



**The international conference  
“Company Towns of the Baťa Concern”**

**24.—25. March 2011, Prague**

FILOSOFICKÝ ÚSTAV AV ČR



INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY



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The business activities of the Batà concern have not been afforded due attention in the historiography of economic and social history, despite the fact that the concern's individual companies, which operated in many countries around the world starting in the interwar period, undoubtedly ranked among the pioneering enterprises of a new industry based on mass production of consumer goods. The attention that these progressive enterprises garnered in their time was not based merely on their economic success, but mainly on the very specific quality of their development and on the comprehensive business model that had gradually formed at the Batà concern. This model consisted not only in introducing the newest organisational and production processes, but also in the wide use of new methods in the areas of modern management and employee welfare. Moreover, the concern's business strategy vis-à-vis its employees was directed at creating a remarkably comprehensive industrial way of life and work that was incorporated into the framework of social space in the towns which the company built. These towns can be considered a certain highly modernist version of model factory settlements (i.e. communities striving for social reconciliation between industrial capital and the workforce), which have existed in various forms and permutations since the initial phases of industrialisation. In the context of the period it is possible to consider this as a type of industrial arrangement inspired by the large American enterprises which were developing the model of welfare capitalism, according to which employees were to be compensated for some of the negative impacts connected with the introduction of rationalised production (assembly lines) through improvements in the social sphere. In the case of the Batà enterprise this basic aspect of the company was also supported by more traditional paternalism and followed from a long tradition of reform-oriented business policies, which were very often connected with the construction of housing estates for workers. Starting in the interwar period, a peculiar form of housing was systematically built in the vicinity of the Batà production plants in which progressive industrial innovations derived from Fordism and Taylorism were applied comprehensively and became firmly established. At the very centre in the minds of these housing estates' creators was the “factory”. It was not only viewed as the substantive element of the modern economic system, but also as the main entity upon which the entire project of modern progress and the associated new industrial culture were based. The Batà company not only implemented changes in the areas of technology and management, but it also made an exceptionally interesting attempt at creating a particular model of industrial life and culture that would chime in harmony with modern production practices.



At the end of the 1930s and based on experience acquired during the building of Zlín (i.e. the place where the company was founded and where its headquarters were located for many years) and other localities established in the interwar period in various countries around the world, the concern developed an explicit formulation of its own model of industrial business based on the broader concept of the “industrial town”. This concept, among others, was summarised in a company publication of more than 600 pages called *Průmyslové město* (Industrial Town) which came out in 1939. Through its comprehensive and detailed approach to the development of the new industry as well as its immediate link to Ford’s production system, the book presents what is in many ways a unique enterprise in the planning of industrial towns during the first half of the twentieth century. In this respect the conference theme undoubtedly also has more general relevance in relation to certain issues and problems addressed by period historiography which extend beyond business history in the narrow sense. The concept of “industrial town” is also an important point of departure for research on the history of the Baťa concern, as it is in a certain sense symptomatic of the core of the Baťa industrial model and is one of the major interpretive frameworks which can substantially contribute to our understanding of this issue.

It is evident from the above description that the conference theme of “Company Towns of the Baťa Concern” extends in its very formulation beyond the scope of economic and social history and business history, the perspectives of which the conference organisers emphasise in their own research. With this in mind, the conference also invites contributions by researchers in other fields and research specialisations, and thus aims to provide a stage for developing various perspectives and approaches to the topic. Contributions from the areas of architecture and urban planning, sociology, economics and cultural studies are especially welcome. One of the conference’s objectives is to help create a discussion platform and develop necessary communication between Czech and foreign researchers working on the issue of Baťa company towns or related topics. It is expected that the open nature of the conference will allow for a more objective assessment of our current understanding of the issue, not only from the point of view of relevant research fields and topics, but also from the perspective of reflection on and elaboration of the topic in individual countries. Based on this, it will be surely possible to formulate future research priorities in certain fields.

**Possible topics may (but need not) address these areas:**

- company towns of the Baťa concern (or the Baťa model of the “industrial town”) as viewed by various disciplines (history of architecture and urban planning, sociology, etc.),
- the present state of our understanding of the issue (individual countries / locations / fields of research),
- clarification of specific issues and problems connected with economic / social / production and operating conditions which led the concern to establish company towns at home and abroad,
- the development of individual locations (in particular construction, social and economic development, how successful they were in establishing themselves in various environments, the present state of these locations),
- comparative contributions (comparisons with other industrial towns and projects, mutual comparisons of individual locations).



**The main output of the conference will be a collective monograph composed of contributions selected on the basis of a review process.**

## **To apply for the conference**

Send your conference application (title of your contribution, 250-300 word abstract, and a brief academic CV) to [tmbk11@gmail.com](mailto:tmbk11@gmail.com) **no later than 15 September 2010**. All proposals for contributions will be subjected to a review process. Applicants will be notified of the results of the review process **by 15 October 2010**.

*(In the event that you will not be able to participate in the conference but are interested in having your contribution published in the collective monograph, please follow the same guidelines and state this fact in your correspondence with the organisers).*

The official languages of the conference are Czech and English (contributions may be presented in a different language by prior arrangement with the organisers).

## **Venue**

Academic Conference Centre, Jilská 1, Prague 1

*(The entrance to the conference centre is from Husova street no. 6, Prague 1.)*

## **Organisers**

Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

Department of Social Sciences, VŠB – Technical University of Ostrava

Centre for Economic and Social History, Ostrava University in Ostrava

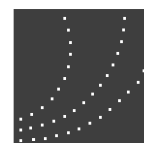
## **Representatives of the organisers**

PhDr. Martin Jemelka, PhD., VŠB – TU Ostrava

PhDr. Ondřej Ševeček, PhD., Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

**Should you have questions, please contact: [sevecek@flu.cas.cz](mailto:sevecek@flu.cas.cz).**

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