

Abstract

The text of the publication is divided into five chapters, of which the first four are dedicated to literary autobiographies of Ota Filip and Horst Bienek. The Introduction contains notes about the importance of the personal reminiscences of writers and people with no literary ambitions, but who also felt the need to share their memories of the '30s and '40s of the last century. The Introduction also includes remarks quoted from Michaela Peroutková about the importance of understanding the past and the principle of oral history. The same author also mentions the importance of the fictional processing of the fates of individuals, set against the background of historical events.

The fifth chapter contains memoirs by Frank Sikora, Eva Althammer-Švorčíková, Hubert Sigmund, and Gerold Tietz. These authors wrote their memoirs when at an advanced age, in order to preserve memories of the turbulent '30s and '40s of the last century. Gerold Tietz is the only member of this group who we can characterise as a professional literary author. He was already retired when he began writing, but he produced four books, not all of which are autobiographical.

The first chapter provides a brief introduction to Ota Filip and Horst Bienek. Filip came from Silesian Ostrava, in today's North Moravian region, which borders on the former region of Upper Silesia. He was born into a middle-class family in the year 1930. Bienek came from Hlívce (in German Gleiwitz, in Polish Gliwice), which now lies in Poland. He was born in the same year as Filip, into a lower-middle-class family. Earlier this town belonged to the predominantly German-speaking ethnic enclave in Upper Silesia. The two authors developed a friendly relationship in the '60s.

The second chapter, *Family Environment*, reflects the view of Filip on his childhood and youth in Ostrava through the main character of his first or, as it has been called, Ostrava novel *Journey to the Cemetery*. Jan is introduced to the outside world in the café of his father, frequented by guests of all sorts of nationalities, political or religious affiliations, and social origins. Filip likewise got to know it through his father, who was the proprietor of a café in the centre of Moravian Ostrava. The multicultural environment of Ostrava in the '30s is testified to by data on the political scene, with Czech and German parties and one Jewish party and the existence of Czech, Slovak, Polish, and German periodicals. First, there is a brief presentation of the cultural situation in Ostrava against the background of disputes between the Czech and

German theatres and the rich Czech, German, and Polish social activities, with particular reference to Radovan Lipus.

This chapter also deals with the multicultural situation in Upper Silesia, or rather in Gliwice, in the Hlivity Tetralogy (or, in German, Gleiwitzer Tetralogie) of Horst Bienek. This author, like Filip, also partly identifies with the protagonists of his novels. His parents had a good command of the German and Polish languages, and although the author did not inherit this bilingualism of theirs, his literary character moves naturally through this linguistically mixed environment. This chapter also discusses the history and present of the historic region of Upper Silesia and provides information on political and ethnic representation in Hlivity and the cultural situation of the city in the early 20th century.

The third chapter, *Childhood and Youth in Wartime*, is largely dedicated to reflection on Ota Filip's autobiographical novel *Seventh Biography*, in which the author recalls that his father forced him to move from a Czech school to a German one. The author continues to perceive this as a deeply traumatic experience even now. A multilingual environment was not unfamiliar to him and he was able to communicate in simple German through children's street games, but that was not enough in the school environment, and thus he became a target for the ridicule of his classmates and some teachers who were sympathetic to Nazism.

The author's childhood and youth are also the topic of his second Ostrava novel, *The Ascension of Lojzek Lapáček from Silesian Ostrava*. The main character, Lojzek, is closely associated with the football team F.C. Silesian Ostrava as the son of one of its officials. The plot of the novel begins in the '30s, when ethnic and political tensions between the Czech, German, Polish, and Jewish ethnic groups begin to manifest themselves. Filip does not neglect to deal with the complicated ethnic situation in the nearby Hlučínsko region. The historiographical essays of V. Pláček are cited in connection with this highly individual region. The multicultural situation in Silesian and Moravian Ostrava is discussed, mainly on the basis of the works of K. Jiřík and B. Pitronová. Until 1919 Silesian Ostrava was known as Polish Ostrava, and so the text also mentions the tendencies to Polonisation which culminated in the occupation of the Těšínsko region by the Polish army in the year 1938.

In his second Ostrava novel Filip also pays attention to the persecution of the Jewish population, represented in the book by the widow Preisová and her son. The enterprise which she inherited from her husband is expropriated, a situation which the bankrupt Czech businessman Pastrňák skilfully exploits.

Like the author, the literary character Lojzek has a problem identifying with the "mission" of the Hitler Youth organisation, into which he was enrolled by his father. It expresses itself

mainly in the deployment of a section of this organisation in the battle for Ostrava. Lojzek's commander is not sure whether his subordinate sympathises with the Germans or their opponents. This confrontation is a result of the author's storytelling.

In his Hlivity novels Horst Bienek identifies with several literary figures. In the first part of the Hlivity Tetralogy, *Die erste Polka* (The First Polka), the author identified with a boy from Hlivity, Josel, and his cousin from Breslau (in Polish Wrocław), Andreas, who represents a view of Upper Silesia from the point of view of "observers" from other areas. The novel is set on the day of a wedding, when Josel's sister Irma marries a soldier in the German army, who then goes to war. The wedding actually takes place at the beginning of the Second World War and the wedding guest Andreas happens accidentally to witness the assault on the radio transmitter in Hlivity during the night of August 31 to September 1, 1939.

In the second novel of the Hlivity Tetralogy, *Septemberlicht* (September Light), Bienek, among other things, shows the perception of the conflict as a means of redressing historical 'wrongs' when, under the influence of propaganda, the character Tonik volunteers for the German army in order for Germany to recover the part of Upper Silesia which it lost after the Third Polish Uprising in 1921, when the area was divided into German and Polish parts.

In this text there also appears a young man, Janosch, with orders to join the German army. However, he has relatives in the Polish part of Upper Silesia and cannot imagine that he should fight against them.

The third part of the Hlivity Tetralogy, *Zeit ohne Glocken* (Time Without Bells) takes place, like the first part, on one day, Good Friday in 1943, when the Hlivity church bells were removed. The local priest deliberately chose this day to protest against using bells as material for weapons production.

The Hlivity Tetralogy also depicts the persecution of the local Jews through the characters of Georg Montag and Arthur Silbergleit, both of whom have a basis in reality.

The last part of the Hlivity Tetralogy, *Erde und Feuer* (Earth and Fire), describes the end of the war and the flight and later expulsion of the ethnic Germans from Upper Silesia. In the battle for Hlivity members of the Hitler Youth with anti-tank weapons are deployed against the troops of the Soviet army. They include the literary character Kotik, who, unlike his comrades, does not believe in the ultimate victory of the German army and views the effectiveness of their use against tanks in a similarly sceptical way.

The subject matter of the third chapter about Horst Bienek is based on research from Bienek's secondary text on the Hlivity Tetralogy, *Beschreibung einer Province* (Description of a Province), in which the author returns to the circumstances of the Hlivity novels and mentions

the archival resources with which he worked, responds to his compatriots who had read the books in the tetralogy, and mentions other memories of his childhood and youth in Gliwice. The tetralogy is considered an attempt at a “reconstruction of the province” he had to leave in 1946. Further quotations and research findings come mainly from the monographs by M. Krüger and T. Urbach.

The fourth chapter, *The Postwar Period*, focuses on the reflections of the time in Filip’s fictional works *Journey to the Cemetery* and *Seventh Autobiography* and also the collected journalistic writings ... *doch die Märchen sprechen Deutsch. Geschichten aus Böhmen* (...And Yet Fairy Tales Speak German. Stories from Bohemia). Filip saw the excesses of the Revolutionary Guards in Prague, where he moved with his mother and younger brother at the end of the war. The main theme of this chapter is thus the wild evacuation and subsequent organised evacuation of the ethnic Germans. In the novel *The Ascension of Lojzek Lapáček from Silesian Ostrava* the author mentions in this context the premises of the entrepreneur Pastrňák’s company in the centre of Moravian Ostrava, which functioned as an internment camp for the Ostrava Germans after the liberation. It is an obvious allusion to the Hanke camp in Ostrava, where there were many excesses, as in other such facilities in Bohemia and Moravia. The research on the expulsions and Czech wartime collaboration draws on the work of the following authors: Michaela Peroutková, A. v. Arburg, T. Staněk, D. Brandes, M. Sládek, and others. Mention is also made of other postwar acts of violence, carried out by the Revolutionary Guards, guerrilla groups, and the Czechoslovak and Red Armies in Stachovice, near Fulnek, and in Vráž and Tušt.

The postwar period is mainly represented by the last novel in Bienek’s Hlivická Tetralogy, *Erde und Feuer* (Earth and Fire), in which most of the characters of German origin have to face the dilemma of whether to flee the rapidly approaching Soviet army or stay at home. One of the two families (the Piontek family), around which the main storyline is concentrated, flees from the Soviets and the second (the Ossadnik family) remains. The Pionteks experience the chaos caused by Nazi propaganda, which claims that the German army will soon stop the Soviet advance, and the Ossadnik family watch with surprise as German officers and senior NSDAP officials flee from Hlvice, but consider the efforts of others to follow them to be desertion. The situation remains just as dramatic after the occupation of the city by the Red Army, because men aged 16 to 50 years are dragged away to perform forced labour in the Soviet Union. Other ethnic Germans are deported to Germany, and their abandoned homes are taken over by citizens of Polish origin who have been expelled from the eastern region of Poland occupied by the Soviets. During these mass migratory movements,

which are difficult to control, numerous excesses occur, as in Czechoslovakia. Space is also devoted in this chapter to the life of the German minority in Poland in the '90s of the 20th century and the situation is compared with that in Bohemia.

There is also discussion of Bienek's arrest in 1951 and the subsequent trial on trumped-up charges that resulted in his being sentenced to twenty-five years of hard labour in Siberia, from where he returned in 1955. The research in this section draws on the works of the following authors: G. Knopp, A. Petersen, A. Hofmann, Aleksandra Trzcielinska-Polus, T. Urbach, and M. Krüger.

The fourth chapter also contains a shorter passage, *The Loss of Ota Filip's Homeland*, which discusses the author's forced relocation to the German Federal Republic, which was the result of his persecution by Czechoslovak State Security. In addition to Filip, works by M. Faryara, R. Cornejo, W. Schmitz, and A. Kliemsová were also researched for this part of the work.

The fifth chapter, *Other Authors*, includes less extensive discussion about Frank Sikora, Eva Althammer-Švorčíková, Hubert Sigmund, and Gerold Tietz. At the beginning of this chapter it is mentioned that these authors belong to the so-called literature about "expulsion" or "deportees" or literature about "the homeland". This terminology was taken from works by P. Eliášová, L. F. Helbig, and P. Becher.

Als Deutscher unterwegs. Gelebte Zeitgeschichte (As a German Travelling. Experiencing History), the memoirs of Frank Sikora, a German from Moravian Ostrava, focus first on his childhood and youth, which he spent in the Jablunkovsko region and in Ostrava and Litoměřice. Unlike Filip and Bienek, he was proud of his membership of the Hitler Youth and later joined the German army as a volunteer. In his memoirs, however, he also captured the national situation in the Těšín and Ostrava regions, as well as in Litoměřice. After the war Sikora became a West German diplomat, and thus provided in his book authentic testimony about the views on the new German state in the countries of Western and Eastern Europe where he worked. In this section, there is also a comparison with *So etwa ...* (Just About ...), the memoirs of Christl Lanz, who spent his childhood and youth in Komorní Lhotka and Třinec.

Eva Althammer-Švorčíková is the oldest of the authors covered in the fifth chapter. In her memoir *Czechs are actually quite nice...* she recalls her childhood and teenage years in Cheb, Linz, Děčín, and Prague, where she graduated in German and Slavic Studies from the German Charles-Ferdinand University. She studied with, among others, Herbert Cysarz and Franz Spina. This passage is supplemented with information on the development of Czech and German education, German and Czech social life, and the political situation in the Czech lands from the '90s of the 19th century to the '30s of the 20th century. The research for this section

draws on the following authors: A. Arburg, T. Staněk, V. Kural, C. Kučera, Michaela Peroutková, M. Sládek, and D. Krywalski.

The memoirs of Hubert Sigmund, *The House in Štecherová Street. Memoirs of a Childhood Full of Change in the period 1938-1948* (*Das Haus in der Stechergasse. Erinnerungen an eine von Kindheit wechselvolle 1938-1948*) introduce us to the artist's birthplace, Most. He came from a German family that established a positive relationship with its Czech fellow-townpeople, so in the text we find evidence of the lives of both these ethnic groups. The author shows how normal Czech-German relations changed dramatically with the rise of the National Socialists to power and the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. He subsequently provides an eyewitness account from Most of the excesses of the Revolutionary Guards and Czechoslovak and Soviet soldiers against German civilians in the postwar period. The research in this section draws on the works of A. Arburg, T. Staňek, S. Scholl-Schneiderová, V. Kural, Michaela Peroutková, and J. Padevět.

Gerold Tietz is the youngest author to be dealt with in the fifth chapter; he was born into a Sudeten German family in the small village of Horka in North Bohemia in 1941. His memories of the war are therefore largely inauthentic, but in his autobiographical novels he uses memories of the tales told him of his forebears to shed light on this period. In his debut novel *Böhmische Fuge* (Bohemian Fugue), the author describes the fate of a Sudeten German family in North Bohemia, starting from when the Nazis came to power, through the war and the time of the wild expulsions, and up to the integration into German society of those who had been expelled.

Tietz's next novel, *Böhmisches Richtfest* (Bohemian Topping Ceremony), is actually a continuation of the previous one, in which once again he deals with the theme of the wild evacuation as he experienced it as a small child, the issue of the integration of the Sudeten expellees in Germany, and the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army in 1968. His last novel, *Bohmische Grätschen* (Czech Straddels), contains his reflections on his visit to his relatives in the Czech Republic after 1989 and their memories of the '30s and '40s. This part draws on research done on works by the following authors: V. Tuckerová, V. Plaček, Z. Radvanovský, and K. Bachoríková.

The conclusion of the monograph is devoted to issues of authenticity and books of an autobiographical character. Another theme is the wild evacuation and expulsion of the Germans from Czechoslovakia and Czech collaboration with the Nazi regime. Space is also devoted to looking at the literature published after 1989 that is dedicated to the documentation of Czech-German relations and research into these, documentary films, and the reflection of these

relationships in Czech social and political life. The research for this part draws on the works of Ota Filip, Horst Bienek, A. Petersen, V. Mlynář, Michaela Peroutková, and T. Staňek.