performance in the city was on 17 April 1939, at a time of great political turmoil. Most of his performances were given at the Lidový Dům, one of Ostrava's foremost music venues in the period between the world wars. Several concerts were given in the Národní Dům, today the Jiří Myron Theatre. Firkušný mainly gave solo recitals, though he also performed piano concertos or appeared alongside another soloist. His visits to Ostrava were enriched by his artistic friendships with Jaroslav Vogel, Josef Schreiber, Zdeňka Pavlousková and her husband Otakar Pavlousek. After the liberation in 1945 (and also after the fall of communism in November 1989) there were attempts to organize concerts for Firkušný in Ostrava; however, neither attempt came to fruition.

Vincent d'Indy and his contacts with Jaroslav Vogel

Lenka Černíková

Jaroslav Vogel (1884–1970) – conductor, composer, journalist, head of the Ostrava Opera, organizer of many chamber and symphony concerts in Ostrava between the world wars – was a student of Vincent d'Indy, one of the leading representatives of French Late Romantic music. This article examines Vogel's studies under the French composer and teacher in Paris during the period 1912–1913. In his memoirs, Vogel describes the French Schola Cantorum and his experiences at the outset of his professional career. As the head of the opera section of

the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre, Vogel went on to make a major contribution to cultural life in Ostrava.

The Moravian Ostrava Savings Bank – Karel Kotas' first major design in Ostrava

Romana Rossová, Eva Kčmářová, Vlastimil Krčmář

The Moravian Ostrava Savings Bank (Moravskoostravská spořitelna) was the first major design by the architect Karel Kotas in Ostrava. The design won a competition announced by the city. Although the panel chose the less avant-garde of Kotas' two submissions, it was still a thoroughly modern structure which represented an important addition to the city's urban fabric while also respecting the existing buildings in the historic centre. The building combined three functions – a grand head office for the savings bank, a municipal library (which remained in the building until 1996), and apartments. Besides the imposing exterior, the functional modernist interior was also highly regarded at the time of building; this interior has partly been preserved to this day. The article describes the building's history and current state, and offers a comparison with other works by Kotas in Ostrava – the Brouk & Babka department store, the Riunione Adriatica insurance company offices, or the headquarters of the Ferdinand Northern Railway – and places these works in the context of contemporary architecture.

With or without Silesia: The life and work of Helmut Krommer

Gabriela Pelikánová

The works of the graphic artist Helmut Krommer (1887–1973), born in Opava, were deeply affected by the two world wars. Krommer spent the First World War at the front; during the Second World War he emigrated as his wife was Jewish. From 1921 he lived with his family in Berlin; in 1933 they moved to Prague, and subsequently to England. In 1951 Krommer moved to Boston, Massachusetts. Although fate caused him to live mainly outside Czechoslovakia, he retained a deep connection with his home town and the surrounding area – in 1925 and during the 1930s he created graphic albums inspired by Opava, and in 1929 he produced a cycle entitled 'Great Ostrava'. Krommer is also known for his graphic works on industrial themes, such as the cycle on the Vítkovice Ironworks from 1934. These works are held at the Silesian Provincial Museum in Opava and the Gallery of Fine Arts in Opava, which held an exhibition of Krommer's works in 2009 entitled 'Ostrava Again !!!'.

Ostrava's Helena Šáchová – archery world champion in 1948

Jana Prchalová

The article examines the sporting career of Ostrava-born sports archer Helena Šáchová (1907–1988), who was one of the pioneers of the sport in the local area during the 1940s – first as a member of the archery section of the First Czech Tennis Club in Moravian Ostrava, then (from 1946) as a member of the company sports association of the Ostrava-Karviná Coal Mining Corporation, where she had been an employee since 1928. In just a short time she rose to become one of the world’s top archers. Representing Czechoslovakia she competed in three world championships in 1947 – 1949, reaching the peak of her career at the London world championships of 1948. With eight gold medals in the team events, the Czechoslovak team won the world title; in the individual events Šáchová added a gold medal (35 metres), two silver medals (25 metres and short-range), and two bronze medals (50 and 60 metres).

“Anno Domini 1603 on Thursday after the feast of St Vitus...” The life and death of the master stonemason Jan Rinolt (†1603)

Jaroslava Novotná

This paper presents a transcript of the probate inventory drawn up after the death of the master stonemason Jan Rinolt, originally from Italy, an inhabitant of Moravian Ostrava. The inventory was produced on 19 June 1603 and is held at the Ostrava City Archive. The compilation of the inventory was among the duties of the city council, and was intended to protect the claims of Rinolt’s six children and his widow Anna. It included real estate, valuables of silver, pewter items, clothing, cattle and bedding. Particular attention was devoted to debts and monies payable. The probate inventory was followed by four documents dating from 1604–1614, which concern the issue of Rinolt’s property to his inheritors.

The case of the conversion of a Jewish woman, Rachel Tausk, to the Catholic faith, as recorded in documents of the Moravian Ostrava municipal authority in 1831

Blažena Przybylová

These edited German-language documents, translated into Czech, reveal the official process of religious conversion by a 21 year-old Jewish woman, Rachel Tausk, who converted to Catholicism. Tausk was a servant originally from the village of Lúky in Upper Hungary (now Slovakia). After her arrival in Ostrava in 1831 she decided to convert. After submitting the necessary documents – a report by the priest Leopold Radda, a report of her questioning in the presence of two Jewish witnesses compiled by the Moravian Ostrava municipal authority –

the application was passed to the regional authority, which approved it. Tausk was christened in December 1831 at the Church of St Wenceslas in Ostrava.