

# Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis

Studia ad Bibliothecarum Scientiam Pertinentia 17 (2019)

ISSN 2081-1861

DOI 10.24917/20811861.17.12

**Barbora Svobodová**

Institute of Czech Literature of the CAS

## Baťa's Zlín and literature: art and media at the service of progress and as a service to progress

Even in connection with the centennial anniversary of the Czech and Czechoslovak statehood and the commemoration of other important anniversaries this year, a debate about national identity, its formation and transformation is opening up especially in domestic intellectual circles. One of the cornerstones of the Czech myth of a successful and progressive democratic state formed in the Central European space after the First World War is the Baťa phenomenon.

The name of the members of this Zlín family of shoemakers is synonymous in the Czech environment with the business success, innovative approach and skills of the Czech people. At the same time, it is skilfully manipulated; it is abused by current political leaders or those who judge and condemn Baťa's activities regardless of their historical context. Baťa's Zlín was a kind of a synecdoche of this Czechoslovak story, and today we often tend to emphasise only his success and activities in the economic field while forgetting that it was a complex system, basically an avant-garde modernist project and social experiment which formed in the context of contemporary ideals based on boundless belief in constant progress, the power of technology, but also on the conviction of people's abilities and the importance of their work.<sup>1</sup> From this point of view, Zlín's shoemaking empire is a multi-layered phenomenon, which cannot be reduced only to the production and business level. After all, as not only contemporary witnesses say, at Baťa it was not only about working, but in the first place it was about living.<sup>2</sup> The company and its chief did not provide its employees, who had been systematically called co-workers to emphasise that they were perceived as partners, only with work, but also with places to live, education, health care, social services and cultural activities. Since 1923, the company's representatives were also politically active and participated extensively in the administration

---

1 Cf. O. Ševeček, M. Jemelka, *Tovární město Baťova koncernu. Evropská kapitola z dějin globální expanze*, Praha 2016; P. Mareš, *Sondy do kultury města – Zlín, modelové město modernity*, "Sociologický časopis – Czech Sociological Review" 2013, no. 5, p. 681–701; B. Vacková, L. Galčanová, *The Project Zlín. Everyday Life in a Materialized Utopia*, "Urban People – lidé města" 2009, no. 2, p. 311–337.

2 Cf. L. Havelková, *Baťovský Zlín jako literární námět*, "Acta Universitatis palackianae Olomucensis facultas philosophica, Studia Moravica" 2017, no. 5, p. 41–46.



Pic. 1. A period postcard showing the factory area of Baťa's plant in Zlín

of the city of Zlín and the whole region. The company thus intervened practically in all areas of its employees' lives and had its own ideas about what criteria should be fulfilled by artistic creation.

Just as Baťa's employees were systematically led to serve the public, art was to serve them. And as we mentioned the question of Czech and Czechoslovak identity in the introduction, in Baťa's system of management it was works of art and media that helped to consolidate the identity of the Baťa employees. Functionalistic Zlín architecture and urbanism, graphic design, or the development of film production in the Zlín studios are chapters that are quite well explored. But corporate culture policy also interfered with other artistic fields, and in my paper, I would like to show a few examples of how it was reflected in literature and literary life.

### "Healthy Books"

Judging by the thoughts and words of both Baťa brothers, books, reading, and self-study had their meaning in the life of a person, but at the same time it must be added that this was not true for all books. In his unfinished memoirs *Úvahy a projevy/Reflections and Speeches*, Tomáš describes how reading in the time of his youth inspired in him a desire to achieve something, and how literary stories opened his eyes.<sup>3</sup> In another section, however, we learn that "we should read only books that give us incentive. Even the best written of unsuccessful life will not teach us to win. On the contrary, such a story prevents us to enjoy and deprives us of the courage to act."<sup>4</sup>

3 T. Baťa, *Reflections and speeches*. Zlín 2016, p. 19.

4 Ibidem, p. 186.



Pic. 2. The Zlín city centre with the walls covered with iconic Baťa's mottos

A similar opinion was also expressed by his younger half-brother and successor Jan Antonín, who took control of the company after Tomáš's death in an air accident in 1932, when he repeatedly supported optimistic and encouraging literature. And one of the iconic Baťa mottos adorning the walls of the factory site proclaimed: "Read Healthy Books".<sup>5</sup>

The company therefore supported its co-workers in reading and the development of literary literacy, not only by motivational slogans, but also by particular steps. In 1918 a company library was established, the funds of which were regularly expanded. New book acquisitions were always reported by the company press, which explicitly listed specific new issues. The first list of books published in the magazine *Sdělení* on 31 August 1918 contains 151 items which were endorsed; we can find there works of fiction such as Jirásek's *Temno/Darkness*, Dickens's *David Copperfield*, or *Písně otroka/Songs of the Slave* by Svatopluk Čech, the favourite author of the chief himself, as well as titles about history, philosophy, law and science such as Arnošt Denis's *Čechy po Bílé Hoře*, Teréza Nováková's *Ze ženského hnutí*, Bohumil Němec's *O původu a vývoji života* or literature focused on personal development such as Swett Marden's *Vůle a úspěch/Ambition and Success*, Karel Karásek's *Jak uložit peníze* and many others.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the possibility of visiting the company library and reading the corporate press, which I will mention later, books also served as a kind of reward.

5 The walls of the Baťa factory were covered with various types of motivational slogans and advice, reflecting Baťa's philosophy and the basic principles that the company inculcated its employees. The motto talking about "healthy books" thus worked in this context. Cf. V. Veselý, *600 hesel*, Zlín 2016, p. 14.

6 *Seznam knih závodní knihovny firmy T. & A. Baťa*, "Sdělení zaměstnancům firmy T. & A. Baťa" 1918, no. 15, p. 4.

CENA 20 HAL.

Ročník XL. Ve Zlíně v únoru 1928. Číslo 5.

# SDĚLENÍ

zaměstnanců ty. T. & A. Baťa

Týdeník vycházející v sobotu.

---

**JIDELNÍ LISTEK**

**Pondělí.** Oběd: Hovězí polévka krupicová, rajská omáčka, hovězí maso a chléb Kč 2.—, Karbenátky, zelí a brambory Kč 4.—, Večeře: Dušená játra a chléb Kč 2.—

**Úterý.** Oběd: Fazolevá polévka, hovězí ragmat a chléb Kč 2.—, Svičková na smetaně a knedlík Kč 4.—, Večeře: Risotto Kč 2.—

**Středa.** Oběd: Hovězí pol. nudlová, fazole, hovězí maso a chléb Kč 2.—, Vepřové kotlety a knedlík Kč 4.—, Večeře: Guláš a chléb Kč 2.—

**Čtvrtek.** Oběd: Krupicová pol., uzené, zelí a chléb Kč 2.—, Telci pečené a ryže Kč 4.—, Večeře: Hovězí špikované a chléb Kč 2.—

**Pátek.** Oběd: Hovězí pol. šlísková, cibulková omáčka a chléb Kč 2.—, Roštěná a brambory Kč 4.—, Večeře: Karbenátky a brambory 2 Kč.

**Sobota.** Oběd: Zasmaž. polévka nudlová, sagedínský guláš a chléb Kč 2.—, Hrách a uzené Kč 4.—, Večeře: Hovězí roštěná a chléb Kč 2.—

**Neděle.** Oběd: Zasmaž. polévka rýžová, vepřová pečená, vej, chléb Kč 2.—, Růstek, kotlety, bramborový salát Kč 4.—, Večeře: Uzené, okurek a brambory Kč 2.—

*Člověk, který vyrostl k dospělosti jen na účet svých předků a státu, bude se těžko učiti sloužiti sobě a jiným, bez ohledu na míru vědomostí, kterých nabyl.*

*Tomáš Baťa.*

**PŘEDCHÁZEJTE VZNIKU NEMOCI.**

Mínulý týden hluboce dojala širší zlinské publikum zpráva o náhlém skonu známého váženého občana. Mnozí, kteří jej viděli ještě před čtrnácti dny veselého na společenské zábavě, ptali se, jak jest to možné, aby člověk, plný zdraví a mužného humoru, pojednou, po tak krátké nemoci, se rozloučil navždy se svojí rodinou a svými přáteli. A k tomu ještě přistupuje trapné pomyšlení, že příčinou smrti byla zdánlivě nepatrná příhoda, malý úraz, který sotva porušil kůži.

Takto a podobně uvažoval mnohý z těch, kteří smutnou zprávu o nešťastném nemocném se dozvěděli. Jinak ovšem jeví se případ lékaři, který hned od prvního dne nemoc starostlivě sledoval se zjevním na to, že, i když bylo vlastní poranění nepatrné, byly přece jen v organismu raněného závady, které oko lékařevo postrehlo a které činily předpověď nemoci velmi vážnou.

Nezáleží mnohdy na tom, jak ta neb ona nemoc neb to neb ono poranění samy o sobě jsou závažné, ale koho postihují.

Příkladem tohoto tvrzení jest třeba známá skutečnost, jak rozdílně snáší veliká krvácení muž a žena. Tělo ženy od přírody jest přizpůsobeno ztrátám krve, které organismus ženský dovede bez pomoci a bez následků vyrovnati. Možno směle říci, že žádný muž nemůže ani číst oně ztráty krve, kteron i nemocná žena bez jakýchkoliv následků překoná.

Nebo jest známo, že těžká infekční onemocnění, jako skvrnitý tyfus, zánět plic a řada jiných nemocí probíhají u mladých lidí do 30 let téměř bez výjimky hladce, nebývají při zdravém a zachovalém srdci mladého člověka téměř nikdy příčinou smrti, a naopak u lidí starších, otlých, u individuí se srdeční vadou, se akor-

**V neděli**  
12. února 1928

**Dětské radovánky**  
Ráno Na louce - v lese - u potoka

**V Obchodním domě.**  
Začátek ve 2 hod. odpo.

Pic. 3. The front page of "Sdělení" 1928, no. 5

For those employees who participated in cultural events or, for example, contributed to Baťa's periodicals, they represented a certain bonus to the salary. And if the company's management really wanted a specific text to find its way to the workers, they solved it as in the case of a great example and a source of inspiration for the entire Baťa system – Henry Ford. In 1924, the magazine *Sdělení* contained a laconic

one-sentence report that the firm had ordered 200 copies of its newly published book, *Můj život a dílo/My Life and Work*, and simply handed it over to the staff.<sup>7</sup>

### Founding of Baťa periodicals and the publishing house Tisk: Zlín

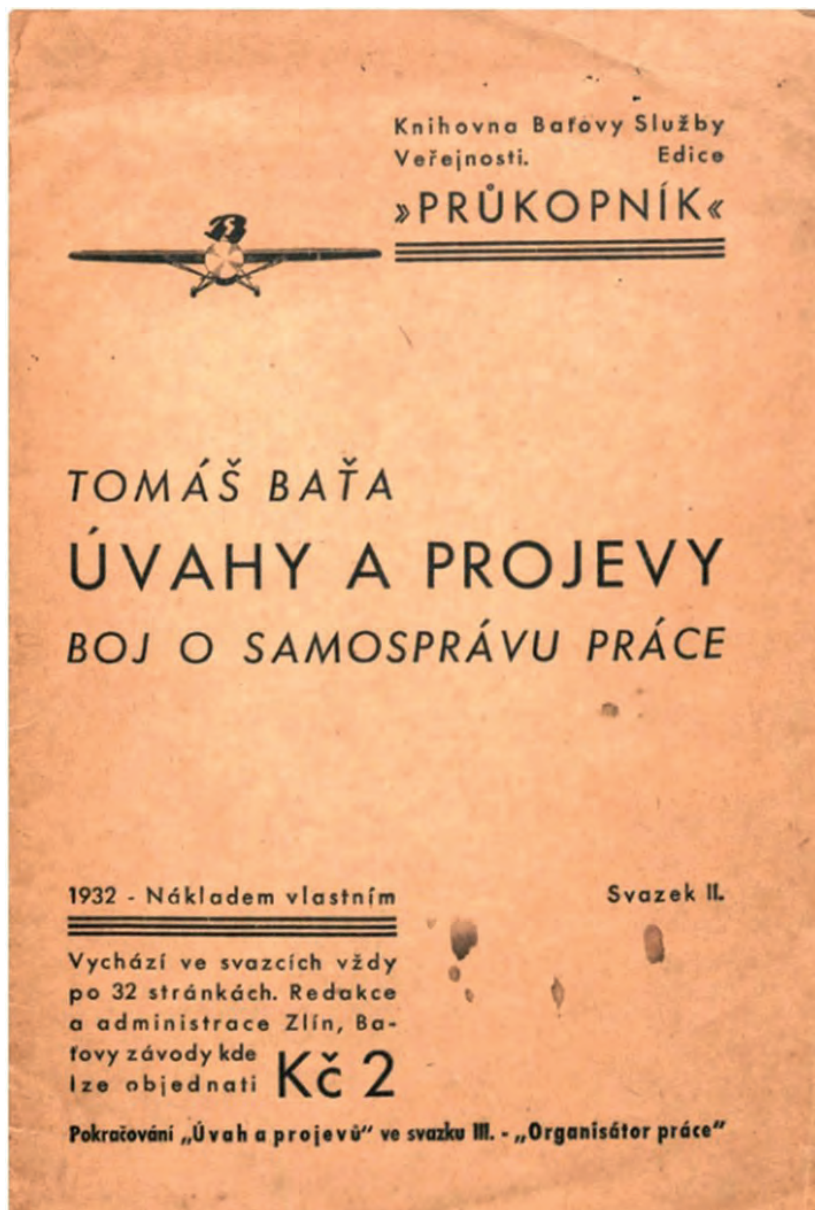
In addition to his obvious love of reading, Tomáš Baťa was well aware of the power of media and printing, but he likely did not have an ambition to build a media empire in addition to a shoemaking business in the beginnings of his career. Although the company had print presses, they were primarily used to produce leaflets. However, the situation changed at the end of the First World War. On the one hand, the plant had grown and Baťa was no longer able to communicate with all his employees directly as he used to; on the other hand, the business was also struck by the war-time crisis, the management was trying to solve it and wanted to explain to the employees its steps and respond to the threat of a strike. Baťa resorted to a step that was unusual in the then-Central Europe. Inspired by the organisation of work in large overseas factories, he founded a company magazine and called it *Sdělení zřízeníctvu firma T. & A. Baťa*, soon renamed to *Sdělení zaměstnancům firmy T. & A. Baťa*. Its first issue of only two pages was received by the workers on 25 May 1918 and was issued once a week.

The newspapers continued working rather on an amateur basis for quite a long time after their beginnings. They presented, in particular, transcripts of Baťa's speeches, the company's educational campaign (against alcohol, smoking, about the importance of personal hygiene, etc.), motivational quotations of famous personalities, practical information on food supplies and prices, an honourable place in it was devoted to the canteen's menu, furthermore it included reports or articles taken over from other sources both inland and foreign, mainly Anglo-American. They also played a significant role in the political campaign that preceded Tomáš Baťa's appointment as mayor of the city of Zlín in 1923,<sup>8</sup> as well as in other political elections and in all disputes that were led against the company.

Until the middle of the 1920s, *Sdělení* had only one permanent editor – first it was František Kessler and later František Pagáč, who was directly responsible to the boss. With the increasing importance of the company and the number of its employees, the importance and influence of *Sdělení* grew as well. In the middle of the 1920s, the magazine became a part of the nationwide distribution and ceased to function purely as an internal corporate journal. New reinforcements in the form of Josef Vaňhara in 1925 and a year later Antonín Cekota, two men who would have an influence on Baťa's press until the protectorate period, were added to the editorial board. In particular, Cekota would be responsible for publishing most of Baťa's speeches and articles and would be the author of one of the first significant biographies *Geniální podnikatel Tomáš Baťa/ Entrepreneur extraordinary Tomáš Baťa*.

7 *Správa našeho závodu...*, "Sdělení zaměstnanců firmy T. & A. Baťa" 1924, no. 7, p. 7.

8 Baťa's newspaper contributed significantly to Tomáš Baťa's campaign, presented his political program, and above all, highlighted his business merits. This topic is discussed in more details in D. Valůšek, *Tomáš Baťa a tisk*, [in:] *Tomáš Baťa: Doba a společnost*, ed. M. Tomašík, Zlín – Brno 2007, p. 274–281.



Pic. 4. The front cover of the first edition of Tomáš Baťa's *Reflection and Speeches* (1932)

In addition, in 1925, the company asked for a publishing and bookkeeping concession and in 1926 it founded the company Tisk Zlín, which newly fulfilled the task of publishing and distributing magazines, books and promotional materials. The first publication to be published in this publishing company is the booklet *Zámožnost všem* by Tomáš Baťa, which summarises the fundamentals of corporate philosophy based on the principle that every worker is also an entrepreneur and has a share in the profit of the whole company.



Pic. 5. The front page of “Zlín” 1931, special issue celebrating Labour Day

The end of the 1920s meant a further boom for the company. After his second successful election, Baťa was set to reform the Zlín school system, expand the company’s scope to new industrial and non-industrial sectors, and prepare a plan for expansion abroad. *Sdělení* itself was not sufficient for covering all areas of interest, so since the turn of the second and third decades of the 20th century, and also during the 1930s, the portfolio of periodicals published either by the company itself, or by

organisations and institutions somehow related to it, grew significantly. Here are some examples of the whole range of Baťa newspapers and magazines:

*Batova služba veřejnosti* (1926–1929), *Šídlo ševců Batových* (1927–1929), magazine for children and youth *Mladý Zlín* (1931–1944), *Průkopník úspěšného podnikání* (1935), *Dál a výš. Časopis mladých mužů a žen Batovy školy práce* (1929–1940), magazine of the club of graduates of Baťa's vocational school *Vpřed* (1939–1941), *Zpravodaj prodavačů firmy Baťa* (1925–1945), *Aranžér Baťa* (1938–1939), *Výběr* (1934–1945) and many others.<sup>9</sup> *Sdělení* itself then gained a new name *Zlín* in 1930, its periodicity increased, it was published three times a week and its sub-titles varied in the following years.

### Literature in Baťa periodicals and the production of books by Tisk Zlín

Regarding the content of the Zlín newspapers, in *Sdělení* literature had from the beginning its place in the form of the Literary Patrol section, which drew the readers' attention to books worthy of their attention. Medallions commemorated the literary anniversaries of famous personalities, mainly of the classics of lesser Czech literature or of regional authors (for example, B. Němcová, A. Jirásek, J. S. Machar, S. Čech, K. H. Borovský or F. Bartoš).

In Baťa's periodicals, the genre of classical literary review did not grow, much less the genre of criticism. Emphasis was placed on the educational aspects of the literature. The patriotic aspect also played a major role. The book as such was labelled as the best friend for a human being; on the contrary, a campaign was led against fallen genres such as "blood-and-thunder" or "unchaste literature". In addition, literary production was understood in a broad sense and it was certainly not limited to fiction. On the other hand, non-fiction work or texts at the border of journalism and fiction were strongly presented and mainly prevailed in later years. Articles with literary themes are most often signed by the ciphers of M. R., S. Ú. or the delta sign. However, the initials S. Ú. probably belonged to Svetožar Úlehla, the Zlín bookseller who founded the first bookkeeping team in the town and whose member was Tomáš Baťa himself. If a particular piece of work was recommended in the section, such as Bezruč's *Slezské písně/Silesian Songs*, often the article was finished with a note that the book was available either in Úlehla's shop or possibly in the mentioned company library.<sup>10</sup> The texts in the section are often rather annotations or announcements, possibly accompanied by a recommendation from the author.

In addition to the mentioned educational and advertising articles, in the magazine we can also find excerpts of primary texts – whether consisting of poems that were more sporadic, longer prosaic texts, or feuilletons published in instalments – mainly from texts popular at that time, fables (for example, excerpts of the book *Od píky* with the moralising stories of John Graham and his son Pierrepont), works with regional or Baťa themes (for example, a feuilleton about the establishment of the Baťa – Prague – Wenceslas shop), but surprisingly we can also find historical

<sup>9</sup> A completely separate chapter consisted of papers that were later published in foreign branches of the Baťa plant, such as the French *Bataville – avis et échos*, British *Bata Record*, German *Bata Bericht*, Yugoslav *Borovo*, Polish *Echo Chelmka* and more.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. e. g. *Slezské písně*, "Sdělení zaměstnancům firmy T. & A. Baťa" 1919, no. 42, p. 3.



works or literary treasures from older Czech literature. In 1924, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the death of Jan Žižka, the readers of *Sdělení* could read excerpts from the humanist chronicle of Martin Kuthen or see the transcript of a 17th-century historical document about the relations in the Zlín weaver's guild. A special thematic section consists of excerpts from non-fiction books by authors, or rather thinkers and practitioners, who believed in the same values on which the whole philosophy of the plant was based. First and foremost these included Henry Ford, previously mentioned, as overprints of his texts are distributed in virtually every year of the magazine, as well as Andrew Carnegie and T. Edison.

A completely separate chapter then includes attempts at literary works from the pens of Baťa employees themselves, who tried to capture the life in the plant, to celebrate their chief or generally to discuss the shoemaker's theme in a poetic way. The vast majority of them are an example of naive folk creation and creativity, as the editorial team likely received a huge number of them – so huge that the editorial team in issue 33 of 1923 reports that it is literally inundated with manuscripts, but that many poems are really bad, and in response it publishes at least a basic lesson on the structure of the Czech verse. In this issue of *Sdělení* we can therefore find the basics of verseology containing not only information on typical Czech metres, but also Czech quantitative verse.<sup>11</sup>

It can be said that until 1923, when the Zlín elections took place, as mentioned above literature in the magazine had a privileged position besides business affairs. After this point, however, it slightly receded into the background; there were not fewer examples of primary works, but the Literary Patrol had to share space in the back section with the sports news or the Amusement Corner section. This state basically lasted until the transformation of *Sdělení* into *Zlín*, except that this magazine was more focused on foreign literature, such as Jack London, or published feuilletons by Bertý Ženatý from the USA, who also held the position of editor-in-chief for a short time.

The 1930s brought an overall expansion of the cultural section, but literature was only one of many topics and was marginalised rather than becoming more prominent. In the context of the construction of the Zlín Velké kino/Grand Cinema and later also of the film studios, the section focuses mainly on the film medium as well as on the visual arts. This is with regard to the organisation of the exhibition of artists, the Zlín Salon, which the letter refers to, and there are also longer thoughts from this area – for example, about Cubism. However, the publication of excerpts from books continues, mostly in English through the translations of B. L. Nekovařík (e.g. Clif Farrell's *Buldok Kelly/Bulldog Kelly, Osudná zatáčka/Fatal Turn*).

In 1932, after Tomáš's death, parts of his memoirs were published in *Zlín*. During the great journey of Jan Antonín across the United States in 1937, the magazine regularly published reports by Edvard Valenta. The Baťa "travelogue" or the records of Baťa's travels were published in the magazine since its beginning and they represent a specific literary-journalist-didactic genre; starting in the 1930s, however, the incidence of this type of texts especially increased as the company was growing and its staff were sent out into the world more.

---

11 *Básníkům a básnířkám našeho závodu*, "Sdělení zaměstnanců firmy T. & A. Baťa" 1923, no. 33, p. 7.

Additionally, after Jan Antonín's arrival to the leading position of the company, many more books in Tisk Zlín started to be published than during Tomáš's leadership. This is probably related to the fact that Jan Antonín had a relatively clear idea since the mid-1930s of how the cultural and intellectual life in Zlín (and indeed, in the whole of Czechoslovakia) should look like, as evidenced by his own book *Budujeme stát pro 40 000 000 lidí/Let us Build a State for 40 Millions People*. Unlike his brother, the other Baťa apparently felt like an intellectual apart from being a shoemaker: he had literary ambitions as well, he wrote poems, novels and satire, although it must be emphasised that these works were not really good. In 1936, on the one hundredth anniversary of the death of K. H. Mácha, he organised a writer's congress in Zlín, which began with a speech in which he invited artists to create positive and moral supportive works and to help the people build a sense of self-esteem and desire to work:

"Our people need mental leadership to grow. They need to get the courage, the self-confidence of the right kind, they need life optimism and humour. They need to fall in love with life and the tasks they are facing. [...] Czechoslovak writers, help our people from their distress. Do not think you cannot do it. You will do it just as well as your predecessors – even better. Today's people need you to fill them with the ideas for which they want and can work, live or die. But rather live. Show them the way. Avoid pessimism."<sup>12</sup>

During his work, the company also started to award literary and journalistic awards. At the same time, however, the company found itself in several literary scandals. The publication of four volumes of Tomáš's *Úvahy a projevy/Reflection and Speeches*, or reports about his journey to India, in an edition for children titled *Mladý Zlín*, did not, of course, trigger any controversy in the year of the founder's death. But the same thing cannot be said about the litigation surrounding the book by Svatopluk Turek *Botostroj/Shoe-Machine*,<sup>13</sup> published in 1933 by the Sfinx publishing house, where the writer and former painter working in the Baťa factory, after his dismissal, settles his accounts with the company and Tomáš Baťa personally. It all ended in litigation and a withdrawal of the book from sale. In 1934, the book *Živé dílo* by T. A. Pánek, which represents a sort of "anti-Botostroj", was published in Tisk; some Zlín inhabitants even believed that its real author was Jan Antonín himself.<sup>14</sup> Another book that would meet the requirements of Baťa's literature is a collection of poems by Jaroslav Josef Balcárek called *Město* (1939), in which the author celebrates Zlín's hard work and diligence. In addition to this, works of fiction found a home in the environment of Zlín in Tisk, including selections from the work of British poet John Masfield titled *Volání moře/Calling the Sea* (1938), a collection by Josef Kurz *Písně o slunci* (1936) or the work dedicated to children *Petrova dobrodružství* (1933). In the mid-1930s a wide range of self-education and motivation manuals focusing on sales techniques, time management, and generally on quality of life and personality development were produced (*Jak nahoru: Kniha pro úspěšné*

12 J. A. Baťa, *Význam a poslání literární práce*, "Zlín" 1936, no. 27, p. 1–2 (transl. B. S.).

13 Although the author of the book declares his distance from the fact that his work was related to Zlín and the name of the city or Baťa himself does not figure in the text, the title of the book and the whole fictional world clearly refers to Baťa Zlín and thus the work was understood in the period.

14 Cf. L. Havelková, *Baťovský Zlín jako literární...*, p. 44.

*zaměstnanec* (1936), *Obchod jako služba* (1937), *Jak vyniknout do třicítky* (1938), *Jak správně řečnit* (1938), *Umění jednat s lidmi* (1939) and others). A specific position in this category belongs especially to the texts by the Canadian journalist and writer Herbert Newton Casson, for whose work the publishing house even created a separate edition.

The change in the direction of the whole company, including its publishing and magazine production, was brought, not surprisingly, by the Second World War and the Nazi occupation of the former Czechoslovakia. Part of the management of the company emigrated, including Jan Antonín, and due to its enormous economic potential the company was also under the close supervision of the Protectorate authorities and the Third Reich's controllers. Even though life in Zlín did not stop and the plants, Tisk Zlín itself and some periodicals continued to work, it is a question of how much this and the subsequent period of 1939–1948 still deserve to be attributed to Baťa's. I myself would like to avoid judging whether and how many individual Baťa factory employees collaborated with the Nazis. The complexity and chaotic nature of the situation can be indicated by the personality of Jaroslav Pelíšek, editor-in-chief of the Zlín periodicals and publishing house, about whom it is still not possible to say with certainty how much he collaborated and how much he tried to help people in need in this situation. Certainly, many books, materials and articles in the established journals that were published in Tisk at that time were propagandistic and conforming to the regime. The most notable it was in the main magazine *Zlín*, which was renamed after 1942. Its Monday edition, newly called *Náš kraj*, was focused on events in the region, Friday's edition remained with the name *Zlín* and was meant to continue to function as a company journal, and a large Wednesday edition was named *Svět*. It was in *Svět* where most of the propaganda texts appeared and it also underwent a visual change to make it as similar to the German magazine *Das Reich* as possible.<sup>15</sup> The last post-war period of Tisk is very short. All of Baťa's plants were virtually immediately after the liberation of May 1945 under the newly forced communist administration, and in October the company was nationalised. The leadership of the company were seen as traitors and supporters of the Nazi regime, although lawsuits followed later in 1946 and 1947.

### Modernity vs. traditionalism

In spite of all the progressiveness and modernity promoted by the company in its production and reflected in the organisation of life in the city, Zlín literary taste was, in its essence, very conservative and traditionalist, in many aspects not unlike what we know from the literature of the 1950s with socialist realism.

In secondary texts published by Baťa's press, literature is judged primarily by whether it is sufficiently educational and motivational, whether it sets good examples and clearly communicates a positive message. Art is generally not considered in the context of aesthetically high and low; texts should both teach and entertain their readers. Complexity and artistic autonomy are not essential values and are rather an

---

<sup>15</sup> Cf. M. Mašek, *Zlínský novinářský aktivista Jaroslav Pelíšek před národním soudem* [Diploma Thesis]. Brno 2019.

aggravating circumstance, and avant-garde styles and movements are definitely not preferred or regarded as an example to follow. Like everything, literature is subject to greater intentions and is supposed to serve work and progress.

Despite the fact that Baťa's periodicals were devoted to the promotion of reading and books from the very beginning, the importance of the role of literature gradually diminishes as "more modern" media, especially photography and film, move to the forefront. However, in my opinion, this change of cultural orientation cannot be perceived only from an ideological point of view as a shift towards more progressive means of artistic communication, but also from a pragmatic point of view. Film studios or graphic and photographic workshops were an important part of the company's portfolio, but despite all the invitations and efforts, practically no renowned authors willing to write the desired Baťa literature were found whose works would be able to address a wider readership. In the sense of efficiency, the company placed an emphasis on its own production, or on production which was close to it. We can only speculate today whether the situation would have been different if enough Baťa bestseller-makers had been found.

## Sources

- "Sdělení zřízenectvu firmy T. & A. Baťa" 1918–1919.  
 "Sdělení zaměstnancům firmy T. & A. Baťa" 1919–1921.  
 "Sdělení zaměstnanců firmy T. & A. Baťa" 1921–1930.  
 "Sdělení zaměstnanců firmy T. & A. Baťa. Pondělník" 1926–1930.  
 "Slovo Zlína a Sdělení zaměstnanců firmy T. & A. Baťa" 1930.  
 "Zlín. Sdělení zaměstnanců firmy T. & A. Baťa" 1930–1932.  
 "Zlín pondělní" 1931–1935.  
 "Zlín. Časopis pro šíření zásad služeb veřejnosti" 1932–1935.  
 "Zlín. Časopis podnikavé práce" 1935–1941.  
 "Zlín. Časopis spolupracovníků Baťa" 1935–1945.  
 "Zlín. Pondělník Zlínského kraje" 1935–1941.  
 "Svět" 1942–1945.  
 "Náš kraj" 1942–1945.  
 Baťa J. A., *Význam a poslání literární práce*, "Zlín" 1936, no. 27, p. 1–2.  
 Baťa J. A., *Budujeme stát pro 40 000 000 lidí*, Zlín 1938.  
 Baťa T., *Reflections and speeches*, Zlín 2016.  
*Básníkům a básničkám našeho závodu*, "Sdělení zaměstnanců firmy T. & A. Baťa" 1923, no. 33, p. 7.  
*Seznam knih závodní knihovny firmy T. & A. Baťa*, "Sdělení zaměstnancům firmy T. & A. Baťa" 1918, no. 15, p. 4.  
*Slezské písně*, "Sdělení zaměstnancům firmy T. & A. Baťa" 1919, no. 42, p. 3.  
*Správa našeho závodu...*, "Sdělení zaměstnanců firmy T. & A. Baťa" 1924, no. 7, p. 7.  
 Státní okresní archiv Zlín, fond Tisk, s.r.o, Zlín, no. 1–87, 1926–1948.  
 Bibliografie Baťa [online database], Zlín 2007, <http://tomasbata.org/bibliografie/>

## Bibliography

- Cekota A., *Entrepreneur extraordinary Tomáš Baťa*, Zlín 2018.
- Havelková L., *Baťovský Zlín jako literární námět*, "Acta Universitatis palackianae Olomucensis facultas philosophica, Studia Moravica" 2017, no. 5, p. 41–46.
- Holubec S., *Silní milují život. Utopie, ideologie a biopolitika baťovského Zlína*, "Kuděj" 2009, no. 2, p. 30–55.
- Kouba K., *Co to byl Baťovský Zlín? Město jako případ vysokého modernismu*, [in:] *Tomáš Baťa: Doba a společnost*, ed. M. Tomašík, Zlín – Brno 2007, p. 293–301.
- Mareš P., *Od práce emancipující k práci mizející*. "Sociologický časopis" 2004, no. 1–2, p. 37–48.
- Mareš P., *Sondy do kultury města – Zlín, modelové město modernity*, "Sociologický časopis – Czech Sociological Review" 2013, no. 5, p. 681–701.
- Mašek M., *Zlínský novinářský aktivista Jaroslav Pelíšek před národním soudem* [Diploma Thesis]. Brno 2019.
- Pagáč J., *Tomáš Baťa a 30 let jeho podnikatelské práce*, Praha 1926.
- Pokluda Z., *Baťovi muži*, Zlín 2012.
- Pokluda Z., *Baťa v kostce*, Zlín 2014.
- Salátová R., *Baťova knihovna ve Zlíně*, [in:] *Vliv sociálního programu Tomáše Bati a Jana Antonína Bati na vzdělanost ve zlínském regionu. Historická tradice a současnost*, Svatova Kašpárková et al., Brno 2010, p. 67–76.
- Szcepanik P., *Mediální výstavba „ideálního průmyslového města“: Síť médií v Baťově Zlíně 30. let*. [in:] *Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity, řada O 2*, Brno 2015, p. 23–66.
- Ševeček O., Jemelka M., *Tovární města Baťova koncernu. Evropská kapitola z dějin globální expanze*, Praha 2016.
- Ševeček O., *Zrození Baťovy průmyslové metropole. Továrna, městský prostor a společnost ve Zlíně v letech 1900–1938*, České Budějovice 2009.
- Vacková B., Galčanová L. *The Project Zlín. Everyday Life in a Meterialized Utopia*, "Urban People – lidé města" 2009, no. 2, p. 311–337.
- Valůšek D., *Tomáš Baťa a tisk*, [in:] *Tomáš Baťa: Doba a společnost*, ed. Marek Tomašík, Zlín – Brno 2007, p. 274–281.
- Vaňhara J., *Příběh jednoho muže a jednoho města*, Zlín 1994.
- Veselý V., *600 hesel*, Zlín 2016.

## Abstract

Baťa's Zlín represents a complex phenomenon that cannot be reduced to the business sphere only. It was, in essence, a modernist avant-garde project unique for its kind in the context of Central Europe in the first half of the 20th century. The Baťa shoemaking company very much influenced and determined nearly all of the events in this East Moravian town and the whole region itself, and it also had an idea of the forms and functions of artistic production. While in the field of architecture, urbanism and design, progressive artistic tendencies were strongly applied in the spirit of corporate philosophy, Baťa's taste in literature was, as it appeared on the pages of the company periodicals *Sdělení* and later in *Zlín* and in the production of publishing house Tisk Zlín, very conservative. Baťa encouraged his employees to develop reading literacy and self-study, founded a company library, but at the same time, books were considered in a sense of Czech National Revival as a means of educating, teaching, and cultivating workers. Literary works were to communicate clearly understandable and positive

messages; on the other hand, they were also supposed to entertain the readers and enable them to relax. Within the framework of the main newspapers published by the company, the Literary Patrol section with the recommendation of specific titles was included from the beginning, and also examples of fiction and non-literary texts were published in Baťa's press together with excerpts from manuals devoted to personal development. Especially in later years, much space was devoted to travel reports. In the mid-1920s, the company acquired a publishing and bookkeeping concession and began publishing its own publications. During the relatively short period of time, despite repeated calls the authors who would start creating Baťa bestsellers were nowhere to be found. Even J. A. Baťa appealed to writers to do this in his speech at the Writers' Congress held in Zlín in 1936, and he also tried to motivate them by having the company began to award literary and journalist prizes. But few original books could meet Bata's literary demands, and today we can only speculate how the situation would have developed if it had not been violently interrupted by historical events.

**Keywords:** Baťa, Culture, industry and media, Czechoslovakia 1918–1945, modernism and avantgarde