

some questionable assertions and factual inaccuracies. More glaring than these careless mistakes is that, title notwithstanding, Slovakia disappears almost entirely from the story after March 1939. There is no treatment of the Slovak state, its institutions, and its policies (or Nazi policies towards it) similar to that of the Protectorate. The Holocaust is also not treated in a systematic way, except for a few pages in the chapter on forced labor and some scattered mentions in other sections. It seems dubious to assert that “there was no history of anti-Semitism in Czech culture” (256) and the Roma (referred to as “Gypsies”) are mentioned only once (273). Finally, Crowhurst writes of “Germans” and “Czechs” with little attempt to address the ambiguities of those terms both before and during the war. Though useful to advanced undergraduates and graduate students for its archival material, unfortunately, for this book the whole is less than the sum of its parts.

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In the Kingdom of Shoes: Bata, Zlín, Globalization, 1894–1945. By Zachary Austin Doleshal. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021. xv, 272 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. \$90.00, hard bound \$39.95, paper.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.118

The history, and especially lore, of the Bat’a shoe empire has long been tied up with a Czech nostalgia for “what could have been.” The success of the Bat’a Company, located in a less than cosmopolitan or lucrative corner of the Czech lands, offered opportunity to those who might otherwise have missed out, and its legacy has been a great source of pride. Václav Havel himself was the grandson of Bat’a executive Hugo Vavrečka and as president, he helped jumpstart the Tomas Bata University in Zlín.

Zachary Austin Doleshal’s *In the Kingdom of Shoes* is the first English-language history of Bat’a. Considering that its story touches on so many fascinating aspects of east central European history, it is surprising that such a book did not come sooner. Fortunately, Doleshal delivers. He does a superb job of mining the archives as well as dipping into the abundant Czech-language historiography, both the older hagiographic version and the newer revisionist one, to narrate the nuanced tale of the Bat’a company founded within an empire but soon confronting national identity politics, even as it continued to define itself by what Doleshal, borrowing from Tara Zahra’s work, refers to as a policy of “national indifference.” He argues that national indifference in this case was a carefully considered company policy, since “[n]ational belonging was not an ideal but an obstacle” (13) for Bat’a.

For those not familiar with the Bat’a Company, the story goes like this: in 1894, Antonín Bat’a, a card-playing, beer-loving shoe manufacturer, gave his three children an early inheritance with which to start their own shoe factory. They moved to Zlín, where they set up shop, hiring local shoemakers working out of their homes. Women stitched the uppers; men worked on the lathe (a gender division that would remain in place). Tomáš Bat’a, who would largely lead the enterprise, hit it big with the so-called *batovky*—affordable cotton loafers. Their popularity took off, orders poured in from Vienna, and Tomáš had to find a way to mass produce them. With several employees, he took a work trip to Lynn, Massachusetts, America’s center of shoe manufacturing, where he turned a blind eye to the ongoing labor strikes, and focused instead on the machinery. (Not exactly the life of the party, when he found his employees drunk and gambling, he left them behind in America.)

After “shodding the Austrian army” during World War I, the interwar years saw the company’s star rise ever higher, and by 1939, “the Bat’a Company employed over 84,000, ran 5,000 retail stores, and operated twenty-five factories in eleven countries across the globe” (7). In fact, it was now the largest shoemaker in the world. Its workforce—a lesson learned in Lynn—was intentionally young, allowing the company to shape them. Becoming a *Batovec* must have been a shock to the system, even as it meant a significant leg up for its mostly “rural, Catholic, and poor” young workers.

The company was very much of its time, holding fast to the belief “that an industrial utopia could be achieved through harmonizing man and machine, and through rationalizing society” (8). The consequent company culture came to be called *Batism*, and it meant not only that Zlín looked, felt, and sounded unlike any other city in Czechoslovakia (visitors would say they had been transported to America), but it focused on “vertical integration.” A worker ate Bat’a farm eggs in the Bat’a canteen, before returning to his Bat’a dormitory. If he were an exemplary *Batovec* (not only a hard worker, but married and producing more little *Batovci*), he might get a Bat’a house, and his wife would trade the factory floor for a life of gender-regimented bliss. Special boarding schools were set up to pluck talented youth. Unsurprisingly, Bat’a employees came to control both the local government and the police.

The dystopian aspects of the enterprise are in many ways the most fascinating. Doleshal does not gloss over these, yet he perhaps stays too loyal to the Habsburg theoretical frameworks that focus on nationalism and national identities. Because there is another story to tell here; the story of industrial surveillance and the desire of corporations to turn (wo)man into efficient machines. It is a story that stretches from the 1927 film, *Metropolis*, to Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. In today’s climate of accelerated corporate machinations, the history of Bat’a is relevant again in a way that moves beyond questions of nationalism to ask: how much is a worker willing to sacrifice in return for their livelihood?

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Three Cities After Hitler: Redemptive Reconstruction Across Cold War Borders. By

Andrew Demshuk. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021. xviii, 566 pp.

Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Photographs. Maps. \$65.00, hard bound.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.119

Histories of central Europe’s urban spaces since 1945 have focused overwhelmingly on memory, particularly Holocaust memory. At first glance, *Three Cities After Hitler* might seem to follow this pattern. But the fate of Jewish synagogues and cemeteries is not Andrew Demshuk’s main concern; in fact, the topic is shunted off to the book’s conclusion. To Demshuk, “redemptive reconstruction” denotes selective rebuilding in the wake of the Third Reich—but also later attempts to “redeem” the excesses of modernism. In effect, this is a comparative study of urban planning spanning seven decades, with special emphasis on citizens’ involvement in (or exclusion from) decisions about the fate of historic city centers.

Like Michael Meng in *Shattered Spaces* (2011), Demshuk offers a comparison across West Germany, East Germany, and Poland. The research design is extremely compelling, featuring three cities with a good deal in common: Frankfurt am Main,