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## FROM HISTORICAL REALISM OF SILESIA TO POST-MODERN REALITY OF THE CZECH SILESIA

**ABSTRACT.** Regions' Europe! Global thinking and regional working!

Probably the most frequent two slogans accompanying the integration processes on the European continent at the end of the 2nd and beginning of the 3rd millennium. The author, based on the globally presented futurological vision of the couple Heidi and Alvin Toffler regarding the development of human history, renders a complex characteristic of changes of the Czech Silesia territory in the pre-industrialisation, industrialisation and post-industrialisation period. This conception is particularly important in studies of genius regionis not only of the Czech Silesia, but all the tent candidate countries aiming to be admitted to the EU. Sets of extraordinary properties and meanings characteristic for the individual countries, in which human activities get intertwined with the natural environment of these countries in a nonrecurring manner, are generalised by decisive civilisation waves.

**KEY WORDS:** historical realism of Silesia, pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial period.

### INTRODUCTION

The most southern offshoot of the historical Silesian country dashes into the northeastern part of the Czech Republic. Czech Silesia means that part of the unusually variable territory of Silesia, which in the past belonged to several state forms, now forming an integral part of the Czech Republic. "Silesia" is probably most discussed in connection with the nationality issue. It is however more important to pay attention to dynamics of the changes that during the course of time significantly marked and continue affecting the reality of life of the population of Czech Silesia.

## HISTORICAL REALISM OF SILESIA

At the times of prince Svatopluk (the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century) the territory was under the influence of Great Moravia. In the early Middle Ages this territory fell alternatively under the Czech and Polish state. Silesia was a part of the Czech state under prince Boleslav I (935–967) for the first time. His son Boleslav II (967–999) then fought for Silesia with the Polish prince Meschek I. Prince Bretislav I (1034–1055) re-seized a part of the territory again. The German Emperor Henry III, however, made him give up these conquests. The territory gradually crumbled into smaller units, while the germanising influence intensified.

In the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Silesia as a historical country formed in the river basin of the upper and central Odra, fell apart into the Upper and the Lower Silesia.

The Upper Silesia was subdivided into Opol, Bytom and Ratiboř areas. The Těšín Principality singled out with its first sovereign Meschko, son of Vladislav of Opol.

Lower Silesia crumbled into numerous territories. Opava area belonged to Moravia at the time, Premysl Otakar II, the Czech king, appointed his son Nicolas the sovereign of the royal estates in the Opava region. Nicolas became the founder of the Opava sovereign dynasty. Subdivision of the territory that was deemed to be the family property of the secondary branch of Premyslide house, resulted in the Opava Duchy, Krnov Duchy, and others. These were integrated into Silesia one by one. John the Luxembourg in 1327 contributed to political integration of Silesia by military expedition. Affiliation of the whole Silesia to the Czech Kingdom was accomplished in 1335.

Within the Austrian monarchy Silesia was the duchy and royal territory. Only the Prussian king Fridrich II seized almost the whole territory of Silesia in wars against the Austrian Empress Maria Theresia. According to the Vratislav peace treaty, only the Těšín Principality, southern part of Opava region, Krnov area and a part of Nýrsko area were left over to Austria. This territory roughly corresponds with definition of today's Czech Silesia.

Modern national consciousness in Silesia was born very hardly. After the First World War, the whole Silesia was divided again among Czechoslovakia, Poland and Germany. The Czechoslovak Silesia (formerly Austrian Silesia) formed one of the five countries of the new state. After 1927 it was integrated with Moravia to form the Moravian-Silesian Country. After 1920, the eastern Part of Těšín area fell to Poland, while the Czech Republic obtained the Hlučín area from Germany as a compensation.

During the Second World War, the whole Silesia was annexed by Germany. After 1945 the Czechoslovak state retained a part of Silesia in the range of the

pre-war period. This part of Silesia is therefore viewed in the Czech Republic as Czech Silesia too.

### WHAT WAS THE CONTRIBUTION OF PRE-INDUSTRIAL PERIOD TO CZECH SILESIA?

Slavonic agricultural and herdsman tribes came to the Czech Silesia during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century. During the initial colonisation hides were detached and agricultural farms developed. The land was not a subject to excessive division and the overall housing development was associated to a very mild extent only. The character of this colonisation conditioned the dominance of Silesian scattered development.

High quality of land in the Poopavská and Osoblažská Plains had typed the agricultural development of Czech Silesia. Poopavská Plain was rather a beet and wheat area, while Osoblažská Plain focused on beet and barley. To date, the neighbouring adjacent part of Silesia (Opole Region) speaks of "White Silesia" (according to the sugar called "white gold").

The eastern mountain part of Czech Silesia was colonised by Walachian settlers since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They created pastures in the mountains, later altered into small fields. The scattered character of the settlement development was supported by numerous detached buildings outside the villages. Water mills, hammer mills, saw mills and other workshops were situated in the valleys of Beskydy Mountains around the creeks and rivers.

Another reason for scattered development was a large number of towns with improving cloth-maker and linen-weaver craft production (especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> century). This production located at the foothills of the Beskydy Mountains between Frýdek and Jablunkov provided employment to numerous domestic workers and craftsmen. Country spinners produced linen thread and flax linen. Sheep breeding supported by the state together with supplies of sheep wool from remote areas of Poland and Hungary conditioned the development of wool industry especially in Opava and Těšín. Community development grew rapidly, hides were divided and minor agrarian farms developed too.

After the division of Silesia in 1742 Opava became the centre of the Austrian Silesia. It was the seat of sovereign offices and the country estate assembly had its session in the town. The Jesuit order was invited to Opava as early as in 1625. Some activities were developed under the Jesuit School on which the current Czech Silesia draws on (e.g. museum science, archival science). Numerous Silesian noblemen chose to live in this town. German population started prevailing in the town. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century Czechs formed only one seventh of the town population. Opava became a permanent cultural centre of Czech Silesia.

The oldest tradition in economic non-agricultural activities belonged to ore and mineral mining. The Middle-Age mining of precious metals (gold, silver) was followed by iron ores mining during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They were processed in Ludvíkov, Ondřejovice or around Jeseník or Bruntál. Iron ores in the Carpathian part of Czech Silesia were founded in Staré Hamry, Baška, Frýdlant nad Ostravicí and other iron-working centres at the foothills of the Beskydy Mountains.

However, absolutely fundamental moment was the discovery of bituminous coal in Silesian Ostrava in 1763, which typed the following period of industrial development, particularly in the eastern part of Czech Silesia.

### WHAT WAS THE CONTRIBUTION OF INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION TO CZECH SILESIA?

The onset of industrial revolution accentuated even more the scattered character of Silesian development, especially in the Ostrava Basin and adjacent Těšín Highland. Mining colonies founded since the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and new houses with small gardens and fields filled the areas between the original villages. The territory between Ostrava, Bohumín, Orlová, Karviná, Havířov, Třinec and Frýdek-Místek are therefore very specific until these day.

At the very beginning there was no big interest in the discovered bituminous coal in Silesian Ostrava (charcoal production in Moravian-Silesian Beskydy Mountains), but as soon as in the 1930 bituminous coal became a very precious raw material for the development of industrial works. There are about 180 coal seams in the Ostrava measure, in this about 100 suitable to be exploited. In the Karviná part there are about 46 mostly exploitable seams.

In 1828 an industrial metallurgical work was founded in Vítkovice (Rudolf Metallurgical Works – today's engineering works of Vítkovice, a.s.). Implementation of coke as a power raw material in pig iron founding in blast furnaces resulted in increasing consumption of coal, i.e. opening of new bituminous coal mines, too.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the greatest part of the population of eastern Czech Silesia found sources of living mostly in industrial and mining activities. Industrial revolution emphasized the coal mining and iron industry, and engineering production in the region. Therefore, at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Ostrava became the most populous place of the industrial conurbation (former Moravian Ostrava and Polish Ostrava).

Thousands of young people from near and remote background of Czech Silesia came to the Ostrava Region to find work. New housings were built near the metallurgical works and coal mines, which influenced the settlement, nationality and social structure of the inhabitants.

Extremely turbulent industrial development (bituminous coal mining, iron metallurgy, heavy engineering, power industry, chemical industry, etc.) during

two centuries resulted in a significant impact on the life of population of the eastern part of Czech Silesia. Huge growth of job opportunities in the Ostrava Region resulted in several waves of increased immigration and growth in number of population of Czech Silesia.

The developing Ostrava conurbation experienced a rapid growth of population both in towns and country municipalities, with resulting change in orientation of the population on job opportunities in prevailing industries.

In the western part of Czech Silesia, specifically in Krnov, Bruntál and Jeseník Regions, textile industry continued keeping its dominant significance long after the onset of industrial revolution. There was a significant share of excavation and treatment of stone and slates, linen growing with ensuring textile activity, potato growing in mountain agriculture, and the like.

Space relationships and bindings among individual social and economic activities completely clouded the historical border between Czech Silesia and Moravia. This historical experience substantially influences further development visions for the north-eastern part of the Czech Republic.

### WHAT IS THE CONTRIBUTION OF POST-MODERN REALITY TO CZECH SILESIA?

Current reality of the Czech Silesian population is not pleasant at all. During the 1990s there was and continues to survive the prevailing idea of necessary reduction of production and necessity to build D47 motorway as the decisive phenomenon that will allow for vital transformation of this largely urbanized and industrialized territory.

Justification of these ideas themselves is beyond discussion. It is however a mere immediate response to the non-complex development of the territory lasting for more than one and half century.

While in the industrialization period the raw materials located and excavated in Czech Silesia (particularly bituminous, very close-burning coal but also construction raw materials and the like) and labour of strongly concentrated population in Ostrava Basic were the basic production factors in the Czech Silesia, after 1989 these over-dimensioned production factors lost all their development efficiency.

By contrast, knowledge either in a form of data resources, progressive information networks, culture, territorial development philosophy and humanist, post-modern perceived social values were lacking, and worse more, until now it has not been felt as a priority that in long-run time horizon may bring a real transformation effect.

It is a real fact that the old production halls and mining buildings disappear, numerous machines (very often obsolete) were removed, but there are many

people understanding transformation, besides production "reduction", as a mere "modernisation of industrial machinery fleet".

The ability to obtain, generate, distribute and apply knowledge from the current scientific knowledge of the advanced world is missing.

The long-term one-sided orientation of industrial landscape is showing too much, moreover in terms of substantially changed current geographical position of the Czech Silesia territory.

There is no significant need to focus on and identify oneself with the archetypes of Silesian cultural landscape either. Social need to study genius loci of the towns and country municipalities or genius regionis of microregional units or newly formed macroregional units is imperceptible.

Therefore, it is impossible to orient sufficiently in dynamically changing internal and external cohesion processes. This knowledge, however, is the crucial condition for starting of the measures that can result in positive effects on a long-term basis.

Organisational schemes both in production and non-production sector are extremely burdened with industrial development systems (hierarchic structures, functionally non-diminishing bureaucracy). The ongoing restructuring is seldom based on process principles. This results in small growth of social development plans, joint ventures, joint research projects, and the like. The solution for the continuously growing unemployment is almost monofunctionally connected with the increase in the number of job opportunities. The quality aspect of this social phenomenon has been absolutely underestimated. However, those activities are the crucial key for the development of Czech Silesia, in which the amount and complexity of intellectual work are the decisive factors. To achieve this, it is necessary to change completely the philosophy of transformation of more widely conceived territory.

## CONCLUSIONS

The continuously growing system complexity of the territory (which does not apply to Czech Silesia only) requires completely new attitudes to system integrations.

It would be non-functional and insignificant for the landscape development perceived in a post-modern way to return to national Silesian feeling or other activities that created the plastic picture or symbols of this landscape in the industrial past.

Besides, there is a generally well-known phrase that you cannot enter the same river twice. It is however extremely topical and progressive to perceive the area of Czech Silesia under the new conditions, in new geographic, political, economic, cultural, social and other relationships.

The need of extraordinarily high level of system integration of Czech Silesia at the Czech-Polish frontier is the crucial task of the present. Certain attempts accompanying this period of time have been made already (e.g. "Těšín Silesia – Śląsk Cieszyński" Euroregion).

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