

**A RED TOWN?
TŘEBÍČ WORKERS BETWEEN BATAISM AND COMMUNISM**

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Abstract

In this thesis I argue that the relationships between the local working class and the Baťa company underwent a dynamic change during the 1930s in the Czech town of Třebíč, which can be characterized as an industrial town with a strong working-class tradition. I identify the character of the local working-class movement as a communist one and analyze its parts, activities and spatial distribution and analyze the Baťa company actions and approaches in Třebíč as well as different types of relationships between the Baťa company and the workers of Třebíč. In the first three years of the 1930s, these relationships had a highly conflictual character and were shaped by the economic crisis, restructuration of the production in the factory and the strong position of the local Communist party. Later on, with the improvement of the economic conditions and a renewal of the production in the factory, the Baťa company became more and more acculturated into the local society. This development was also connected to the change in the tactics of the Communist party, which in the period of the Popular front tactic became less confrontational. The success of the Baťa company May Day celebrations demonstrates the company's beginning dominance over the town in the second half of the 1930s. However, the 1938 May Day celebrations, which were connected with a demonstration for the Czechoslovak republic facing the threat of Nazi Germany, once again showed the strong roots of the local culture of protest, connected to the working-class movement.

Acknowledgement Page

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my great-grandmother, a worker in the Baťa factory, and to my great-grandfather, a worker and a communist, arrested for distribution of communist leaflets in 1931.

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List of Abbreviations

a.s. – Akciová spoločnosť [Joint-stock company]

JPT– Jednota proletárske telesovej výchovy [Union of the proletariat physical education]

KSČ– Komunistická strana Československa [Communist party of Czechoslovakia]

MZA – Moravský zemský archiv [Moravian land archive]

SK – Sportovní klub [Sport club]

SOkA – Státní okresní archiv [State district archive]

SSP – Spartakovi skauti práce [Spartacus scouts of work]

SSSR – Svaz Sovětských Socialistických Republik [USSR]

1. Introduction

“... After that, the elections came. Once, the director of the leather shops Tuša called me to his office and asked me what my political views are. I told him I am a socialist because I am a worker. He told me to be more specific, that there are Social Democrats, National Socialists and Christian Socialists. When I told him, I see no difference in them, he said that therefore I will go with them¹. I had no idea what he was talking about until he told me to come to the elections meeting when the Zlín boys come². My head was spinning, and I had to say that I will go with them. In the evening I opened up to Polda Pokorný.³ He told me that the best way could be to pretend sickness. The whole day before the meeting I was walking helplessly and, in the evening, I got the idea to shove my hands into acid. I did that until my skin eroded and then I went to the doctor, and I showed my bandaged hands, and I was happy that I avoided the meeting. I had no idea that A. Věžník⁴ was watching me behind the barrels and had nothing else to do but to tell them.⁵ When I came back after two weeks, Mr. Malý waited for me in the dressing room, and I got fired. I couldn't get a job for two years.”⁶

While the story recounted here is an extreme case, it is a telling example of the relationship between the Baťa company and members of the Communist party in interwar Czechoslovakia. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Baťa company were fierce ideological opponents. They however lacked opportunities for direct confrontation, as Communist strongholds like the city of Kladno were far away from Baťa's city Zlín, where the

¹ „Them“ meaning Bataist workers getting ready to break up a communist meeting.

² „Zlín boys“ were boxers from Baťa sport club, brought to Třebíč to fight the Communists.

³ Local communist activist and functionary of the Communist youth and sport organizations.

⁴ Beránek's coworker, loyal Bataist worker.

⁵ Management of the company.

⁶ “Jan Beránek Memoirs,” n.d., fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 49, ič. 529, SOKA Třebíč.

Communist party lacked any real influence. This situation changed in 1931, when the Baťa company purchased the former Budischowsky & Sohne shoe and leather making factory in Třebíč. Soon after, Baťa started to impose significant changes into the organization of the production in the factory. This however met with a severe backlash, especially from a strong local branch of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. However not every local worker was a Communist, willing to take actions against the Baťa company. There was a number of workers, who welcomed the opportunities provided by Baťa and took part in its efforts and an even greater number of workers just tried to survive in the harsh conditions of the Great Depression.

This thesis focuses on the response of different local actors in the town of Třebíč, namely the working class and the working-class movement, municipality and local bourgeoisie, and the Baťa company, to the realities of the Great Depression and emergence of questions of rationalization, Taylorism and Fordism in the local production. It also explores the relationships between these actors, with an emphasis on the relationships between the local working-class movement and the Baťa company. The thesis is rooted in the new scholarship on the history of labor, with overlaps to industrial history and the history of capitalism.

1.1 Historical Context

The processes described and analyzed in this thesis took place in the context of the interwar Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak republic was founded in 1918 as a result of the Entente powers victory in a World War I and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, mostly as a Czech nationalist project. It had a population of circa 13-14 million inhabitants and while it was constructed as a Czech-dominated and to some extent Czech-Slovak nation state,

it was a multiethnic state with number of different ethnicities and nationalities. Czechoslovakia consisted of the formerly Austrian regions of Bohemia, Moravia and Austrian Silesia and of the formerly Hungarian regions of Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia.

The Czechs formed just around the 50% of the population of the new state. In 1921, there was 6,6 million Czechs, 3,1 million Germans, 2 million Slovaks, 750 000 Hungarians, 460 000 Ruthenians and 180 000 Jews⁷ living in Czechoslovakia, as well as thousands of Poles, Roma people, Russians and others. In order to strengthen the position as a state nation and to legitimate the incorporation of Slovakia, a concept of a one Czechoslovak nation, consisting of a Czech branch and Slovak branch was constructed. While the Czech and Slovak languages are closely related and mutually understandable, the Czechs and Slovaks never formed one political entity before the establishment of Czechoslovakia.⁸ The Czechoslovak elites understood that the nationality question is an important one for the survival of Czechoslovakia and decided to deal with it via minority protection laws and rights, especially those concerning education and culture. The state was however strongly centralized and thinking about possible autonomy of some regions and nations was only done in the final months of its existence in 1938 and 1939. Another problematic point of the nationality question was, that the Czech society saw the minority rights as a generous gift, rather than a bare minimum necessary for the coexistence in one state.⁹

Czech lands were historically the most industrialized part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Czechoslovakia inherited roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Austrian industry but only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the population. And while the Czech industry in the Austro-Hungarian empire was focused on the

⁷ This is the number of people who declared their nationality as Jewish, while there were also many more Jewish people declaring Czech, German, Hungarian or Slovak nationality.

⁸ Adam Hudek, Michal Kopeček, Jan Mervart eds. *Čechoslovakismus* (Praha: NLN, 2019).

⁹ Andrej Tóth, Lukáš Novotný, Michal Stehlík, *Národnostní menšiny v Československu 1918–1938: Od státu národního ke státu národnostnímu?* (Praha: FF UK, 2012).

inner imperial market, the Czechoslovak economy had to become an export focused industrial one. This export orientation brought great problems in the times of the Great Depression, when isolationism and protectionist tariffs hurt Czechoslovak export and therefore the economy strongly. Most of the industry was situated in the western part of the country, in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, huge percentage, especially of the consumer industry, was in the predominantly German speaking areas. The German speaking areas were also those that were hit the hardest by the economic crisis of the 1930s. There were huge differences between the Czech lands, Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia in the economic sense, as the Czech lands were predominantly industrial and Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia agricultural. The west and east of the country were also not economically and infrastructurally connected, as both parts were previously focused on their respective imperial centers, Vienna and Budapest.¹⁰ What also made the coalescence of the formerly Austrian and formerly Hungarian part of Czechoslovakia difficult were different legal systems in each part of the state.

While this thesis focuses on the internal context of Czechoslovakia, the international situation must not be overlooked as it influenced the inner political, economic and social life of Czechoslovakia immensely. Czechoslovakia was formed as a part of a Versailles system and was dependent on its stability. The most important relationships of Czechoslovakia were those with France, who was however over the time losing interest in the central and eastern Europe, and with the so-called Little Entente. The little Entente was an alliance of Yugoslavia, Romania and Czechoslovakia, aimed primarily against Hungary. It was however losing its dynamics in the 1930s, with changes of regimes in Yugoslavia and Romania and with German interfering. Czechoslovakia had a difficult relationship with almost all its neighbors and led wars with

¹⁰ Eduard Kubů, Jaroslav Pátek, *Mýtus a realita hospodářské vyspělosti Československa mezi světovými válkami* (Praha: Karolinum, 1999).

Poland over Těšín region in 1919 and with Hungary in 1918 and 1919 over Slovakia. The most troubled relationship was however the one with Germany, especially after 1933. The struggles of Czechoslovakia with Germany, primarily concerning the German minority in Czechoslovakia, together with many other reasons¹¹ resulted in Munich agreement of 1938 and finally occupation of the Czech lands in 1939.¹²

The particular space of this thesis is a town of Třebíč. Třebíč lies in western Moravia, 50 km west from Brno and 140 km north from Vienna. It was founded in 1101 around a Benedictine monastery and served as an important regional center ever since. Since the Middle Ages, it was also a center of crafts, especially leathermaking and weaving. While weaving vanished in the beginning of the 19th century, some of the leathermaking and shoemaking craftsmen went successfully through the process of industrialization.¹³ Several factories emerged from this process, like Subak factory or Hassek factory. The most important one was however Budischowsky factory, that eventually became one of the biggest shoes and leather producer in Cisleithania.¹⁴ The rapid industrialization of the town in the second half of the 19th century brought an increase in the number of workers in town. In late 19th century, out of 12000 inhabitants of Třebíč around 4500 were workers. While most of the workers worked in the factories, there was also a big number of so called “štukverkáři”, home workers dependent on the factories, producing practically in a putting-out system.¹⁵

Local workers started to struggle for their emancipation and turned to self-organization in the 1880s. Contacts with Vienna, as an industrial as well as socialist center

¹¹ See Jan Tesař, *Mnichovský Komplex* (Praha: Prostor, 2000).

¹² Zbyněk Zeman, *Edvard Beneš: Politický životopis* (Praha: Mladá fronta, 2009).

¹³ Jan Janák, *Dějiny Města Třebíče II.* (Brno: Blok, 1981).

¹⁴ Jaroslav Mejzlík, *Dějiny Závodů Gustava Klimenta v Třebíči-Borovině* (Třebíč: Závody Gustava Klimenta, 1972).

¹⁵ Boleslav Šmejkal, “Vstupování Dělnického Hnutí Do Veřejného Prostoru: Třebíč Na Přelomu 19. a 20. století” (Unpublished BA thesis, Praha, Univerzita Karlova, 2019), <https://is.cuni.cz/webapps/zzp/detail/202043/>. Accessed on 13.4.2021.

were crucial for this process. Many Třebíč workers spent some time working in Vienna and getting acquainted with the working-class movement, some of them inspired by the radicalism of Johann Most. Such inspirations manifested themselves in the first mass public action of workers of Třebíč, the riots of 1885, in support of a detained working-class activist.¹⁶ After these initial events, several working-class organizations started to emerge. *Dělnická beseda* (Worker's Club), connected to the ideas of the Social Democratic party, was founded in 1888 as cultural and educational society. It covertly pursued political and economic activities and was an organizational center of numerous strikes and demonstrations, as well as theater plays, lectures and dance balls. Because of the *Dělnická beseda's* activity, Třebíč became the regional center of the working-class movement in the 1890s. At the same time, a trade union movement was emerging and gaining success in Třebíč, as it became one of the most important shoemaking trade union centers in Austria.¹⁷

Because of the traditional connection to Vienna, the majority of the local movement joined the centralists in the split of the Czech Social Democratic party in 1910. In this split, the centralists defended internationalism against Czech nationalism and supported strong, centralized trade union leadership in Vienna.¹⁸ Dormant during the first years of World War I, the local working-class movement played an important role on the local level in the establishment of Czechoslovak republic. After the split in the Social Democratic Party in 1920/1921, most of the local social democrats joined the newly established Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The Communists managed to retain significant influence over local politics as well as the local working class during the whole interwar period, usually finishing second or

¹⁶ Jan Janák, "Procesy s Třebíčskými Socialisty v r. 1885," *Vlastivědný Věstník Moravský* 17, no. 1 (1965).

¹⁷ Šmejkal, "Vstupování Dělnického Hnutí Do Veřejného Prostoru: Třebíč Na Přelomu 19. a 20. století."

¹⁸ Jaroslav Mejzlík, *Dělnické Hnutí Na Západní Moravě Do Založení KSČ* (Havlíčkův Brod: Krajské nakladatelství, 1957).

first in the elections. There was even a Communist mayor in Třebíč for some time in 1925. While the party lost some of its support in the process of bolshevization¹⁹ of the late 1920s and early 1930s, it retained its position as a leading working-class organization in Třebíč.²⁰

The last context necessary to discuss for this thesis is that of the Baťa company. Baťa company was founded 1894 in Zlín, Moravia by three siblings, Antonín, Tomáš and Anna Baťa, as a small shoe-making company. It grew gradually and in 1900, it was already one of the biggest shoe-making companies in the Czech lands. Tomáš Baťa was over the time gaining the initiative in the leadership of the company. He traveled to the United States twice in 1904 and in 1913 where he studied Fordist and Taylorist methods and organization of the production. He was also interested in technical innovations, especially mass production and assembly lines. Back in Zlín in 1906, the Social Democratic trade unions strike in the Baťa company resulted in a dismissal of the trade union organizers from the factory.²¹ Baťa afterwards started with its program of “social capitalism” or “welfare capitalism”²², with which the company tried to solve the problems of the working class and the threat the working-class organizations posed to the factory. It did it by founding an ambitious social welfare program for the employees, consisting of factory canteens, workers’ housing, kindergartens and schools, hospital and free time facilities like cinema.²³ Tomáš Baťa also established new system of remuneration, in which he dealt with every worker as with an independent unit with entrepreneur spirit and supported competitiveness between workers and workshops.²⁴

¹⁹ A process in which the Communist party of Czechoslovakia adapted the Bolshevik party model, and its leadership was seized by people not associated with Social Democracy.

²⁰ Jaroslav Mejzlík, *Dělnické hnutí na Třebíčsku 1917-1938* (Brno: Krajské nakladatelství, 1962).

²¹ Bohumil Lehár, *Dějiny Baťova Koncernu* (Praha: SNPL, 1960).

²² Svatopluk Herc, “Welfare Kapitalismus: Koncepty a Motivace Podnikatelů Při Řešení Sociální Otázky, 1900–1930,” *Historická Sociologie*, no. 1 (2020).

²³ Martin Jemelka, Ondřej Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova koncernu* (Praha: Academia, 2016).

²⁴ Romana Lešingrová, *Baťova soustava řízení*. (Roma, 2008).

At the time of the beginning of the World War I, Baťa company was already one of the biggest shoe producers in Austria and as such it obtained lucrative deals for supplying the Austro-Hungarian army. The defeat of the Austro-Hungarian empire in the war together with the post-war economic crisis led to significant problems for the company, that were solved by inner credit system, radical reduction of the prices of Baťa shoes but also by the aid of the state. From 1923, the Baťa company started to prosper again and Tomáš Baťa secured his positions in Zlín by becoming the city's mayor. The rest of the 1920s was marked by increased construction activity in Zlín with both the new factory buildings with mechanical assembly lines and workers' housing, in form of the small family houses in a garden town. The impact of the economic crisis that started in 1929 on the Baťa company depending on export was especially in protectionism and protective tariffs. Baťa company therefore started to found factories and subsidiary companies in different countries, that allowed Baťa to operate internationally in times of increased deglobalization of the economics. It also tried to substitute lost European markets with Asian ones.²⁵

In 1931 the Baťa company managed to take over its biggest Czechoslovak competitors, damaged by the crisis. After this move, Baťa company was producing 78% of the Czechoslovakia shoes production. In 1932 the founder of the company, Tomáš Baťa died in an airplane accident and his adoptive brother Jan Antonín Baťa became the leading force in the company. Jan Antonín continued in Tomáš's strategy of international expansion and founding of the factory towns, as well as with the development of the company in Czechoslovakia. He also tried to influence the direction of the economic and infrastructure development of Czechoslovakia.²⁶ After the outbreak of World War II, Jan Antonín Baťa emigrated to Brazil

²⁵ Zdeněk Pokluda, *Baťa v kostce* (Zlín: Kniha Zlín, 2013).

²⁶ Jan Antonín Baťa, *Budujme stát pro 40 000 000 lidí* (Zlín: Tisk, 1937).

and the Baťa company in Czechoslovakia got partially under German control. After the war, the Czechoslovak part of the Baťa company was nationalized and transformed into the state-owned company Svit. The parts of the company located outside of the newly forming eastern bloc remained in possession of the Baťa family which had continued its entrepreneur activity until nowadays. In post-1945 Czechoslovakia, the Baťa company was portrayed as one of the worst examples of interwar Czechoslovak capitalism.²⁷ The main representatives of the company and members of the Baťa company were accused of collaboration with the Nazis and some of them were sentenced to prison. One of the most striking examples of anti-Baťa activity was renaming of Zlín as Gottwaldov (after first Communist president Klement Gottwald).²⁸

Zlín was the Baťa company's biggest project of the interwar period. When Baťa started its business in the town, Zlín had around 3000 inhabitants. In 1930 it already had 21 000 inhabitants and after the World War II in 1950 53 000 inhabitants. This illustrates the rapid development of Zlín, especially in the interwar period. As Tomáš Baťa controlled the municipality from the early 1920s, the company had unprecedented opportunities to adjust the development of the city to the needs of the company. It tried to construct Zlín as an example of a modern factory city, run by the principles of Bataism. Apart from the new factory buildings themselves, Baťa constructed numerous housing projects, with a special emphasis on the garden town with small family houses with gardens that fitted Baťa's ideas about gender roles, labor and housing. Baťa company also constructed numerous public buildings, like a cinema (biggest in Czechoslovakia with 2500 seats) or a hospital. Only a minority of the workers was however able to benefit from the family houses project, as most of them lived in

²⁷ Svatopluk Turek, *Botostroj* (Mladá fronta, 1954).

²⁸ Bohumil Lehár, *Dějiny Baťova Koncernu*.

the military barracks like lodging houses with severe control over their lives.²⁹

1.2 Conceptual Framework and Concepts Used

The overall theoretical approach of my thesis draws from both the classical social history, and the new labor history. The new labor history broadens the focus of the traditional social history. The traditional approaches of the social history focused mostly on the industrial factory labor of skilled, male, white workers and their political organization. New labor history on the other hand focuses on many types of previously neglected labor, for instance women's labor, indentured labor, slave labor, labor in the third world and non-industrial labor. Worker's agency is a crucial concept for both classical social history and the new labor history. I believe I am able to employ the classical social history approaches as well as the approaches of the new labor history. I employ the analysis of the local working class and its relationships with the Baťa company based on the statistical analysis, spatial analysis and the emphasis on traditional research topics such as political party or trade unions. At the same time, I pursue the analysis of the experiences of the workers based on their memoirs and focus on the women workers, or non-organized unemployed workers.

A key concept used in this thesis is a class. Historians of labor and of the workers will inevitably find themselves dealing with the concept of class and more specifically of the working class. While class never stopped to be used as a concept and analytical tool in the western scholarship, the situation in the former eastern bloc is much different. Here, the concept of class was to a more significant extent discredited after 1989 because of its connection with Marxism-Leninism and the official language of the ruling regimes pre-1989.

²⁹ Martin Jemelka, Ondřej Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova koncernu* (Praha: Academia, 2016).

However, in the years following the economic crisis of 2008, the historical scholarship in the former eastern bloc started to engage itself once more with the questions of workers and their agency and therefore inevitably, with the questions of class.

While I understand the importance of the concept of class for the research of the working-class movement and especially the approach of E.P. Thompson³⁰ is of great importance for me as a source of inspiration, I show in my thesis, that the actions, character and development of the working class and the working-class movement were influenced by many factors. My own understanding of the working class is informed by the idea that it is constituted by the relationship of the people to the means of production, as well as by their experiences, actions and culture. However, I understand this definition of a working class as only a part of the concept of the working-class movement. For instance, it is the concepts of gender, culture, nation or international politics, that cannot be reduced to the notion of class and constitute another very important part of the concept of the working-class movement.

Closely connected to the concept of class and working class is the concept of the working-class movement. It is based on Marxian notions of the class for itself, that realizes itself as a class and its relationships with other classes and bases its actions on its class belonging.³¹ Organized working-class movement became an important factor in the 19th and 20th century political struggle for the emancipation of the working class. The working-class movement had many forms, from political parties³² and trade unions³³ to cultural and sport

³⁰ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin books, 2013).

³¹ Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968).

³² Zdeněk Kárník, *Na Úsvitu Dějin České Sociální Demokracie: Od Prvopočátků Hnutí k Základům Moderní Politické Strany (1844-1893)* (Praha: Dokořán, 2019).

³³ Volker R. Berghahn, Detlev Karsten, *Industrial Relations in West Germany* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1988).

societies³⁴, and anarchist worker collectives³⁵. As such it also became the main focus of the historians who were dealing with the history of the working class and its agency. In my thesis I use the concept of the working-class movement as a conglomerate of political parties, trade unions, cultural and sport organizations and sympathizing individuals. While using this concept, I also consider with caution the criticism of the new labor history for biases favoring white, skilled, male workers that are contained in the concept of the working-class movement.³⁶ Being aware of such biases, I try to incorporate the experiences of women workers as well as workers not involved in the traditional working-class movement into my thesis.

While the concepts of working class and working-class movement are very important for my thesis, even more important are labor relations and relationships between the employer and the workers. In the case of this thesis, the employer is the Baťa company, and the workers of different groups. I deal with former workers of the Baťa factory, dismissed after the Baťa takeover, new Baťa workers, unemployed workers and workers from different factories and workshops, associated with the working-class movement of the town. I also try

³⁴ Jürgen Kocka, *Arbeiterleben Und Arbeiterkultur: Die Entstehung Einer Sozialen Klasse* (Bonn: Verl. J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 2015).

³⁵ Ondřej Slačálek, Václav Tomek, *Anarchismus: Svoboda Proti Moci* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2006).

³⁶ Eg. Christian G. De Vito, "Labour Flexibility and Labour Precariousness as Conceptual Tools for the Historical Study of the Interactions among Labour Relations," in *On the Road to Global Labour History: A Festschrift for Marcel van Der Linden* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018).; Tessie P. Liu, *The Weaver's Knot: The Contradictions of Class Struggle and Family Solidarity in Western France, 1750-1914*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

to put emphasis on the gender and women labor questions, inspired by such authors like Cathy Hunt³⁷, Karen Hunt, Matthew Worley³⁸, Ching Kwan Lee³⁹ or Alena K. Alamgir⁴⁰.

Concerning the relationships between the Baťa company and the workers, which I deal with in the fourth chapter of the thesis, I determine three categories, according to which I analyze the relations and their dynamics and development. The first category is conflict, which I identify as an outcome of tensions concerning different visions and ideas of work and society. The conflicts I identified took both a form of physical violence and a more subtle political struggle of speeches, leaflets, posters or meetings. The second category is coexistence. In this category I analyze the difficult attempts to find a *modus vivendi* between different groups with different interests in a limited space of a town. I do so on an example of the May Day celebrations. The third category I use is cooperation. With this category I analyze the ways in which certain groups of workers accepted the Bataist project and became an integral part of it, and the tactics of the Baťa company to achieve such cooperation. On the other hand, I also analyze limits of this cooperation and the problems Baťa workers faced. While approaching the labor relations and relationships of the Baťa company and the local working class, I employ works of Stefan Link⁴¹, Kurt S. Schultz⁴², Mary Nolan⁴³, David E. Greenstein⁴⁴, Rüdiger

³⁷ Cathy Hunt, “‘Her heart and soul were with the labour movement’: Using a local study to highlight the work of women organizers employed by the workers’ union in Britain from the First world war to 1931,” *Labour History Review* 70, no. 2 (August 2005).

³⁸ Karen Hunt, Matthew Worley, “Rethinking British Communist Party Women in the 1920s,” *Twentieth Century British History* 15, no. 1 (2004).

³⁹ Ching Kwan Lee, *Gender and the South China Miracle: Two Worlds of Factory Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁴⁰ Alena K. Alamgir, “Recalcitrant Women: Internationalism and the Redefinition of Welfare Limits in the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese Labor Exchange Program,” *Slavic Review* 73, no. 1 (2014).

⁴¹ Stefan Link, “Transnational Fordism. Ford Motor Company, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union in the Interwar Years” (Harvard University, 2012).

⁴² Kurt S. Schultz, “The American Factor in Soviet Industrialization: Fordism and the First Five-Year Plan, 1928-1932” (The Ohio State University, 1992).

⁴³ Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity. American Business and the Modernization of Germany* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁴⁴ David E. Greenstein, “Assembling Fordism: The Production of Automobiles, Americans, and Bolsheviks in Detroit and Early Soviet Russia,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56, no. 2 (2014).

Hachtmann⁴⁵, Stephen Meyer⁴⁶ or James R. Barrett⁴⁷, concerning Fordism, especially Fordism in Europe. I also employ works of Stephen Kotkin⁴⁸, Mark Pittaway⁴⁹ or Peter Heumos⁵⁰, who deal with questions of labor relations in socialist countries.

1.3. Existing Scholarship and Primary Sources

In this part of the Introduction, I describe and analyze the available secondary literature and primary sources. Secondary literature for my thesis can be divided into several categories. First of them is scholarship and literature concerning the situation in Třebíč in the interwar period and including original material. *Proletářská tělovýchova v Třebíči*⁵¹ [Proletarian sport in Třebíč, 1986] written by the collective of local historians is a brochure dealing with the history of sport and scouting in Třebíč, connected to the Communist party and Social Democracy. It is set mostly in the interwar period with excursions into the pre-World War I period. It contains information about the organization and life of the sporting clubs, and about numerous other aspects of all types of sports and active leisure. It also contains interviews with working-class sport activists. *Kapitoly z dějin KSČ na Třebíčsku*⁵² [Chapters from the history of the KSČ in the Třebíč region, 1981] is a compilation of texts dealing with the history of the local Communist party with emphasis on the interwar period.

⁴⁵ Rüdiger Hachtmann, "Fordism and Unfree Labour: Aspects of the Work Deployment of Concentration Camp Prisoners in German Industry between 1941 and 1944," *International Review of Social History* 55, no. 3 (December 2010): 485–513.

⁴⁶ Stephen Meyer, "Adapting the Immigrant to the Line: Americanization in the Ford Factory, 1914-1921," *Journal of Social History* 14, no. 1 (1980).

⁴⁷ James R. Barrett, "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930," *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (1992).

⁴⁸ Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁴⁹ Mark Pittaway, *The Worker's State. Industrial Labor and the Making of Socialist Hungary, 1944-1958* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012).; Mark Pittaway, *From the Vanguard to the Margins: Workers in Hungary, 1939 to the Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

⁵⁰ Peter Heumos, *Vyhrňme Si Rukávy, Než Se Kola Zastaví!* (Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2006).

⁵¹ Rudolf Fišer, Eva Nováčková, Jiří Uhlíř, ed. *Proletářská tělovýchova v Třebíči* (Třebíč: Západomoravské muzeum, 1986).

⁵² *Kapitoly z dějin KSČ na Třebíčsku* (Třebíč: Západomoravské muzeum, 1981).

Rather short articles are often focusing on particularities of the local Communist movement, such as Red trade unions, media, sport organizations or youth organizations.

Jaroslav Mejzlík was a local historian and an author of the next two publications, *Dělnické hnutí na Třebíčsku 1917-1938*⁵³ [Working-class movement in the Třebíč region 1917-1938, 1962] and *Dějiny závodů Gustava Klimenta v Třebíči-Borovině*⁵⁴ [History of the Gustav Kliment factory in Třebíč-Borovina, 1972]. The former is an attempt to produce a regional history of the working-class movement but is rather a political history of the local Communist party. The book nevertheless contains useful summary of the facts about the most important acts and events of the period. The latter publication is a factory history of the most important shoe factory in Třebíč, owned by the Baťa company in the 1930s and 1940s, as well as an overall history of the Třebíč shoe industry. It contains detailed information about the labor process in the factory, as the author himself was a former worker there. All the texts from this category contain strong pro-Communist biases in the evaluation of both the local working-class movement and the Baťa company. They are however a significant source of information, especially on the thinking that characterized the local Communist movement, but they must be approached carefully and with understanding of the historiography of the Communist era.⁵⁵

Second category is the literature concerning the Baťa company. Baťa company itself produced number of texts, dealing with its own position on the questions of labor and organization of the production. Most significant is a text *Budujme stát pro 40 000 000 lidí*⁵⁶ [Let's build a state for 40 million people], published in 1937 and written by Jan Antonín Baťa,

⁵³ Jaroslav Mejzlík, *Dělnické hnutí na Třebíčsku 1917-1938* (Brno: Krajské nakladatelství, 1962).

⁵⁴ Jaroslav Mejzlík, *Dějiny závodů Gustava Klimenta v Třebíči-Borovině* (Třebíč: Závody Gustava Klimenta, 1972).

⁵⁵ For more information about the historiography of the Communist era see Vítězslav Sommer, *Angažované dějepisectví* (Praha: NLN, 2012).

⁵⁶ Jan Antonín Baťa. *Budujme stát pro 40 000 000 lidí* (Zlín: Tisk, 1937).

the majority owner of the company in the 1930s and 1940s. The book presents his vision of the future development of Czechoslovakia, mainly its industry and infrastructure, using the Bataist methods of the organization of labor and production. *Botostroj*⁵⁷ [Shoemachine] by Svatopluk Turek is a novel, written by a communist and a former worker of the Baťa factory, and published originally in 1933. The book illuminates communist views on Baťa and Bataist methods, as well as a position of a worker, who was not able to adapt himself to Bataism. Other texts in this category are from the post-1989 era.

*Baťova soustava řízení*⁵⁸ [Baťa's system of management, 2008] by Romana Lešingrová is an economic text, analyzing Bataism and its system of management. Lešingrová praises Bataism and tries to propose possible implementations of Bataism into nowadays economic praxis. *Tovární města Baťova komplexu*⁵⁹ [Factory towns of the Baťa complex, 2016] written by Martin Jemelka and Ondřej Ševeček is a well done urban and social history of the factory towns created by the Baťa company. While it analyzes Bataist approaches to the factory towns in general, it also focuses on Třebíč, and on the plans and approaches of the Baťa company towards its factory in Třebíč as well as towards the town and its people. Zdeněk Pokluda is an author of a broad variety of literature about Baťa company. His *Baťa v kostce*⁶⁰ [Basics on Baťa, 2013] is a good summary of the history of the company, even though it is very uncritical and celebratory towards Baťa. There is also a number of sources on Fordism and its effect in the interwar Europe. My main inspiration in this field was from *Transnational Fordism*⁶¹, a

⁵⁷ Svatopluk Turek, *Botostroj* (Mladá fronta, 1954).

⁵⁸ Romana Lešingrová, *Baťova soustava řízení* (Roma, 2008).

⁵⁹ Martin Jemelka, Ondřej Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova koncernu* (Praha: Academia, 2016).

⁶⁰ Zdeněk Pokluda, *Baťa v kostce* (Zlín: Kniha Zlín, 2013).

⁶¹ Stefan Link, „Transnational Fordism. Ford Motor Company, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union in the Interwar Years" (Harvard University, 2012).

dissertation by Stefan Link, *The American factor in Soviet industrialization*⁶² by Kurt Stephen Schultz, *Visions of Modernity*⁶³ by Mary Nolan and *Americanism and Fordism*⁶⁴ by Antonio Gramsci.

Next category of texts is that concerning relevant elements of the situation in Czechoslovakia, especially that of the working class and the working-class movement. Zdeněk Kárník was a prime Czech historian of the interwar period and his *České země v éře první republiky*⁶⁵ [Czech lands in the First republic era, 2003] is a traditional history of the western part of Czechoslovakia in the interwar period, rich in facts. *Lidé periferie*⁶⁶ [People of the periphery, 2009] written by Stanislav Holubec is a social and cultural analysis of the Prague working class of the interwar period. Holubec bases his analyses mostly on the sociological research from the period. Bohumil Melichar and Jakub Vrba are young scholars, whose master theses deal with the questions of the Communist movement in the interwar Czechoslovakia. Melichar's work concerns Prague⁶⁷ and Vrba's north Bohemia, especially in the German-speaking environment⁶⁸.

*Dějiny Komunistické strany Československa*⁶⁹ [History of the Communist party of Czechoslovakia, 2002] written by Jacques Rupnik is a brief synthetic text about the history of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the interwar period. *Stará dělnická Praha*⁷⁰ [Old

⁶² Kurt S. Schultz, „The American Factor in Soviet Industrialization: Fordism and the First Five-Year Plan, 1928-1932" (The Ohio State University, 1992).

⁶³ Mary Nolan. *Visions of Modernity* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁶⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers Co, 1989).

⁶⁵ Zdeněk Kárník, *České země v éře první republiky* (Praha: Libri, 2003).

⁶⁶ Stanislav Holubec, *Lidé periferie* (Plzeň: ZČU, 2009).

⁶⁷ Bohumil Melichar. „Rudá Praha". (Unpublished MA thesis, Praha, Univerzita Karlova, 2017). <https://is.cuni.cz/webapps/zzp/detail/184070>. Accessed on 23.5. 2021.

⁶⁸ Jakub Vrba. „Rudé hrady v meziválečném Československu". (Unpublished MA thesis, Praha, Univerzita Karlova, 2017). <https://is.cuni.cz/webapps/zzp/detail/168301>. Accessed on 23.5. 2021.

⁶⁹ Jacques Rupnik, *Dějiny Komunistické strany Československa: od počátků do převzetí moci* (Praha: Academia, 2002).

⁷⁰ Antonín Roubík et al. *Stará dělnická Praha* (Praha: Academia, 1981).

Working-Class Prague, 1981] written by the collective of authors with Antonín Roubík being the leader of the project, is a set of ethnographical studies about everyday life and culture of the working-class Prague. The book focuses mostly on the 19th century but contains a chapter about the interwar period as well. Jakub Rákosník is another important contemporary author on the social history of the interwar period. Together with Jakub Noha, Rákosník wrote *Kapitalismus na kolenou*⁷¹ [Capitalism on its knees, 2012], an analysis of the Great depression in Czechoslovakia using frameworks of social and economic history. Rákosník also wrote *Odvrácená tvář meziválečné prosperity*⁷² [The other face of the interwar prosperity, 2015] about the phenomena of unemployment in the interwar Czechoslovakia.

Beside the scholarship and printed material discussed so far, the thesis also builds on primary sources. Amongst the numerous obstacles of writing a thesis in a global pandemic, obtaining and work with the primary sources is probably the most difficult one. Majority of my primary sources are from the Třebíč archive, and some are from the archive of the Baťa company in Zlín and in Brno. Due to the pandemic regulations in the Czech Republic, archives and libraries were closed most of the last year, or their services were limited. I managed to access the Třebíč archive in summer of 2020, when restrictions were eased. I was however only able to access fragments of the Zlín and Brno archives of the Baťa company.

One of the main sources of this thesis is the collection of memoirs of the local working-class activists. These memoirs were gathered from 1950s to 1970s by local Communist party officials in order to conserve the memory of the local working-class movement, as well as to legitimize their own power over the town. While majority of the memoirs comes from working class people of Třebíč, some of them are from activists from other villages and small towns in

⁷¹ Jiří Noha, Jakub Rákosník, *Kapitalismus na kolenou* (Praha: Auditorium, 2012).

⁷² Jakub Rákosník, *Odvrácená tvář meziválečné prosperity. Nezaměstnanost v Československu v letech 1918-1938* (Praha: Karolinum, 2015).

the region. The memoirs are divided into three groups. The biggest group is called *General working-class movement memoirs* and contains 31 different memoirs. Second group is called *Memoirs concerning sport and youth organizations* and it contains 16 memoirs. Last one is called *Memoirs of the cultural activity* and contains 5 memoirs. The memoirs are of different length and quality. From only a couple of pages to dozens and from simple answers to a questionnaire to unassisted lengthy texts. The choice of the workers and activists asked for memoirs, as well as the memoirs themselves contain strong pro-communist biases and sometimes omit non-communist parts of the working class. They are however still a valuable source of information on the position of the workers in the interwar Třebíč, as well as overall position of the local Communist party.

The information from within of the local Communist party in the memoirs are crucial, because the actual documents from the party did not survive. They were most probably hidden or destroyed during the World War II in order to avoid their seizing by the Nazis. Other documents about the situation in Třebíč in the 1930s are therefore from the municipality, state administrative, police and gendarmerie. Important part of these documents are surveillance documents of the local Communist movement from the local branch of the state administration. They were issued once or twice a year and contained information about approximate numbers of members and supporters of the party, list of major Communist actions, names and addresses of leading functionaries and activists, and also situation and actions of the organizations connected to the Communist party personally or ideologically. Some of these organizations, for instance *Svaz přátel SSSR* (Association of the friends of the USSR) or *Jednota proletářské tělovýchovy* (Union of the proletarian sport) have their own files in the archive, concerning their monitoring and interaction with the state administrative.

The Communist party also had to communicate with the state administrative, especially in cases of authorizations or prohibitions of the public actions, meetings or demonstrations. These files therefore contain descriptions of different Communist actions from both the Communist party and the state administration as well as different posters or brochures.

Next part of the archival material are documents connected with police and judiciary investigation of the Communist activity. They mostly contain denunciations, criminal charges, documents describing criminal procedures, police reports and records. Majority of the crimes or supposed crimes in the documents are unlawful assembly, disorderly conduct, or breaches of the press law, especially with connection to the variety of posters, homemade newspapers or brochures. The gendarmerie and other local authorities also followed closely the May Day celebrations and the reports on the celebrations are a very interesting source. Reports about such celebrations are very valuable for understanding the dynamics in interactions of the local actors.

Last part of the material are fragments of the Baťa company documents. The most interesting ones are documents of the director of the factory, Josef Radvanovský, containing his memoirs as well as his correspondence with J.A. Baťa. Another significant material are personal files of the workers of the factory, which I was able to access thanks to a generous help from Mr. Martin Marek from the Zlín archive.

1.4 Thesis Overview

This thesis contains three research chapters and one introductory chapter. In the present introductory chapter, I illuminate the basic context of the thesis, describe the main concepts used in the thesis, lay out the content of each chapter and the theoretical

approaches used in it, evaluate the secondary literature and the historiographical tradition and describe and evaluate the primary sources used in the thesis.

In the first research chapter, I deal with the local working class and the working-class movement in the 1930s. I start with the spatial analysis of the local working-class movement in which I identify working class, petit bourgeois and bourgeois areas of the town in order to have a better understanding of the spatiality of the actions taking place in the town. Then I describe the character and the inner dynamics of the local working-class movement and analyze the organization of the local Communist party, trade unions and other organizations adjacent to the working-class movement. I also deal with the question of unorganized and unaligned workers and their agency, on the example of the unemployed movement in the early 1930s.

Baťa company is the main focus of the second research chapter. In this chapter I describe and analyze Bataism and role of broader phenomena of rationalization of the production, Fordism and Taylorism. I also describe the Baťa company actions and policies that took place in Třebíč, concerning the development of the factory itself, construction of the factory town, radical reorganization of the production, its positions towards the workers and its projects of welfare, as well as its actions in the broader context of the town and municipality politics.

In the third and last research chapter, I describe and analyze the relations of the actors mentioned above. While their positions are defined in previous two chapter, in this chapter I deal with their mutual intercourse and struggles. For this, I use three main concepts of relationships, conflict, coexistence and cooperation. I describe the bargaining, street and pub fighting, negotiating, elections and other political struggles, strikes, demonstrations, celebrations, sport struggle, agency of the Baťa workers and their participation in the Baťa

project, verbal contesting through leaflets, posters and local press and finally coalitions, cooperation and reactions to the situation of the threat of the Nazi Germany in the late 1930s.

* * *

The gruesome story of the self-harm of Jan Beránek I quoted at the beginning of this chapter marked the end of his employment relationship for two years. For this thesis, his story is a beginning of a thinking about the relations between workers and employers in the context of the Great depression in interwar Třebíč, Czechoslovakia.

2. The Working Class and the Working-Class Movement in 1930s Třebíč

In my thesis, I am dealing with the question of working class and its politics in the 1930s Czechoslovakia in context of the Great Depression and rationalization of the industry. The case study I explore is the example of the working class of Třebíč and its relations to the Baťa company, the important Czechoslovak shoemaking company and promoter of Fordist and Taylorist methods in the industrial production. In this chapter of my thesis, I explore the Třebíč working-class movement, its structure, organization and actions and I try to set it to a broader context of the political life of Třebíč. I also conduct a spatial analysis that helps me to settle the activity of the local working class in space. While I tried to broaden my focus to other political parts of the local working-class movement, the lack of sources together with the key position of the Communist party in the local working class, impelled me to focus mostly on the Communist party and its supporters and organizations.

Třebíč is a town in western Moravia and administrative center of Třebíč district. Urban unit of Třebíč in the 1930s was formed by the actual Třebíč town and independent *Jewish town* and *Podklášteří* community. *Jewish town* merged with Třebíč in 1931. For the purpose of my thesis, I consider all three parts as “Třebíč” as they formed a cohesive urban structure. All three together had 15 778 inhabitants in 1930, from which *Podklášteří* had 1420 and *Jewish town* 1075 inhabitants.⁷³ Apart from *Podklášteří* and *Jewish town*, Třebíč was divided into 7 boroughs. This division played an important role in the self-identification of people who often identified strongly with their borough or neighborhood and also formed basis for the organizational structure of the local Communist party. I therefore use this division in my

⁷³ Růžková Jiřina, Josef Škrabal, *Historický lexikon obcí České republiky 1869–2005* (Praha: Český statistický úřad, 2006).

spatial analysis. Třebíč in 1930s was predominantly ethnically Czech with an important Jewish (mostly German speaking) minority.

In this place, I explain my understanding of the concept of the *working-class movement* which I am going to use throughout the thesis. I consider the working-class movement to be a conglomerate of political parties, trade unions, cooperatives, cultural associations, sport clubs, their members and their supporters who are striving to achieve the political, economic and cultural emancipation of the working class. In Třebíč the working-class movement started to emerge in 1880s, intertwined with the industrialization of the traditional local shoemaking and leathermaking craft.⁷⁴ This movement was connected to the Social Democratic party in Austria and in 1890s mostly took form of the proclamatively cultural association, *Dělnická beseda* (Worker's club). In 1900s it turned its focus into trade-unionism.⁷⁵ Even though the working-class movement was quite radical in its praxis and thinking in its beginnings, it consequently became incorporated into the local society in the sense of modern, Czech, national society, even though most of the local working-class activists remained on the internationalist, centralist, pro-Austrian positions in the schism in the Czech Social Democracy in the early 1910s.⁷⁶

This situation changed rapidly as the consequence of the formative experience of the First World War and the 1917 revolutions. In the very beginnings of the newly formed Czechoslovak republic, the Social Democratic party was the strongest and won the 1920 elections. However, the internal struggle between revolutionary and reformist wings in the party resulted in the split and the formation of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ)

⁷⁴ Janák, *Dějiny Města Třebíče II.*

⁷⁵ Mejzlík, *Dělnické Hnutí Na Západní Moravě Do Založení KSČ.*

⁷⁶ Šmejkal, "Vstupování Dělnického Hnutí Do Veřejného Prostoru: Třebíč Na Přelomu 19. a 20. století."

in 1921.⁷⁷ Majority of the Třebíč Social Democrats joined the newly formed Communist party apart from other reasons because of the KSČ founder and leader dr. Bohumír Šmeral was born and raised in Třebíč and had a significant influence in the local movement.⁷⁸ The party retained strong presence and support in the town through the whole 1920s as can be seen in the results of the elections. This position resulted in a win in the municipality elections in 1925 and a short-term rule of a Communist mayor.⁷⁹

2.1 A Spatial Analysis

I decided to carry out a spatial analysis of the working-class Třebíč in order to be able to have a better understanding of the actions the working-class movement in the space. I focused on two major topics, the locations where the working-class activists were living and on the major gathering and meeting points in the town. As it is probable that the list of the members of the local Communist party, I found in the archive is dated after 1945, I had to create my own database of the members and their addresses. I did so by going through all the official documents mapping the actions of the Communist movement I found in Třebíč archive. I also measured this data against the total number of inhabitants of each borough. This data come from the Czechoslovak 1930 census. I understand this set of data is problematic as it only captures the leading elements of the movement as well as the most radical elements, in case of those arrested on different occasions. Due to relatively small sample (the number of the members gathered for each year is usually around 10% of the total membership) one can

⁷⁷ Jacques Rupnik, *Dějiny Komunistické Strany Československa: Od Počátků Do Převzetí Moci* (Praha: Academia, 2002).

⁷⁸ Jan Galandauer, *Bohumír Šmeral 1880-1914* (Praha: Svoboda, 1981).

⁷⁹ Jan Kratochvíl, "Správní Vývoj Města Třebíč v letech 1918-1939" (Unpublished BA thesis, Brno, Masarykova Univerzita, 2011), https://is.muni.cz/th/bom6a/Spravni_vyvoj_mesta_Trebic_v letech_1918_-_1939.pdf. Accessed on 15.3.2021.

observe some fluctuations that are most probably just the impact of the data sample. However, I believe this data, when contextualized with the sources about the “nature” of different parts of the town can still prove to be a valuable source of information, when one focuses on the general trends and processes rather than fluctuations.

Here are the results of my analysis, firstly, the table showing the number of inhabitants in different boroughs of the town.⁸⁰

Tab.1 Inhabitants of different boroughs of Třebíč in 1930s

Town borough	Number of inhabitants in 1930	Proportion of all inhabitants of the town
Inner town	1175	7,44 %
Jewish town	1075	6,81 %
Podklášteří	1420	9 %
Jejkov	1448	9,18 %
Domky	4392	27,84 %
Horka ⁸¹	=	=
Nové Dvory	1795	11,38 %
Nové Město	1232	7,8 %
Stařečka	3241	20,54 %
Total	15778	100 %

Sources used: This is based on data of the *Český statistický úřad* [Czech Statistical Office].⁸²

⁸⁰ Růžková, Škrabal, *Historický Lexikon Obcí České republiky 1869–2005*.

⁸¹ In the census, boroughs *Horka* and *Domky* are treated as one borough *Horka-Domky*, as they are administratively treated nowadays, even though at that time there were still separate boroughs. As *Horka* was significantly smaller than *Domky*, for the needs of the analysis, I treat them as one borough.

⁸² Růžková, Škrabal, *Historický Lexikon Obcí České republiky 1869–2005*.

Tab. 2 Communist activists in different boroughs in the 1930s boroughs.

Town borough	Number of communist activists in 1930	Number of communist activists in 1931	Number of communist activists in 1932	Number of communist activists in 1933	Number of communist activists in 1934	Number of communist activists in 1935	Number of communist activists in 1936	Number of communist activists in 19331937	Average	% Of borough population
Inner town	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0,25	0,02 %
Jewish town	9	2	3	3	3	7	5	3	4,38	0,41 %
Podklášteří	4	5	8	8	3	5	3	1	4,625	0,33 %
Jejkov	1	2	1	0	3	1	2	1	1,38	0,1 %
Domky	5	3	4	2	9	8	6	3	5	0,17 %
Horka	1	1	3	1	3	3	6	2	2,5	=
Nové Dvory	6	17	11	6	13	12	21	9	11,88	0,66 %
Nové Město	3	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	0,08 %
Stařečka	3	2	2	5	10	7	6	5	5	0,15 %
Total	32	35	34	25	46	43	49	24		

Sources used: I created a database of the addresses of the core members of the Communist movement recovered from the archival sources.⁸³ Calculations are my own.

The estimated number of the core members of the Communist movement is between 300 and 400.⁸⁴ The number of sympathizers, based on authorities' estimations as well as the election results⁸⁵, is around 2000. If we consider our sample as 10% of the total number of the core members of the communist movement, we may see particularly strong presence of the Communist movement in *Nové Dvory* borough⁸⁶, and a strong presence in *Podklášteří* and *Jewish town* as well.⁸⁷ The presence in other boroughs was significantly weaker, the most

⁸³ "Communist Movement of the Třebíč Region," 1930 1933, fond Okresní úřad, kr. 59, ič. 748., SOKA Třebíč.; „Evidence of the Communist Movement in Třebíč Region," 1933 1939, fond Okresní úřad, kr. 60, ič. 748., SOKA Třebíč.

⁸⁴ "Evidence of the Communist Movement in Třebíč Region," 1933 1939, fond Okresní úřad, kr. 60, ič. 748., SOKA Třebíč.

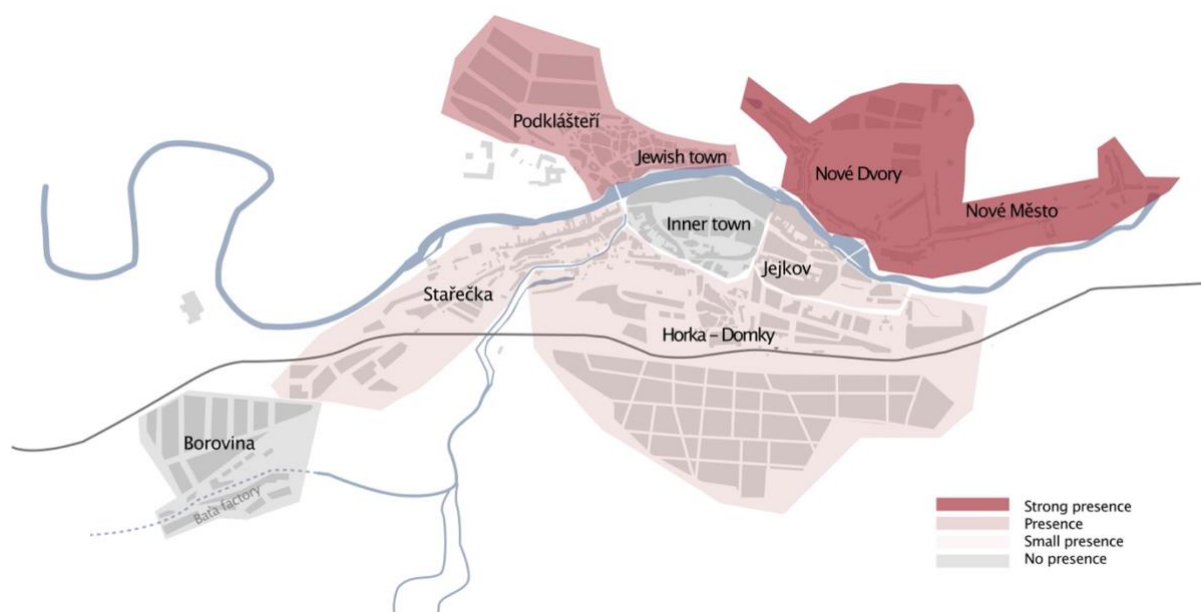
⁸⁵ Kratochvíl, "Správní Vývoj Města Třebíč v letech 1918-1939."

⁸⁶ Estimated 6,6% of the population as core members of Communist movement.

⁸⁷ Estimated 3,3% or 4,1 % respectively, of the population as core members of Communist movement.

striking example being the *Inner town*.⁸⁸ The map below illustrates the results of the analysis of the presence of the Communist movement in different boroughs in a graphic way.

Map 1. Average presence of the Communist movement in different boroughs in the 1930s



Sources used: See Table 2

Situation in different boroughs of the town

In this part I describe the demographic and class situation in different parts of the town. *Vnitřní Město (Inner town)* is the historical center of the town. In 1930 it had 1175 inhabitants that formed 7,44 % of the town population.⁸⁹ It was the political, economic and cultural center of the town and its main square was the most important and most prestigious meeting point of the town. Therefore, it was the place of the majority of the demonstrations and public actions in Třebíč. *Inner town* was inhabited mostly by the local bourgeoisie, petit

⁸⁸ Estimated 0,2% of the population as core members of Communist movement.

⁸⁹ Růžková, Škrabal, *Historický lexikon obcí České republiky 1869–2005*.

bourgeoisie and the officials. It is thus no surprise that the working-class movement lacked any strong support here.⁹⁰



Pic.1 Inner town in 1920s

The *Jewish town* is located north of the *Inner town* between the river and a steep rock. It was an independent town until 1931 when it joined Třebíč. The Jewish settlement was in this place from the Middle Ages, however in the late 19th century especially bourgeois Jewish population left the crowded town for more prestigious parts of Třebíč or for other cities like Vienna or Brno. Out of the 1075 inhabitants of the *Jewish town*, around 300 belonged to the Jewish community. The ethnic and religious ghetto was slowly transformed into a social ghetto as the poorest inhabitants of the town moved there in the early 20th century.⁹¹ The Communist party had a significant support in the *Jewish town*, probably greater than what my spatial analysis would suggest, as the 1930 District office (Okresní hejtmanství) report states, there

⁹⁰ Karel Dvořák, *Ze Staré Třebíče I.* (Třebíč: Sociální Demokracie, 1990).

⁹¹ Šmejkal, "Vstupování Dělnického Hnutí Do Veřejného Prostoru: Třebíč Na Přelomu 19. a 20. století."

was around 200 Communists in the *Jewish town* and its last mayor before the town was unified in 1931 was a Communist as well.⁹² There were also important working-class movement meeting places in the borough, such as Dočekal's pub.⁹³

Another borough with the high Communist support was *Podklášteří*, in 1930s an independent community of 1420 inhabitants around Třebíč chateau⁹⁴, held by Wallenstein family. Here as well, the District office reports suggest greater support than my analysis, around 120-140 Communists⁹⁵, probably both members and supporters of the party. This high support is a surprise as the support of the working-class movement here on the turn of the centuries was particularly low.⁹⁶ Possible explanation would be the diminishing of the importance and influence of the house Wallenstein over *Podklášteří* after the naissance of the Czechoslovak republic.⁹⁷ Another factor could be a partial exchange of the population as the number of the chateau employees decreased and they were replaced by the workers from Třebíč.

Jejkov is an old suburb east of the *Inner town* which in 1930 had 1448 inhabitants.⁹⁸ It had a strong tradition of Christian socialism, later connected to the *Československá strana lidová* (Czechoslovak people's party). It was most probably because of the persistence of the traditional craftsmanship in the borough as well as because of the presence of the monastery of the Capuchin order.⁹⁹ The Communist party had its main headquarters there in *Dělnický dům* (Worker's house). The building was bought by the Social Democrats in 1906 and

⁹² "Communist Movement of the Třebíč Region."

⁹³ "Antonín Kalina Memoirs," 1959, fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 48, ič. 491, SOKA Třebíč.

⁹⁴ Růžková, Škrabal, *Historický lexikon obcí České republiky 1869–2005*.

⁹⁵ "Communist Movement of the Třebíč Region."

⁹⁶ Šmejkal, "Vstupování Dělnického Hnutí Do Veřejného Prostoru: Třebíč Na Přelomu 19. a 20. století."

⁹⁷ For the information on Wallenstein family in Třebíč see Anna Marie Waldstein-Wartenberg, *Als Trebitsch Noch Bei Waldstein War* (Třebíč: Muzeum Vysočiny Třebíč, 2014).

⁹⁸ Růžková, Škrabal, *Historický lexikon obcí České republiky 1869–2005*.

⁹⁹ Šmejkal, "Vstupování Dělnického Hnutí Do Veřejného Prostoru: Třebíč Na Přelomu 19. a 20. století."

converted into a vast multi-purpose space.¹⁰⁰ *Dělnický dům* was located on the main road from the *Inner town* into *Nové Dvory*, the working-class stronghold. This road was often a scene of the demonstrations and parades heading from *Nové Dvory* into the *Inner town*.



Pic. 2 May Day parade 1930 in Jejkov

Nové Dvory were a crucial borough for the Třebíč interwar Communist movement. This eastern suburb with 1795 inhabitants was forming an urban unit with *Nové Město* with its 1232 inhabitants.¹⁰¹ This birthplace of Bohumír Šmeral was a hotbed for the local working-class movement.¹⁰² According to my analysis, its inhabitants formed 32,7% of the local Communist party and local pubs as well as private flats of the members were important meeting spots. Some parts of the borough were extremely impoverished, especially

¹⁰⁰ Mejzlík, *Dělnické Hnutí Na Západní Moravě Do Založení KSČ*.

¹⁰¹ Růžková, Škrabal, *Historický lexikon obcí České republiky 1869–2005*.

¹⁰² Galandauer, *Bohumír Šmeral 1880-1914*.

neighborhood called *Kočičina*¹⁰³. The poverty and characteristics of the place were illuminated in a local folk song from the beginning of the 20th century: "...tam dole u Babáku je plno pytláků, tam každej malej capart už střílí z praku." (Down there at Babák, there is plenty of poachers, there every little tot is shooting his sling). While *Nové Město* was a clearly distinctive borough in the early 20th century, when agriculture was still the means of living of the inhabitants, by the 1930s the two boroughs were less and less distinguishable and the name *Nové Dvory* started to prevail for the whole urban ensemble.



Pic. 3 Kočičina in the early 20th century.

¹⁰³ Rough translation would be a „cat place“. In 19th and early 20th century Czech this word meant a riot, unrest or noise.

Stařečka, with 3241 inhabitants¹⁰⁴, is the oldest suburb and was the birthplace of the Třebíč shoemaking and leathermaking industry in the 19th century. Therefore, the borough traditionally had a strong industrial and working-class character.¹⁰⁵ In the early 20th century, it was the stronghold of the Social Democratic working-class movement¹⁰⁶ and the place with a bad reputation: “...na Krajíčkově stráni je starej větrník, tam bydlí samá lůza a samej hadrník...” (on the Krajíček’s hillside there is an ol’ windmill, there lives only a rabble and only a tag-rag). One factor explaining the relative weakness of the Communist movement here in 1930s could be the proximity and influence of the *Borovina* factory, overtook by Baťa company in 1931, and its anti-communist actions. Another possible explanation could be that part of the local workers remained in the ranks of the reformist Social Democracy. Notwithstanding with this fact, there were still some key Communist meeting points in *Stařečka* like Novotný’s pub or Číhal’s pub.¹⁰⁷

Last boroughs are *Horka* and *Domky*, subsequently forming one borough, that together had 4492 inhabitants.¹⁰⁸ *Horka* was a small suburb on the hill south of the town center. Its population consisted mostly of the independent craftsman. Christian socialists had its headquarters here which was reflected in the politics of the locals. *Domky* were the newest of the boroughs. It saw its rise with the building of the train station in 1886. The borough had a rapid growth and in the lower part, around the hospital and the District court, new prestigious location emerged. In the upper parts however, there was a more working-class

¹⁰⁴ Růžková, Škrabal, *Historický lexikon obcí České republiky 1869–2005*.

¹⁰⁵ Janák, *Dějiny Města Třebíče II*.

¹⁰⁶ Šmejkal, “Vstupování Dělnického Hnutí Do Veřejného Prostoru: Třebíč Na Přelomu 19. a 20. století.”

¹⁰⁷ “Antonín Kalina Memoirs.”

¹⁰⁸ Růžková, Škrabal, *Historický lexikon obcí České republiky 1869–2005*.

neighborhood called *Žižkov*¹⁰⁹ where the Workers sports club (Dělnický sportovní klub) had its facilities.¹¹⁰

2.2 Structure, Organization and Actions of the Local Communist Oriented Working-Class Movement

In next part of the chapter, I illuminate the structure, organization and actions of the local working-class movement. Prior to the first World War, the local movement was predominantly Social Democratic and Centralist with some smaller sections of the working-class being Christian Socialist. At that time the National Socialists¹¹¹ didn't have much support in Moravia. After the war the position of the Social Democracy became stronger and after the split in 1920, most of the local party joined the newly formed Communist movement, while Social Democracy retained some support. National Socialists emerged as a new strong political force in the town, incorporating some workers, mostly independent craftsmen, as well as officials, intelligentsia and small tradesmen.¹¹² The Czechoslovak People's Party also had some support among the workers, especially among the craftsmen. However, the Communist party can be considered as the main representant of the local working-class movement, as will be detailed in the following section. We may observe this for example in the factories trade-union councils. In most of the factories the Red trade-unions has as many elected representatives as the other trade unions together. This party division is a crucial one as the whole political life

¹⁰⁹ Named after the Hussite warrior Jan Žižka z Trocnova. Prague borough of the same name was a hotbed of anarchism, socialism and communism.

¹¹⁰ Pavel Navrkal, *Hráli Za Slávu Třebíče* (Třebíč: Akcent, 2005).

¹¹¹ Czechoslovak National Socialists are not to be mistaken for the German ones. They were established in the late 19th century as a socialist party more receptive to the Czech national program as opposed to the internationalist Social Democracy. In the interwar period, they became the mainstream party of some of the Czech workers, petit bourgeoisie and state officials.

¹¹² Karel Čtveráček, *Třicet Let Národních Socialistů v Třebíči* (Třebíč, 1927).

and most of the social and cultural life of the interwar Czechoslovakia was rotating around political parties and their adjacent organizations.¹¹³

The Communist party

The position of the Communist party as well as other parties can be observed in the municipality election results.¹¹⁴ Then still united Social Democratic Party won the first elections in 1919 with 37,1% of the votes. The National Socialists and People's Party had 24% and 22,8%. The Communists won the 1925 as well as the 1927 elections with 30,8% and 29,6%. The Social Democracy obtained only 4,2 and 4,9%. In the 1931 elections, after the Bolshevization of the party and a tense campaign connected with the entry of the Baťa company into the town, the Communists finished third with 21,8% after National Socialists with 31,5% and People's Party with 22,3%. The Social Democracy rose to 7,7% in this election. Last election of the interwar period took place in 1938. It was won by National Socialists with 29,7% of the votes, followed by Communists with 25,2%. The People's Party finished third with 17,1% and the Social Democratic Party improved its results again to the 9,8%.¹¹⁵

The number of votes the Communist party obtained, 1807 in 1931 election and 2277 in 1938 election¹¹⁶, coincides with the numbers of members and supporters of the party stated in the District office reports. According to them, the membership of the party fluctuated between 300 and 500 while the number of supporters was always between 2000 and 2500.¹¹⁷ There is unfortunately no information about the percentage of women in the party.

¹¹³ Peter Heumos, "Strukturální Prvky První Československé Republiky: Politicko-Společenský Systém, Intermediární Organizace a Problém Stability.," *Soudobé Dějiny* 2., no. 2–3 (1995): 157–68.

¹¹⁴ In the interwar Czechoslovakia municipality elections, voting rights were reserved for the official inhabitants of the municipality, 21 years old or older, both women and men. One could be elected, if he/she was at least 26 years old. See Election code § č. 75/1919 Sb.

¹¹⁵ Kratochvíl, "Správní Vývoj Města Třebíč v letech 1918-1939."

¹¹⁶ Kratochvíl.

¹¹⁷ "Communist Movement of the Třebíč Region.," "Evidence of the Communist Movement in Třebíč Region."

The party was organized into seven neighborhood units, *Podklášteří*, *Stařečka*, *Inner town*¹¹⁸, *Domky*, *Jewish town* and two units in *Nové Dvory*. The local Communists described themselves as a group of extremely young people, especially compared to other parties.¹¹⁹ The functionaries of the party were usually in their 30s, some of them even 20s. As this could be partly self-stylization, it was a common trend that some of the older members of the party left after the Bolshevization of the party carried out by Klement Gottwald and his “Karlín boys”. Huge majority of the local party leadership were workers, both factory and domestic, with a few small entrepreneurs or craftsman. The number of women in the leadership positions of the party was very small. There was just one woman in eight Communist representatives in the municipal council. Two or three women were usually members of the regional leadership of the party.¹²⁰

The party organization suffered a great loss when Augustin Kliment, the most important local figure and future minister, was transferred by the party to Ostrava in 1931. In 1934 the party under the threat of the official ban started to organize parallel illegal structures. So called “illegal five”, mostly consisting of young party members without any other important functions, was established as a new leadership of the party in case it had to go into illegality. Unofficial channels of communication with center in Brno as well as with regional branches of the party were established and the material and machines to produce leaflets and newspapers were obtained, cover addresses were established and for a time the

¹¹⁸ It is telling for the situation of the Communist party in *Inner town*, that the leader of the party unit of the neighborhood didn't live in *Inner town* but in *Domky*.

¹¹⁹ “Antonín Kalina Memoirs.”

¹²⁰ “Communist Movement of the Třebíč Region.”

party operated covertly.¹²¹ This however changed in 1937 and 1938 when the Communist party got closer to other parties under the banner of anti-fascism¹²².

In the early 1930s, the local party was, according to the official reports, strongly anti-Social Democratic, following the directives of the Communist International about Social fascism. At one meeting on December 29, 1930, a speaker was calling for “Now the socialfascist and bourgeois state must be destroyed; worker’s state must be built.”¹²³ This direction was however abandoned later, when since 1931 the party focused more on a struggle with a Baťa company and later, in the late 1930s, on building of a united Popular front of leftist and liberal parties against fascism. Even though the Communist party proclaimed to be in a strong opposition against other parties, and especially in the early 30s acted hostile, the contacts and mutual interaction continued, especially on the level of the individuals and adjacent organizations of different parties. Therefore, sport clubs competed with each other in friendly competitions, amateur theaters cooperated in obtaining props and sceneries, as well as “borrowing” actors and trade unions tried to cooperate in the sphere of the working conditions, especially in the Baťa factory.¹²⁴

The Communist party entered the 1930s with a strong position. However, successful establishment of the Baťa company as well as the prolonged financial crisis led the party into an inner crisis in the mid 1930s. This crisis was marked with a disharmony in a local party leadership between two fractions, Kopta’s fraction, that was closer to the National Socialists and Kalina’s fraction, with more leftist views. The dispute grew into such a significance, that regional party leadership in Brno had to intervene. The party managed to recover from this

¹²¹ “Evidence of the Communist Movement in Třebíč Region.”

¹²² Jaroslav Mejzlík, *Dělnické Hnutí Na Třebíčsku 1917-1938* (Brno: Krajské nakladatelství, 1962).

¹²³ “Communist Movement of the Třebíč Region.”

¹²⁴ Martin Jemelka, Ondřej Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova komplexu* (Praha: Academia, 2016).

crisis partly by pursuing the new tactics of the Popular front and therefore a less aggressive position to other political parties, and partly by an emphasis on the involvement of the young members and functionaries of the youth and sport organizations.

2.3 The Adjacent Organizations of the Local Communist Party

While the party itself was the main organizational ground for the political struggle, it was the adjacent organizations of the party that maintained strong connections between the Communist party and the lived social reality of the working class. While these organizations retained some level of independence, their activities were coordinated by the Communist party.

The most important adjacent organization were the trade unions. Their importance was due to the fact, that interwar Czechoslovakia had so called Ghent system of the insurance in case of unemployment. The system counted with the trade unions as the main mediator in the process of payment of the unemployment compensations. The trade unions were in 1930s obtaining 2/3 of the unemployment compensation costs from the state and distributed them amongst their unemployed members.¹²⁵ This was crucial for Třebíč workers as the unemployment was extremely high in the 1930s, there were 3000 unemployed in 1932, 4300 in 1934 and still in 1938, there were 2704 unemployed.¹²⁶ There was altogether 600-800 members of different branches of Red trade unions in Třebíč in 1930s. Six main branches of Red trade unions existed, the Trade unions of tanners and curriers, the Trade unions of the construction workers, the Trade unions of the woodworkers, two different groups of the Trade

¹²⁵ Jiří Noha and Jakub Rákosník, *Kapitalismus Na Kolenou* (Praha: Auditorium, 2012).

¹²⁶ Mejzlík, *Dělnické hnutí na Třebíčsku 1917-1938*.

unions of the industrial leatherworkers and the Trade unions of transport and business workers.¹²⁷

The Red trade unions, under direct control of the Communist party, held majority in the factory councils of the two important local factories, shoemaking All-Right factory and UP factory, producing furniture. They also held majority in the *Borovina* factory council before the dismissal of the communist workers after the Baťa company took over. On the trade union level, the cooperation with other parties was frequent.¹²⁸ The trade unions were the main organizational force in the struggles for wages, working hours, overtimes, against dismissals and canceling of the production. While some struggles proved successful, for instance a strike against the cessation of the production in the All-Right factory¹²⁹, the trade unions were under a significant pressure from the Baťa company¹³⁰ as well as from the state apparatus, due to the unemployment compensations.

Organized working-class sport started in Třebíč in 1907 and over the time developed into *Jednota proletářské tělovýchovy* (JPT, Union of the proletariat physical education) that was an important adjacent organization of the party. While the number of members of the JPT was relatively low (around 50), many more people participated in its actions. Apart from its main focus, group gymnastics, valued for its collectivity, non-competitiveness and rhythmical movement of the bodies¹³¹, there was also an athletic branch, cyclist branch and chess branch. JPT also covered number of non-sportive activities. The JPT also had a women section, with separate groups for adult women, teenage women and schoolgirls. The

¹²⁷ "Evidence of the Communist Movement in Třebíč Region."

¹²⁸ "František Vítek Memoirs," 1969, fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 48, ič. 509, SOkA Třebíč.

¹²⁹ Mejzlík, *Dělnické hnutí na Třebíčsku 1917-1938*.

¹³⁰ "Antonín Kalina Memoirs."

¹³¹ David Hoffmann, "Bodies of Knowledge: Physical Culture and the New Soviet Man," in *Language and Revolution: Making Modern Political Identities*, ed. Igal Halpin (London; Portland OR: F. Cass, 2002), 228–42.

leadership of this section was wholly female. The women section focused mostly on group gymnastics and tried to incorporate dance into it.¹³² It seems like the involvement of women in sport and cultural organizations was much greater than in the party politics.

After the dissolution of the local *Proletkult* (cultural organization of the party), the cultural activities such as theater or choir singing became part of the JPT organization. There were two amateur theaters as part of the JPT, one producing fairy tales and plays intended for children, the other one playing social dramas, operettas as well as classical Czech dramas.¹³³ There was a new play every weekend or every other weekend and the revenue played an important role in the financing of the JPT as well as, otherwise often unemployed, actors. The theater ensemble was frequently cooperating with amateur theaters of other parties and organizations.¹³⁴ The choir, as well as the orchestra took part in many public activities of the JPT, like the parades, concerts and meetings, but also during the funerals of the members of the movement. The choir and the orchestra were not only reproducing popular and political music but produced their own songs with local thematic.¹³⁵

JPT was functioning partly in place of the (then forbidden) youth organization of the Communist party. Most of the party's young functionaries found their way into their position through activity in JPT. The last branch of the JPT, *Spartakovi skauti práce* (SSP, Spartacus scouts of work), was focused especially on the youth and its training in survival in nature skills. SSP organized numerous trips, camps and competitions in orientation at night.¹³⁶ Strong position of these scouts can be observed in a fact that they successfully organized Czechoslovak wide meeting of the SSP in Třebíč in 1924. Both scouts and other young

¹³² "Emílie Krejčová Memoirs," n.d., fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 49, ič. 519, SOKA Třebíč.

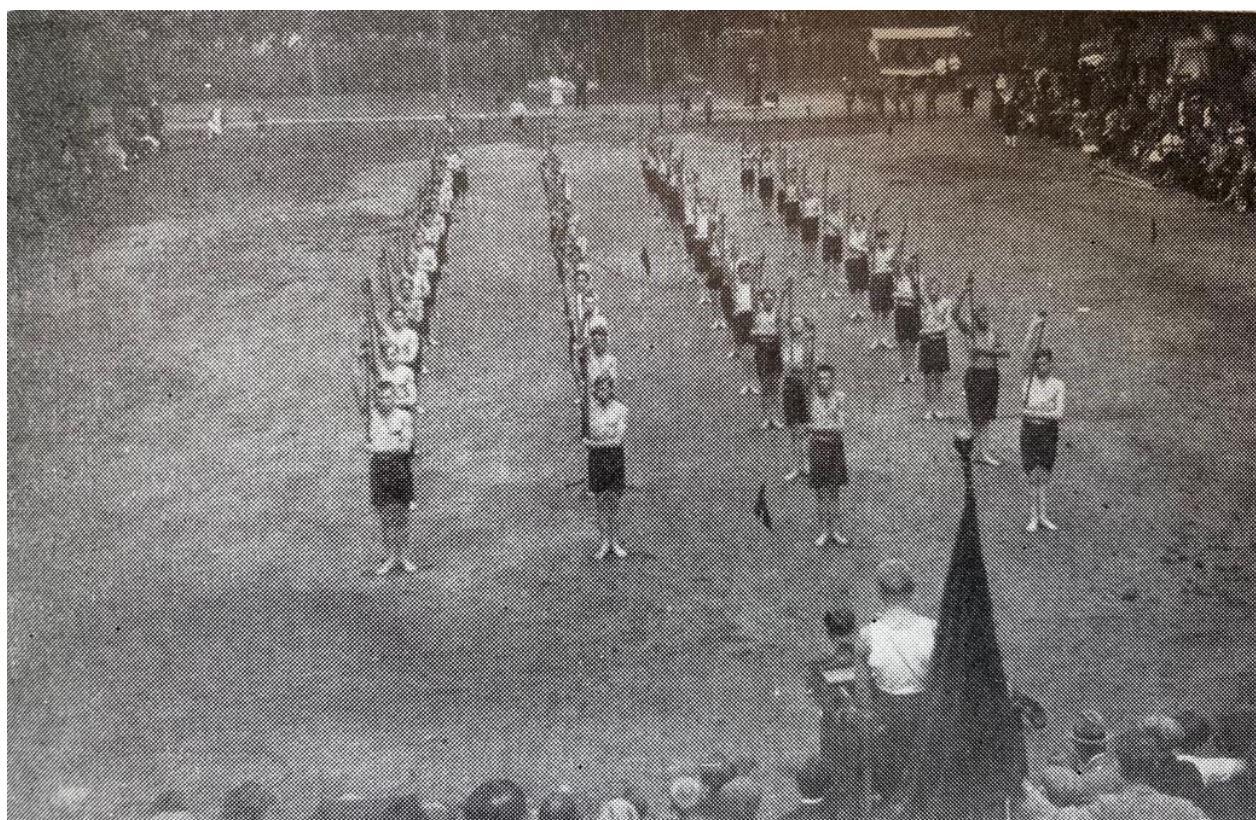
¹³³ "Karánek Memoirs," n.d., fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 49, ič. 530, SOKA Třebíč.

¹³⁴ "Jan Beránek Memoirs."

¹³⁵ "František Voda Memoirs," n.d., fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 49, ič. 533, SOKA Třebíč.

¹³⁶ "Jaroslav Hutař Memoirs," 1984, fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 49, ič. 517, SOKA Třebíč.

members of the JPT were used by the party in the everyday political struggles. It was them who were sticking up posters at night and destroying posters of other parties, spreading leaflets and newspapers, protecting the party meetings and the speakers at illegal demonstrations, as well as attacking and taking control of the meetings of other parties.¹³⁷ Especially active were the members of the cyclist branch of the JPT who apart from their trips, like the one to *Berlin Spartakiade* in 1931¹³⁸, and races also served as couriers between the party leadership in Třebíč and different regional branches of the party.¹³⁹



Pic. 4 Group gymnastics of the JPT in 1930s

¹³⁷ "Josef Bulant Memoirs," 1984, fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 49, ič. 516, SOkA Třebíč.

¹³⁸ "František Blažek Memoirs," 1951, fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 49, ič. 513, SOkA Třebíč.

¹³⁹ "Arnošt Bouzek Memoirs," n.d., fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 49, ič. 515, SOkA Třebíč.



Pic. 5 *Spartakovi Skauti Práce* troop in 1920s



Pic 6. Cyclist branch of the JPT in 1920s

Endeavors of the *Svaz přátel SSSR* (Union of the friends of the USSR) were oriented more towards politics and intellectual work. The main goal of the Union was the promotion of the USSR in the public life. Its activity consisted of screening of the Soviet movies, Russian language courses¹⁴⁰, organization of lectures about life in the USSR (e.g., Lectures by ing. Kroha “What I saw in the USSR or by dr. Bohumír Šmeral “Five-year plan in the USSR”) and distribution of the magazine *Svět Sovětů* (World of Soviets)¹⁴¹. The Union was trying to establish contacts with local intellectuals as well as with the university students from Třebíč studying in Brno or Prague. This proved successful as in the late 1930s several doctors of the local hospital became members of the previously overwhelmingly working-class party.¹⁴² While at the highest level the organization pursued the improving of the Czechoslovak-Soviet relations and had plenty of connections in the USSR itself, it was for the most part self-organized on the local level. The *Svaz* was mainly active from 1935 onwards, which corresponds with the official recognition of the USSR by Czechoslovakia in late 1934.

Other fringe organizations of the Communist party were *Rudá pomoc* (Red aid), and *Svaz proletářských bezvěrců* (Union of the proletariat atheists). *Rudá pomoc* was organizing financial help for striking workers or for the families of the imprisoned Communists. It had around 60 members, but it was banned in 1931. *Svaz proletářských bezvěrců* had around 80 members throughout the period. Its activity’s goal was centered around promotion of atheism and attacks on religion and church, mostly in a form of public lectures.

Last organization, that was only loosely associated to the Communist party was the movement of the unemployed. Since 1931, action committees of the unemployed were being founded as the Communist party was trying to get the movement under its control, according

¹⁴⁰ “František Vítek Memoirs.”

¹⁴¹ “Blahoslav Poláček Memoirs,” n.d., fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 49, ič. 532, SOKA Třebíč.

¹⁴² “Mudr. Karel Holubec Memoirs,” n.d., fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 48, ič. 488, SOKA Třebíč.

to Jaroslav Mejzlík¹⁴³ with some level of success. The unemployed were an important force on the streets and during the frequent spontaneous demonstrations in the early 1930s. They were also trying to pressure the municipality and state officials into raising the unemployment compensations, number of food stamps and to start public emergency works. This pressure often had a form of delegations of unemployed forcing their way into the offices, threatening with violence. An interesting example of this practice is a deputation of 20 women that entered the Regional office with their children on June 1st, 1932 and were demanding a job or raising nutrition benefits. They tried to force this issue by threatening of leaving their children in the office for the Regional office to care about them.¹⁴⁴

* * *

The Třebíč working-class movement had a strong position in the industrial town, affected dreadfully by the Great Depression. This position was particularly powerful in the boroughs *Nové Dvory*, *Jewish town* and *Podklášteří*, that can be considered as clearly working-class neighborhoods. While there were multiple political forces trying to grasp the working-class support, the Communist party of Czechoslovakia was the most successful actor. As the Communist party was engaging itself with the municipal politics and general organization of the political struggle, it was often the adjacent organizations that were communicating with the outer world and fulfilling the cultural and economic needs of the working class. Special emphasis must be put on the activity of the trade unions and JPT. The Communist movement was distinctively identifying itself as a movement of youth, future and work. Even though the

¹⁴³ Mejzlík, *Dělnické hnutí na Třebíčsku 1917-1938*.

¹⁴⁴ Mejzlík, *Dělnické hnutí na Třebíčsku 1917-1938*. p. 179.

Communist party often presented itself in its narratives as isolated from other political parties and standing in complete opposition against them, on the level of the adjacent organizations the cooperation was vivid and frequent, especially with the Social Democratic party, National Socialist party and Czechoslovak People's party. In this chapter I was dealing with the organized segments of the working class and especially those organized in the Communist movement. However, it doesn't mean that those who were not organized were not engaging in various parts of public life and that they didn't pursue their own agencies.

3. Baťa Company and its Engagement in Třebíč

Baťa company is the second crucial actor in my thesis. Its plans and actions it pursued shaped the town and its inhabitants. In this chapter, I am starting with the overall framework of the Baťa company thinking about labor and the workers – Bataism. Subsequently I am describing and analyzing the plans of the Baťa company, as well as its activities. Majority of the plans and actions of the company were dealing with factory buildings and the factory living quarters. It was however aimed at all aspects of the life of the employees, such as education, healthcare, alimentation, sports or culture.

3.1 Bataism

Baťa company used the concept of Bataism itself as a name for its style of the organization of the production and of its system of incentives. I define Bataism more broadly as a system of production and distribution of goods, organization of the production and a system of the relationships with the workers, developed by the Baťa company in the first half of the 20th century. In a technical sense, Bataism included the implementation of innovations, such as the assembly line; while Bataism was strongly influenced by Fordism and Taylorism, it also drew on European traditions of social capitalism and patriarchal relationship of the employer with the employees. Baťa was also applying a discourse, in which he emphasized his working-class origins and the fact that Zlín is a city of workers. He also strictly called his workers “coworkers” or “colleagues”.

Bataist mode of production was to raise the productivity by imposing the competitiveness between the workers and especially between workshops. The company acted as if each worker was an independent entrepreneur and every workshop an independent unit. Baťa emphasized autonomy of each workshop and associated it with a

family, with a workshop master as a father figure.¹⁴⁵ While this brought immense demands on the workers, it also brought them possibility to earn part of the profits produced by their workshops. On the other hand, it also made them responsible for the financial losses of the workshop, for delays in production or for malfunctions of the machines. Working hours were from 7am to 12am and from 2pm to 5pm, with the two-hour break for leisure, which was however very often used for work to fulfill harsh norms.¹⁴⁶ The amount of overtime work was in general a target for criticism of the Baťa company.

The overwhelming strive for productivity in the workplace was accompanied by an ambitious program of welfare for the workers. This program was consisting of common canteens, different types of company housing, healthcare and free time facilities, like cinemas or sport clubs.¹⁴⁷ This program can be called Social Capitalism and many contemporary Czechoslovak socialists deemed it as a direct competitor to their own visions of the future. The immense expectations of the productivity also meant high circulation of workers, mostly young, unskilled labor force from the neighboring hilly, agricultural region. As Baťa company controlled most of the worker's housing in the city, as well as the municipality, the relationship with its workers had a different dynamic than a standard relationship between an employer and an employee. It was also a relationship of a mayor and a citizen of a city and of a landlord and a tenant. Overall relationship of Baťa towards his workers was an authoritative one, when Baťa himself claimed that "Freedom ends at the factory gates."¹⁴⁸

Part of the Baťa company project was an attempt to build a self-sufficient conglomerate, consisting of production, distribution, energy and water sources and

¹⁴⁵ Romana Lešingrová, *Baťova soustava řízení* (Roma, 2008).

¹⁴⁶ Jiří Pokorný et al., *Historie, Odbory a Společnost* (Praha: ČMKOS, 2020).

¹⁴⁷ Martin Jemelka, Ondřej Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova koncernu* (Praha: Academia, 2016).

¹⁴⁸ Romana Lešingrová, *Baťova soustava řízení* (Roma, 2008). P.23.

agricultural production. This conglomerate had divisions of leather and rubber production, shoe production, socks and stockings production, distribution, chain of shops with different services concerning everything from repairs to feet massages, as well as the company's own "financial sector". In many perspectives, Baťa was an outsider of Czechoslovak politics and industry in similar way Stefan Link describes Ford.¹⁴⁹ The Bataist project however also had more general ambitions. Especially Jan Antonín Baťa had a vision of a modernist developmental project for Czechoslovakia. Using Bataist mode of production, he proposed abandoning of the liberal modernity in favor of building centrally planned infrastructure, as well as creating indentured labor camps for constructing roads, railways and dams by the unemployed people.¹⁵⁰

While Bataism was an original system, it was inspired by both Taylorist and Fordist approaches to the production. Taylorism was an attempt to scientific management of the production which emerged from the 1880s and was most widely discussed in the 1910s. It was named after Frederic Taylor, one of its main proponents. Taylorists believed, that labor can be measured, documented and decomposed into simple tasks. Main goal for this approach, was to increase productivity by optimalization of the tasks of the labor. In order to do so, high level of control over employees had to be established, as well as an increase in management work. While the optimalization of the labor process meant establishment of the short breaks, it did not take workers into consideration more than as tools executing simple tasks. With better organization of labor, less skill was needed, which enabled the entrepreneurs to hire cheaper, unskilled workforce. Another way Taylor envisioned to increase productivity was to link worker's compensation more directly to the output of her or his work in form of piece

¹⁴⁹ Stefan Link, "Transnational Fordism. Ford Motor Company, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union in the Interwar Years."

¹⁵⁰ Jan Antonín Baťa, *Budujme stát pro 40 000 000 lidí* (Zlín: Tisk, 1937).

rates. Documentation and optimization of the labor process also created possibilities for the automatization of labor.¹⁵¹

Fordism was a system of production, developed in the Ford company in Detroit in the beginning of the 20th century. Ford company itself did not use the term and it was popularized by Antonio Gramsci¹⁵². Ford had its breakthrough with its Model T, robust and accessible automobile, which it was able to sell at significantly lower price than other companies. Ford reduced the price of the production significantly by introducing the assembly lines, better organization of labor, standardization of the production and the mass production. Part of Ford's strategy was to promote consumerism among his workers. This approach was based on the thinking, that if the workers financial situation would be better, they would be able to purchase automobiles. Therefore, the profit-sharing policy was established, when the income of the workers was divided into two parts, wage and share of the profit. The share of the profit was based on one's productivity and efficiency, as well as one's order and morality in personal life. The whole system was largely based on immigrant labor.¹⁵³ The Fordist system was implemented in several European companies especially after the World War I and had a significant impact on the Soviet industry in the interwar period.¹⁵⁴

3.2. History of the Borovina Factory and the Baťa Company Takeover

The main space of the activity of the Baťa company in Třebíč, was the factory in Borovina. Třebíč in general and Borovina in particular, was an ideal place for a production with

¹⁵¹ Hugh G.J. Aitken. *Scientific Management in Action: Taylorism at Watertown Arsenal, 1908-1915* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

¹⁵² Antonio Gramsci. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers Co, 1989).

¹⁵³ Elana Firsth, „Assembly Line Americanization: Henry Ford's Progressive Politics“. In: *Michigan Journal of History*. (Fall, 2012).

¹⁵⁴ Kurt S. Schultz, „The American Factor in Soviet Industrialization: Fordism and the First Five-Year Plan, 1928-1932“. (The Ohio State University, 1992).

enough water and timber sources, as well as a qualified work force. During the 19th century, Třebíč became a third biggest shoemaking center in Austria, with 27 shoemaking companies.¹⁵⁵ While Baťa acquired the factory only at the beginning of the 1930s, it already had a 90-year-old tradition. Karl Budischowsky started to build the factory in Borovina in 1840. Budischowsky family was a family of tanner craftsmen, which managed to transform their craft into an industrial complex. Their original capital arose from the military commissions during the 7 years' war. Budischowsky company also owned the old family workshop in *Stařečka* borough of Třebíč and an estate in nearby village Kožichovice. Budischowsky became prosperous in the second half of the 19th century largely because of the military commissions, especially during the 1866 Austro-Prussian war.¹⁵⁶

Budischowsky managed to keep pace with the development of the leather making industry with new machines brought from England or the United States.¹⁵⁷ It also expanded its production into the shoemaking, bag making, saddle making and belt making. Budischowsky considered its workers as craftsmen and enforced guild-type education of the workers, with wandering journeymen as a necessary part of the education. In 1871, Budischowsky company established a factory in Vienna and later, in 1904 another in Bošany, nowadays Slovakia.¹⁵⁸ In 1908, the company moved its headquarters into Vienna altogether, however, Borovina factory remained as a main producer in the company. In the beginning of the 20th century, Borovina was the biggest leather making factory in Austria with more than 1000 employees. Out of those roughly 800 worked in the factory and 200 as home

¹⁵⁵ Mejzlík, *Dějiny Závodů Gustava Klimenta v Třebíči-Borovině*.

¹⁵⁶ Jan Janák, *Dějiny města Třebíče II*. (Brno: Blok, 1981).

¹⁵⁷ Mejzlík, *Dějiny Závodů Gustava Klimenta v Třebíči-Borovině*.

¹⁵⁸ Mejzlík.

shoemakers. Between 1905 and 1907 the company started to build factory housing for its employees, inspired by the English factory towns.¹⁵⁹

The first world war brought new opportunities for military commissions for the Budischowsky company, and it decided to expand with connection to German capital, more precisely with the company Siegle und Co. From the connection of Budischowsky and Siegle, new name of the company arose – Busi.¹⁶⁰ However, the defeat of the Austro-Hungarian empire in the war meant a catastrophe for the Busi company. The failed state was unable to pay for the goods it ordered and new states commissions were unattainable. The emergence of Czechoslovakia cut off Borovina factory from the headquarters of the company in Vienna.¹⁶¹ The new Czechoslovak state did not look fondly on Budischowsky family support for Austria as well as for the German language and national cause. Another problem for the company was a loss of leadership, as young Rudolf Budischowsky died while serving as an Austrian army officer.¹⁶²

The last huge advantage of the Busi company were its tanning workshops. Even Baťa company bought part of its leather from Busi. However, the problems of the Busi company continued throughout the early 1920s and culminated in a six-month standstill of the production in 1922. After this standstill, the Baťa company, who was able to react more flexibly to the crisis of the early 1920s, started to dominate the Czechoslovak shoe industry.¹⁶³ Through the 1920s, Busi company was more and more under the influence of the capital of the *Moravská agrární a průmyslová banka* (Moravian agrarian and industrial bank). The bank

¹⁵⁹ Martin Jemelka, Ondřej Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova komplexu* (Praha: Academia, 2016).

¹⁶⁰ Jemelka, Ševeček.

¹⁶¹ Jemelka, Ševeček.

¹⁶² Mejzlík, *Dějiny Závodů Gustava Klimenta v Třebíči-Borovině*.

¹⁶³ Petra Flokovičová, "Budišovský versus Baťa. Příspěvek k Dějinám Průmyslového Komplexu v Třebíči-Borovině," *Památky Vysočiny*, no. 4 (2015).

finally bought the Busi company in 1928 and last members of the Budischowsky family left the board of trustees of the company.¹⁶⁴

The Moravian agrarian and industrial bank did not save the company, as it cared more for the financial gains than development and modernization of the production. As the production was non-rentable, in fall 1930 the Busi company was on the verge of the abyss. On January 1st, 1931, the company stopped its production.¹⁶⁵ By that time, there were around 2500 employees in the company, out of which 2250 were factory workers. These employees also had around 3500 family members dependent on them so together, there were 6000 people connected to the factory, which formed one third of the inhabitants of the town.¹⁶⁶ Local state authorities as well as the municipality knew, that if the stoppage of the production in the factory would have been permanent, it would most likely cause major social upheaval.¹⁶⁷ Even more as a significant part of the local working class and the Busi company workers sympathized with the Communist party. In 1929 the factory worker's council consisted of 7 communist representatives and 5 representatives of all other political parties.¹⁶⁸

In this moment the Moravian agrarian and industrial bank started negotiations with the Baťa company, while the state authorities served as a mediator. The Baťa company was hesitant to buy the factory, as it feared the non-rentability of the production as well as an enormous debt of the Busi company. In the end, Baťa company bought the Busi from the Moravian agrarian and industrial bank for a sum way below the market price and the

¹⁶⁴ Mejzlík, *Dějiny Závodů Gustava Klimenta v Třebíči-Borovině*.

¹⁶⁵ Michala Havlíčková, "Busi a.s., Továrna Na Výrobu Obuvi" (Unpublished BA thesis, Pardubice, Univerzita Pardubice, 2007). <https://dk.upce.cz/handle/10195/25055>. Accessed on 17.2.2021.

¹⁶⁶ Jemelka, Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova komplexu*.

¹⁶⁷ Jemelka, Ševeček.

¹⁶⁸ Mejzlík, *Dělnické Hnutí Na Třebíčsku 1917-1938*.

Czechoslovak state compensated the bank for the difference. It also granted the Baťa company benefits and concessions in taxes, foreign exchange and export policies. Subsequently, these benefits helped the Baťa company significantly in its push towards expansion into foreign countries during the 1930s.¹⁶⁹ Because of the legal issues with the takeover of the Busi company, Baťa company had to change its form into a joint-stock company. While it was expected this would change the authoritative leadership of Tomáš and Jan Antonín Baťa, the change did not have any deeper influence on the company.¹⁷⁰

3.3. Plans and Construction Activities of the Baťa Company

The original motives of the Baťa company for buying the Busi company are still not entirely clear. While the company itself claimed it cares for the employment of the people of the town and for the overall economics of the region, some of its actions in the early period suggest different reasons. The critics of the Baťa company in Třebíč claimed it only purchased the factory to get rid of the competition and Baťa was indeed able to lower the prices of their products in the moment the takeover of the Busi company was finalized in March 1931 and thus continuing with its practice of gaining the monopoly via dumping prices.¹⁷¹ It also started a “restructuring” of the production. After the initial stock-taking of the factory and the temporary suspension of the production, it renewed the production, however on a much lower rate. During the summer of 1932, the leather making production was stopped and the machines were transported to Otrokovice, another Baťa company town near Zlín.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Bohumil Lehár, *Dějiny Baťova Koncernu*.

¹⁷⁰ Jemelka, Ševeček, *Tovární Města Baťova Komplexu*.

¹⁷¹ Mejzlík, *Dělnické Hnutí Na Třebíčsku 1917-1938*.

¹⁷² Bohumil Lehár, *Dějiny Baťova Koncernu*.

Connected to this process was a constant lowering of the number of the workers. While at the time of the takeover there was about 2800 employees in the Busi company, during the rest of the 1931 it was on average less than 2000. By the end of 1932, it was only 750 employees left and this number was stable during the 1933 as well. This was the most drastic dismissal of the workers in the whole Baťa corporation and connected to it was also a significant decline in profit of the company.¹⁷³ All these facts are contributing to the impression that the main reason why the Baťa company bought Busi company with the Borovina factory was to get rid of the competition and to gain the state incentives, benefits and concessions. Baťa was probably quite sceptic about the rentability of the factory as well as the reliability of the local workers.¹⁷⁴

This approach however started to change in 1933. That year was the Busi company, still formally independent, merged into the Baťa concern and the factory became *Baťa a.s.- pobočný závod v Třebíči-Borovině* [Baťa corp.- subsidiary factory in Třebíč-Borovina].¹⁷⁵ In the same year the company started to plan the constructions and changes in urbanism of Borovina. Two plans were created, the plan to rebuild the factory itself, by Arnošt Sehnal from the Baťa company construction department, and an urban regulation plan by an architect Robert Hugo Podzemný.¹⁷⁶ The plan to reconstruct the factory counted with the demolition of most of the old buildings, reconstruction of the rest and construction of the new ones, based on the design used in Zlín. The old factory consisted of a randomly placed buildings, constructed without any general plan.

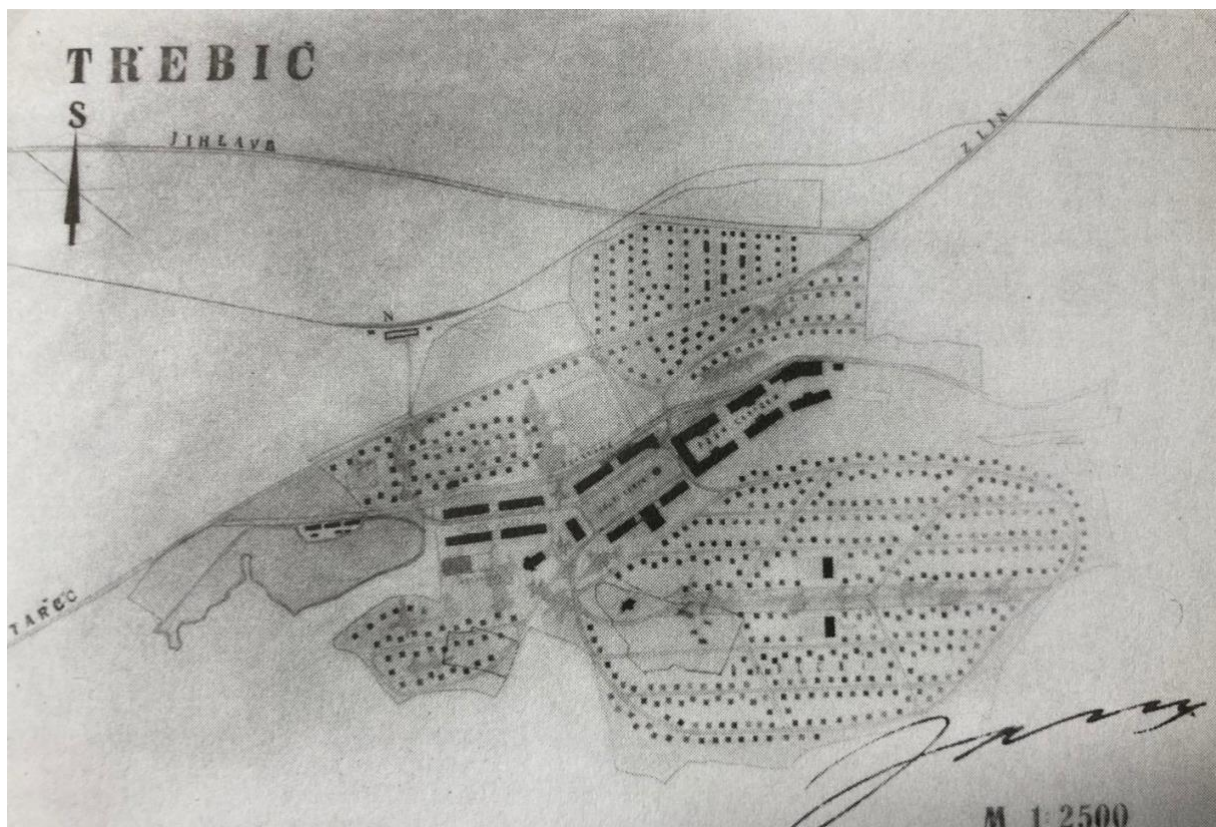
¹⁷³ Jemelka and Ševeček, *Tovární Města Baťova Komplexu*.

¹⁷⁴ "Josef Radvanovský Letter to J.A. Baťa," n.d., Fond Baťa a. s., Zlín, pobočný závod Třebíč, kr. 1. ič. 10., MZA Brno.

¹⁷⁵ Bohumil Lehár, *Dějiny Baťova Koncernu*.

¹⁷⁶ Jemelka, Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova komplexu*.

Baťa company on the other hand wanted a modern, rational and planned construction, following the principal of an open plan in greenery and a principal of functional zones. These principals were a basis of the regulation plan for the factory housing and public buildings. The plan proposed the creation of 4 new living quarters on hills and hillsides around the factory, which was about to form a center of the factory town, with a projected square. The square was supposed to have a church and to be surrounded by public buildings. The square and the public buildings were however never built, and the factory town therefore lacked any center other than the factory.¹⁷⁷ The living quarters were to be formed by detached and semi-detached houses standing individually inside gardens in a regular formation. This was a similar urban structure to that of Třebíč, with a center of a town in a valley near a river and the living quarters scattered on the hillsides and hills of the valley.



¹⁷⁷ Jemelka, Ševeček.

Pic. 7 Regulation plan of Borovina from 1930s

From 1935, these plans started to be carried out, under the leadership of a new director of a factory Josef Radvanovský. Mostly demolition work was done in 1935, especially of the old tanning workshops. As Radvanovský stated “New spirit can only develop in the factory, when everything that reminds us of the old circumstances disappears.”¹⁷⁸ In 1936, three new factory buildings were constructed. All of them were five-store, standardized Baťa factory buildings. These buildings were primarily designed for a production of hosiery which was a new direction the Baťa company planned for Borovina factory after the cancellation of the leather making production. The new buildings had a reinforced concrete construction with bricks and large windows, that enabled enough light and air to flow into the workspace.¹⁷⁹



Pic. 8 New factory buildings in Borovina, late 1930s

¹⁷⁸ “Josef Radvanovský Memoirs,” 1938, Fond Baťa a. s., Zlín, pobočný závod Třebíč, kr. 1. ič. 10., MZA Brno.

¹⁷⁹ Petra Flokovičová, “Budišovský versus Baťa. Příspěvek k Dějinám Průmyslového Komplexu v Třebíči-Borovině.”

The demolition of parts of the old factory continued in 1937 when old warehouses, boiler house, factory kitchen and canteen and some of the old workshops were demolished. In their place, new buildings and facilities were being constructed, such as a new boiler house in 1936, sports ground in 1937 or a boarding school for young women, whose construction started in 1939. The courtyard of the factory was transformed into a park-like space with vast numbers of newly planted bushes and trees.¹⁸⁰ However, majority of the construction work was done outside the factory itself and it consisted especially of the construction of the factory houses. While the first 10 detached houses and two *svobodárna* (collective houses, whose name implicated they were meant for housing of young, single workers) were built in 1932, majority of the construction of the living quarters started in 1935.¹⁸¹

Out of the four living quarters proposed in the regulation plan only two were constructed. Both were situated north of the factory, on the hillsides between the factory in the valley and a railroad and a road on the top of the hill. 10 semi-detached houses were built already in 1935, followed by 5 detached houses, 20 semi-detached houses and five *svobodárna* in 1936. In 1937 the tempo of the construction got even faster, as 10 detached houses and 29 semi-detached houses were constructed. Finally in 1939, 10 more detached and 10 more semi-detached houses were built.¹⁸² The construction of the houses then continued even during the World War II. All the houses were set in the gardens and greenery. Jemelka and Ševeček claim, that one of the quarters that was not constructed was the most interesting from the urbanistic point of view with a leaf-like street plan.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Jemelka, Ševeček.

¹⁸¹ „List of buildings constructed in Třebíč-Borovina“, 1940, kart. č. 1, inv. č. 16, MZA Brno.

¹⁸² „List of Buildings Constructed in Třebíč-Borovina.“

¹⁸³ Jemelka, Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova komplexu*.



Pic. 9 *Borovina* factory with the factory housing in 1940s

The detached houses were meant for the higher-ranking workers and management of the factory. Unlike the semi-detached houses, they had garages. The semi-detached houses had a kitchen, a living room and a bathroom on the ground floor and two bedrooms on the second floor. In houses constructed later, the bathroom was moved upstairs. The *svobodárna* were collective houses with 16 double bedrooms and 3 single bedrooms. They were equipped with built in wardrobes, chrome furniture and central heating.¹⁸⁴ By the end of the 1930s there was therefore 25 detached houses, 79 semi-detached houses with 158 flats and 7 *svobodárna* with 133 flats.¹⁸⁵

New factory town of *Borovina* was projected as an independent town of work and workers. The ambition of the Baťa company was for the greatest number of its workers to live

¹⁸⁴ Jemelka, Ševeček.

¹⁸⁵ "List of Buildings Constructed in Třebíč-Borovina."

in *Borovina*.¹⁸⁶ It also strived for self-sustainability of the factory town. It owned and operated with several estates, fields, meadows and woods around Třebíč. After the Baťa company failed to gain any significant influence over the Třebíč municipality in the local elections of 1931, it was seriously planning a secession of *Borovina* from Třebíč, which however never occurred and the relationships with the municipality normalized during the 1930s. The company was reluctant to hire workers who worked in other Třebíč factories previously, as it did not trust them. Josef Radvanovský speaks in his memoirs of Třebíč in early 1930s as a town controlled by the Communists, who feel to have a right to speak into the matters of the factory. On the other hand, he describes that the situation is much better from his point of view in late 1930s.¹⁸⁷

For this reason, the Baťa company wanted to “construct our own people”¹⁸⁸. The Baťa company focused especially on younger people in their plans to mold their own workforce which would cooperate in the Bataist project. Radvanovský himself juxtaposes young Baťa workers to “old shoemakers-enemies” who were allegedly more prone to Communism.¹⁸⁹ The creation of the new Bataist workers was to happen primarily through the Bataist labor itself but also through the education. The Baťa company was planning to implement their educational system, developed in Zlín, into Třebíč. This system consisted primarily of *Baťova škola práce* (Baťa’s school of labor) for adolescent workers, and of Studijní ústav (Institute of studies) which was focused on the education for adult workers.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ “Josef Radvanovský Memoirs.”

¹⁸⁷ “Josef Radvanovský Letter to J.A. Baťa.”

¹⁸⁸ “Josef Radvanovský Memoirs.”

¹⁸⁹ “Josef Radvanovský Letter to J.A. Baťa.”

¹⁹⁰ Jemelka, Ševeček, *Tovární město Baťova komplexu*.

3.4 The Welfare, Cultural, and Social Activities of the Baťa Company in Třebíč

Most of the Baťa company activities in Třebíč aimed at its own workers, their welfare and life in general. As stated above, education played a crucial role in shaping a new Bataist worker. Třebíč branch of the Baťa's school of labor was founded in 1937. It had three programs, one focusing on shoemaking, another on knitted goods and the last one on engineering.¹⁹¹ In the first year there were 140 students in the school. The school was a form of high school, for both boys and girls. The age of the students was between 13-17 years. The basis of the curriculum was mathematics, chemistry, business correspondence, accountancy and study of foreign languages – German and English. Apart from this common curriculum, each program had their own specialized one. For example, the shoemaking program had special classes of technical drawing and studies of raw materials. The hosiery/knitted goods program had classes on knitting, woven fabrics and special chemistry.¹⁹²

While the theoretical classes were taught by the professors from various Třebíč high schools, the practical ones were taught by the experts from the factory. The school was trying to apply modern methods of teaching, for instance screening of the educational movies, mostly illustrating different processes of the production.¹⁹³ Overall, there was a strong emphasis on a close connection between theory and praxis. Students at school were, apart from their school education, also working in the factory, in a form of apprenticeship. While they were getting paid for their work, majority of their earnings was used to cover the price of the tuition for their education. Rest of their earnings was being put into their bank accounts and students had no access to their money until they graduated.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ "Josef Radvanovský Memoirs."

¹⁹² Jemelka, Ševeček, *Tovární město Baťova komplexu*.

¹⁹³ Jemelka, Ševeček.

¹⁹⁴ Jiří Pokorný et al., *Historie, Odbory a Společnost*.

The graduation was mostly happening after 3 or 4 years of studying, when most of the graduates were about 17 years old. The students had to pass final exams and afterward were employed by the Baťa company. They usually occupied low and mid-level management positions. Baťa's schools of labor were generally considered as very prestigious in the interwar Czechoslovakia. In 1937 the Zlín branch of the school had 21 000 applicants. Apart from the practical and theoretical knowledge of the production, the students were also expected to identify with Bataist principles. They were taught about rational ways of dealing with money, rationalization of their thinking about time and its use and about partnership between workers and the company.¹⁹⁵

The school tried to diminish the class differences between students by making them wear uniforms and live in a collective housing of the boarding schools with strict regime. In Třebíč, two such boarding schools were constructed, with 16 students per room, 18 rooms per floor and their own bathrooms, canteen, kitchen, laundry room, drying room, club room and sports ground.¹⁹⁶ The school was on the other hand reinforcing gender differences between students. While practical thinking, rationality and ability for flexible solution of problematic situations were emphasized amongst young men students, there was a different emphasis for young women studying the Baťa's school of labor. They were being educated as future mothers and housewives. Cooking, sewing, singing and childcare were part of the young women curriculum.¹⁹⁷

Another important educational institution was the Institute of studies. In Třebíč, the Institute was founded in the same year as the Baťa's school of labor, 1937. Its primal focus was the education of the workers, who were already working in the factory. The Institute was

¹⁹⁵ Jiří Pokorný et al.

¹⁹⁶ Jitka Svobodová, "Působení Firmy Baťa v Třebíči 1931-1945" (Brno, Masarykova Univerzita, 2006).

¹⁹⁷ Jiří Pokorný et al., *Historie, Odbory a Společnost*.

organizing language courses, field trips into different factories – often to Zlín, movie screenings and lectures. Lectures were given in the Baťa cinema and were often given by the professors of the Třebíč Gymnasium.¹⁹⁸ Factory press was another way through which the company tried to educate and influence its workers. Factory newspaper *Borovina* was established in 1936 and was led by an editor Jaroslav Křídlo. Its focus was on the news in the factory itself, on other factories of the Baťa company, especially the Zlín headquarters, and on the news from Czechoslovakia. It was also publishing letters and messages from the employees, together with cinema program, articles on rationalization of the production, news on events organized by the factory and its organizations and the menu of the factory canteen.¹⁹⁹

Baťa company put a lot of emphasis on the factory canteen and diet in general. Radvanovský in his memoirs describes how the old canteen was a dark, small room smelling of alcohol and cigarettes. He also emphasized how Baťa company fights against an old habit of eating a lunch brought from home – usually coffee and bread – in ditches or at the hillsides near the factory.²⁰⁰ By 1937, there was a factory canteen and two restaurants. The first one was *Lidová restaurace* (People's restaurant) with Czech dishes for reasonable prices and with a choice between two meals daily. The second one was *Francouzská restaurace* (French restaurant) with a wider variety of meals, inspired by international cuisine. The personnel of the kitchens were being educated in Zlín factory kitchens.²⁰¹

Worker's bodies were of great importance for the Baťa company. Apart from good and healthy diet, the emphasis was mainly put on healthcare and sport. Significant part of the

¹⁹⁸ Jemelka, Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova komplexu*.

¹⁹⁹ Mejzlík, *Dějiny Závodů Gustava Klimenta v Třebíči-Borovině*.

²⁰⁰ "Josef Radvanovský Memoirs."

²⁰¹ Jemelka, Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova komplexu*.

healthcare was a prevention and healthy working conditions with enough air and light. With a rapid development of the factory and the factory town in the second half of the 1930s a permanent presence of a doctor was needed. Therefore, a factory ambulance was founded in 1936 and it managed to deal with 7800 cases or visits the same year.²⁰² Previously the workers had to visit doctors in Třebíč. Later, in 1940 the factory medical care was expanded with a foundation of a dentist office.

Sport was another part of the body politics of the Baťa factory. Factory sports club *SK Borovina* was founded in 1936 in order to increase the physical strength and toughness of the workers. At first the members of the club were doing sports on an improvised sports ground or in an old warehouse. However, in 1937 the construction of a new stadium began in one of the living quarters, close to the train station. The construction was at first done by volunteers from the ranks of the club but soon after, the company helped the club by sending its workers to the construction site. The stadium for 500 people was finished in 1938.²⁰³ *SK Borovina* soon developed into one of the strongest sports clubs in the region. It had 7 sport departments, most notably football, handball, athletics, but also cycling, motorists or hunting. Especially football was popular, and the team led by a Czechoslovak international player Karel Burkert was very successful.²⁰⁴

Last part of the Baťa company activities was culture. The Baťa company believed that their new workers should be educated and cultural beings. Culture also meant entertainment and leisure for its hardworking employees. Director Radvanovský claimed that “There are libraries in the apartments of the *Borovina* factory town, only highly positioned people

²⁰² Jemelka, Ševeček.

²⁰³ Jemelka, Ševeček.

²⁰⁴ Pavel Navrkal, *Hráli Za Slávu Třebíče*.

previously had.”²⁰⁵ In 1933 the Theater club of the Baťa employees was established, which was transformed into the Social club in *Borovina* in 1938. It had a much wider focus, as it had theater section, musical section, singing section and a lecture section. The club was presided by the director Radvanovský and the membership did not only consist of the factory workers, but also middle-class people from Třebíč.²⁰⁶ Radvanovský was especially appraising a factory jazz orchestra.²⁰⁷ Another cultural society connected to the factory was a Club of the Baťa’s school of labor alumni. It was established in 1938 and was at heart of the majority of the cultural activities in *Borovina*. The club was organizing educational, entertaining and sporting events. It owned a recreational cabin near the Steklý pound, around 7 km from the factory, which was a place of many leisure activities of the Baťa workers, especially during summers.²⁰⁸

* * *

Activities of the Baťa company in Třebíč had a very dynamic development. The takeover of the Busi company and the *Borovina* factory was beneficial for Baťa, as it disposed of a potential competition and got the state benefits. For the first couple of years, the Baťa company probably did not see much potential in *Borovina*, as it limited the production significantly and dismissed majority of its workers. The situation was starting to change in 1933 and it finally changed in 1935. After failed attempts to have an influence over Třebíč in the early 1930s, the Baťa company started to develop *Borovina* as an independent factory town. It rebuilt the factory and built new living quarters for its employees. It also started to

²⁰⁵ “Josef Radvanovský Memoirs.”

²⁰⁶ Jemelka, Ševeček, *Tovární město Baťova komplexu*.

²⁰⁷ “Josef Radvanovský Memoirs.”

²⁰⁸ Jitka Svobodová, “Působení Firmy Baťa v Třebíči 1931-1945.”

impose Bataist ways of thinking and producing. In order to impose Bataism to its workers, the company tried to create a new, Bataist worker, disconnected from the local working-class tradition. Apart from the labor itself and the factory housing, this was being done by the company being involved in worker's culture, healthcare, alimentation, leisure, education or sports. In the next chapter I will deal with the analysis of the different types of relationships between the Baťa company and the working class of Třebíč.

4. Relationships of the Baťa Company and the Local Working Class

In the last chapter of this thesis, I am dealing with questions concerning the relations between the Baťa company and the local working class and working-class movement in Třebíč. While older, communist historiography emphasized the conflict potential of such relations and newer historiography focused on the cooperation and partnership, I deal with the whole variety of different types of relations. The story of the relations is very complicated, intertwined and has many sides and viewpoints to it. The relationships were very different for instance between the Baťa company and the 30-year-old communist trade union functionary from Třebíč and between the company and a 17-year-old female worker from a nearby village. While I try to include as many sides of the story as I can, I acknowledge that I am not able to include all the sides, especially because of the lack of sources. In the first part of the chapter, I deal with the questions and forms of conflict in Třebíč with a special emphasis on the early 1930s. In the second part I illustrate the coexistence of different actors in the space of a town on the example of the May Day celebrations. Finally, in the third part I analyze the cooperation and compliance of the actors, especially on the example of the Baťa company workers.

4.1 Conflict

“Here in Třebíč, called sometimes Moravian Kladno, found Tomáš Baťa out, that Třebíč is not Zlín.”²⁰⁹ Especially the first years of the 1930s in Třebíč were full of conflicts and the atmosphere in the town was very tense and political activities increased significantly.²¹⁰ Especially the working-class youth was involved in writing slogans on the walls, spreading

²⁰⁹ “Antonín Kalina Memoirs.”

²¹⁰ Jemelka and Ševeček, *Tovární Města Baťova Komplexu*.

leaflets, posting posters or breaking up other parties' meetings. In this atmosphere, violence erupted.

In his memoirs Antonín Kalina, leading interwar Communist activist in Třebíč, describes one of these confrontations.²¹¹ On Wednesday, 23rd September 1931, the local Communist party was holding several meetings in pubs in different parts of the town, connected to the upcoming municipal elections. Antonín Kalina was presiding over the meeting in a pub in *Jewish town*, a local communist stronghold.²¹² At one point during the evening, he learnt that several Baťa company “boxers and professional brawlers”²¹³ were brought into Třebíč from Zlín by a company bus. He also found out that they were in a pub called *U Číhalů* in *Stařečka* borough, waiting for an upcoming communist meeting to start and to break it up. Kalina interrupted the meeting he presided, gathered the present communists and their sympathizers in *Jewish town* pubs and rallied them to *Stařečka*.

The group consisted mainly of the young members of the Communist youth and Communist sports organizations, but also of the unemployed workers who were spending their days in pubs. The communists got near the *U Číhalů* pub and divided themselves into two groups. Afterwards, one group got to the back door of the pub and attacked the “Baťa boxers” inside. The second group attacked shortly afterwards through the front door. The brawl broke out and the “Baťa boxers” were thrown out of the front door and down the stairs, where they were beaten. Kalina also claimed that some of the local social democrats and national socialists were present, tried to defend the Baťa boxers and were also thrown out. In the aftermath, Kalina defended these violent actions by claiming the Baťa boxers from Zlín

²¹¹ “Antonín Kalina Memoirs.”

²¹² Mejzlík, *Dělnické Hnutí Na Třebíčsku 1917-1938*.

²¹³ “Antonín Kalina Memoirs.”

had nothing to do in the Třebíč election meeting, since they do not have voting rights in Třebíč.²¹⁴

Another communist activist Josef Bulant remembered that when the communists arrived at the scene at the U Číhalů pub, the “Baťa boxers” already started to threaten the speaker. He also claimed that the Baťa company invited a local journalist Cvek to the scene, to report about violent communist meeting, who had to hide under the car while the “Baťa boxers” were being beaten in front of the pub.²¹⁵ In the next few days, several more communist meetings were attacked, in the *Inner town* as well as in the working-class neighborhoods of *Nové Dvory* and *Nové Město*. Kalina claimed all attacks were unsuccessful and the experiences contributed to the formation of informal paramilitary groups consisting of the members of Communist youth organization and Communist sports organization.²¹⁶

While this event was an extreme one, it is a good illustration of the situation in Třebíč in the early 1930s. Baťa company was very suspicious of the Třebíč workers and was hesitant to continue with production in Třebíč after it took over the factory. Director Radvanovský’s described his notion of Třebíč workers and the overall atmosphere in the town in his memoirs.²¹⁷ He claimed Třebíč workers “had more to say concerning the factory than the owner”²¹⁸ in the 1920s, especially in the early 1920s and that they thought they have a right to be a part of a decision-making process in the factory. He described the customs of the local workers: “On the evenings and blue Mondays²¹⁹, that were consistently preserved in Třebíč, Třebíč shoemakers, mainly journeymen and home workers, were sitting in front of their small

²¹⁴ “Antonín Kalina Memoirs.”

²¹⁵ “Josef Bulant Memoirs.”

²¹⁶ “Antonín Kalina Memoirs.”

²¹⁷ “Josef Radvanovský Memoirs.”

²¹⁸ “Josef Radvanovský Letter to J.A. Baťa.”

²¹⁹ Blue Mondays were an old worker’s habit. It meant that after partying on Sunday, the workers mostly did not work, or worked less hours, on Monday.

houses and in Třebíč pubs and were discussing lively – about politics and wages, but mainly about how to outwit it – to make everyone’s living better without much effort.”²²⁰

One of the first policies of the Baťa company towards its workers was to dispose all those who were involved in the Communist movement. Radvanovský claimed that they should not hire people from the Communist families into the factory.²²¹ Such stand can be seen in the praxis of the company as well. Personal file of a young worker F. Č.²²² shows that she was dismissed from the factory after working for just 4 days in March 1936. It is written in the file that “According to the information, her father is a communist. Never hire!”²²³ Kalina claimed, that Dělnický dům, the headquarters of the Communist party, was being spied on by the Baťa company informants. They were supposedly mainly watching who is coming there and if they are from the Baťa factory.²²⁴

Four women, members of the Communist party, wrote a short text about their dismissal from the factory. In 1931, they were working in the production of woven shoes and did most of the work at home. They claimed they were being followed and spied on, in case they were members of the Communist party or the Communist sports organization. When the company found out they were members of both organizations, they were being pressured into stopping their membership and activity in the movement. When they refused, they were at first isolated from the other workers and subsequently dismissed. The four also claimed that it was not only them, who were dismissed but also their friends, who had no connection to any communist organizations.²²⁵

²²⁰ “Josef Radvanovský Letter to J.A. Baťa.”

²²¹ “Josef Radvanovský Letter to J.A. Baťa.”

²²² All the names from the personal files of the workers of the company are anonymized.

²²³ “Personal File of F.Č.,” n.d., Fond Baťa a. s., Zlín, pobočný závod Třebíč, kr.21., MZA Brno.

²²⁴ “Antonín Kalina Memoirs.”

²²⁵ “Emílie Krejčová Memoirs.”

The isolation of the communists from the other workers or their transfer to a different/non-qualified position was a common practice of the Baťa company in dealing with the communist activists. This was being applied especially towards the Red trade union functionaries in the factory worker's council, who could not be easily dismissed.²²⁶ The position of the Baťa company towards trade unions was complicated in general. Tomáš Baťa himself was a member of a trade union when he was travelling to America in the beginning of the 20th century. Baťa was idealizing the US labor relations and considered the relationships between the employer and the employees as more equal than in Europe. In his initial view, the trade unions gave workers self-confidence, taught them partnership and teamwork and were able to tame social conflicts.²²⁷

After this experience, Baťa initiated the establishment of the social democratic trade unions in his own factory. However, he sobered up quickly, after the strike of 1906. Afterwards, Baťa was trying to create a working environment in which the workers would not need and would not want the trade unions. The labor relations in the Baťa factory were framed by the Employment Rules, that were negotiated between Baťa company and the factory worker's council. In Zlín, this council was however not elected by workers since 1923 and Baťa company appointed its members. During the whole interwar period, there were practically no trade unions in the Baťa company in Zlín.²²⁸

The situation in Třebíč was however much more complicated. The social democratic trade unions had a traditionally strong position in the *Borovina* factory, as well as the communist trade unions. Radvanovský claimed that in the early 1920s (before the split in the Social democratic party), 80% of the workers of the factory were members of the social

²²⁶ Mejzlík, *Dělnické Hnutí Na Třebíčsku 1917-1938*.

²²⁷ Jiří Pokorný et al., *Historie, Odbory a Společnost*.

²²⁸ Jiří Pokorný et al.

democratic trade unions and the atmosphere in the company was extremely politicized.²²⁹ The factory worker's council had a strong word in decision-making in the 1920s. Baťa company dismissed most of the communists from the factory and managed to expel the communist members of the factory worker's council. However, the new council, consisting mostly of the social democratic and national socialist workers²³⁰, was hesitant to take part in building of a Bataist project. Between 1931 and 1933 the council sued the Baťa company numerous times, mostly because of the unlawful dismissals or not adhering to the notice period.²³¹ The Baťa company tried to fight with the council by claiming the council and its obstructions are responsible for the dismissals and for the lack of work²³² and in 1933, it managed to dissolve this council and replace it with one consisting of loyal Bataist workers.²³³

The Baťa company had various ways of dealing with workers and activists that did not comply with their visions of labor and worldview in general. Antonín Kalina claimed in his memoirs, that before the 1931 elections, the Baťa company dismissed all his relatives in order to try to persuade him to withdraw his candidacy into the municipality and end his activity in the Communist party. He also stated that the management of the company offered him a position in the administration of the factory with a generous salary, in case he would leave the Communist party. "He said it is a pity for a man of my intellect to work at the production line, and even more to be in the Communist party. He said I could make a career in his company and that I would have a chance to become a director of a factory in a couple of years.

²²⁹ "Josef Radvanovský Letter to J.A. Baťa."

²³⁰ Mejzlík, *Dějiny Závodů Gustava Klimenta v Třebíči-Borovině*.

²³¹ Jemelka and Ševeček, *Tovární Města Baťova Komplexu*.

²³² Mejzlík, *Dělnické Hnutí Na Třebíčsku 1917-1938*.

²³³ Jemelka and Ševeček, *Tovární Města Baťova Komplexu*.

I replied to this tempting proposition, that he does not have enough money to buy a Communist.”²³⁴

Another way of a struggle of the Baťa company with the working-class movement was a massive leaflets and posters campaign. Mejzlík in his work reprints three of these posters. First of them suggests the Communist party is hiring a group of young hooligans who are terrorizing Třebíč citizens with weapons and calls to “Clean up Třebíč! Do not vote Communist!”²³⁵ Second one calls for regaining the good reputation of the town by getting rid of a red terror. The last one warns the citizens against attending the Communist demonstration and suggests that the demonstration might be shot at like in Duchcov or Košuty²³⁶ and that the Communist party is planning to sacrifice the people for its own gains.²³⁷ Kalina recalls that some of the remaining communists of the *Borovina* factory worker’s council were told to post such posters as a work task and their refusal was used to justify their dismissal.²³⁸

Even though the Baťa company warned against communist-led demonstrations, they were an almost daily experience of Třebíč. Especially the early 1930s were years of everyday confrontation, physical insultations of the Baťa officials on the streets and spontaneous demonstrations.²³⁹ Several communist activists are describing the course of such demonstrations in their memoirs.²⁴⁰ Such actions would take place for a very short time, either in the main square or in the working-class neighborhoods. Usually, a young activist would start

²³⁴ “Antonín Kalina Memoirs.”

²³⁵ Mejzlík, *Dělnické Hnutí Na Třebíčsku 1917-1938*.

²³⁶ Places of worker’s demonstrations in the 1930s Czechoslovakia, into which the gendarmerie started to shoot and killed several workers.

²³⁷ Mejzlík, *Dělnické Hnutí Na Třebíčsku 1917-1938*.

²³⁸ “Antonín Kalina Memoirs.”

²³⁹ Jemelka and Ševeček, *Tovární Město Baťova Komplexu*.

²⁴⁰ “Josef Bulant Memoirs.”; “Arnošt Bouzek Memoirs.”; “Antonín Volf Memoirs,” n.d., fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 48, ič. 510, SOkA Třebíč.

giving a ferocious speech, for instance likening Baťa to fascists, surrounded by a group of young militants, protecting the speaker from the gendarmerie or political opponents. Such speeches would often attract 100-300 spectators. After 10 or 15 minutes the speaker would end his speech, call for other demonstrations and try to flee before the gendarmerie would arrive at the scene, disperse the crowd and attempt to arrest the speaker. The activists were performing such actions in hours with the most people on the streets – in rush hours when the workers were coming home from factories or during promenade hours on the weekends.

Especially the first part of the 1930s was filled with such actions and contra actions from the Baťa company. The conflicts were arising from the given economic conditions of the economic crisis, enormous unemployment and uncertainty concerning the biggest Třebíč factory, now owned by Baťa, but also from the local traditions of the working-class movement and the experiences of the Baťa company with dealing with opposition to its project from the workers. However, the relations between the two actors were not only conflict ones but also ones of coexistence in the urban space and even cooperation.

4.2 A Case Study of the Coexistence: May Day Celebrations

The International Worker's Day celebration was one of the most important festivities in Třebíč. During time it evolved into a significant political event in which the power and support of different political parties was illustrated by the attendance of their marches and demonstrations, and their ability to seize the public space. On the other hand, it also became an important public celebration, on some level replacing or supplementing the religious holidays. Because of this, we may use the analysis of the celebrations as a tool for analyzing the political situation in the town.

It was celebrated for the first time already on May 1st, 1890, four years after the Haymarket affair in Chicago. The date was decided upon by the Second International. The first celebrations in Třebíč were attended by 4000 people. These celebrations were initially connected to the Social Democratic movement.²⁴¹ Course of the early celebrations consisted of public manifestations with political speeches and cultural program afterwards, for instance singing concert. Over the time, a march through the town and a dance ball in the evening became an indivisible part of the celebrations.²⁴² In the beginning of the 20th century, other political parties focusing on the working class, such as National Socialists and Christian Socialists also started their own celebrations of the May Day. With the establishment of the Czechoslovak republic, the International Worker's Day became an official holiday and was a part of the official Czechoslovak festivities, together with 28th October, or Jan Hus day.²⁴³

In Zlín, May Day was celebrated for the first time in 1904 and it was a rather small event of the local Social Democratic party, with a manifestation, march, and a dance ball and theater plays in the evening. The celebrations had similar course in the first years of the interwar period.²⁴⁴ However, in 1924, Tomáš Baťa decided that his company will organize their own celebrations. This was in accord to his newly found emphasis on the engagement in the local politics – he was elected as a mayor of Zlín the previous year. The Baťa company celebrations were highly organized and mandatory for the employees. In general, the celebrations consisted of three main parts with first part being a march and a manifestation. Second part was a common lunch of the workshops, and the third part was an afternoon fair

²⁴¹ Šmejkal, "Vstupování Dělnického Hnutí Do Veřejného Prostoru: Třebíč Na Přelomu 19. a 20. století."

²⁴² Mejzlík, *Dělnické Hnutí Na Západní Moravě Do Založení KSČ*.

²⁴³ Dagmar Hájková et al., *Sláva Republice! Oficiální Svátky a Oslavy v Meziválečném Československu* (Praha: Academia, 2018).

²⁴⁴ Jitka Glabazňová, "Proměny Prvomájových Oslav ve Zlíně v Období První Československé Republiky" (Unpublished BA thesis, Brno, Masarykova Univerzita, 2014). https://is.muni.cz/th/muwua/BP_Glabaznova-FIN.pdf. Accessed on 12.3.2021.

with music, dance, cinema, sports and carousels.²⁴⁵ The whole celebrations was conceived as a celebration of work, of a Bataist worker and of the achievements of the Baťa company.

In Třebíč of the 1930s, the May Day celebrations were extremely politicized. However, all the participants in the celebrations respected certain sacrality of the festivities and avoided any major confrontations. The course of the celebrations was very different in the beginning of the 1930s and from 1934 onwards. In 1934, the Baťa company started its own celebrations of the May Day. This changed the dynamic of the celebrations in Třebíč significantly.

Celebrations of all political parties had similar course in Třebíč. They consisted of a more formal and organized part in the morning and a more informal and entertaining part in the afternoon and in the evening. The morning part comprised of a meeting, a march and a manifestation. All parties were using the main square as a space of a meeting, and therefore, they were awarded time slots by the public authorities, so any possible clashes would be avoided. While National Socialists and Social Democrats shared the time, the Communist Party had their own time slot. The events were attended by locals but also by delegations from the villages of the region.²⁴⁶

In the early 1930s, the communist celebrations of the May Day in Třebíč were the biggest in town. In 1930, 500 people attended the march, and 700-800 people were present at the manifestation. This number was higher than the last year, which is remarkable, as the Communist party was losing much of its support and membership in this period statewide.²⁴⁷ There were usually some guest speakers at the May Day manifestations. In 1930 it was Vlasta Borek from Prague who spoke about the meaning of the International Worker's Day in Czechoslovakia and in the USSR and about the economic crisis. After the meeting, 400 of the

²⁴⁵ Jitka Glabazňová.

²⁴⁶ „Reports on May Day celebrations", b.r., Fond Okresní úřad, kr.54, ič.25, SOkA Třebíč.

²⁴⁷ Rupnik, *Dějiny Komunistické Strany Československa: Od Počátků Do Převzetí Moci*.

attendants marched to Polanka, where an afternoon feast was held. Throughout the event, the participants held banners and shouted slogans, such as “Against capitalist rationalization, for the 7 hours workday and higher wages”, “Same work, same wage” “For a united struggle of the unemployed with workers in factories” or “Down with the abortion laws”.²⁴⁸ According to a local gendarmerie, the event was calm and peaceful. Only trouble was with the involvement of 50 children, whose participation in the political manifestations was banned.²⁴⁹

It is obvious from the reports on the celebrations, that the slogans and banners were not chosen on the local level, but on a central level of the party.²⁵⁰ These slogans were seldom referring to local issues. More often, they were reacting to general issues, like the economic crisis or relationship with the catholic church and had more of an international than local focus. Slogans concerning the Comintern, the Soviet Union or rise of fascism and support for the Spanish republic were common.²⁵¹ In general, the Czechoslovak application of the Comintern policies and its changes can be observed in the topics and themes of the celebrations.

The communist celebrations of 1931 were similar to 1930 ones with 450 people in the march and 800 at the manifestation. While the gendarmerie was spying on the preparations and preparing for the unrest, the situation was again calm and organized, except for illegal spreading of leaflets before the May Day. The march was generally rather short one, from the Dělnický dům headquarters of the party to the main square. Music was always present in the front of the march, as well as the riders on decorated bicycles.²⁵² New feature of the 1931 celebrations was a march of the participants from villages west from Třebíč around the Baťa

²⁴⁸ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1930]”.

²⁴⁹ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1930]”.

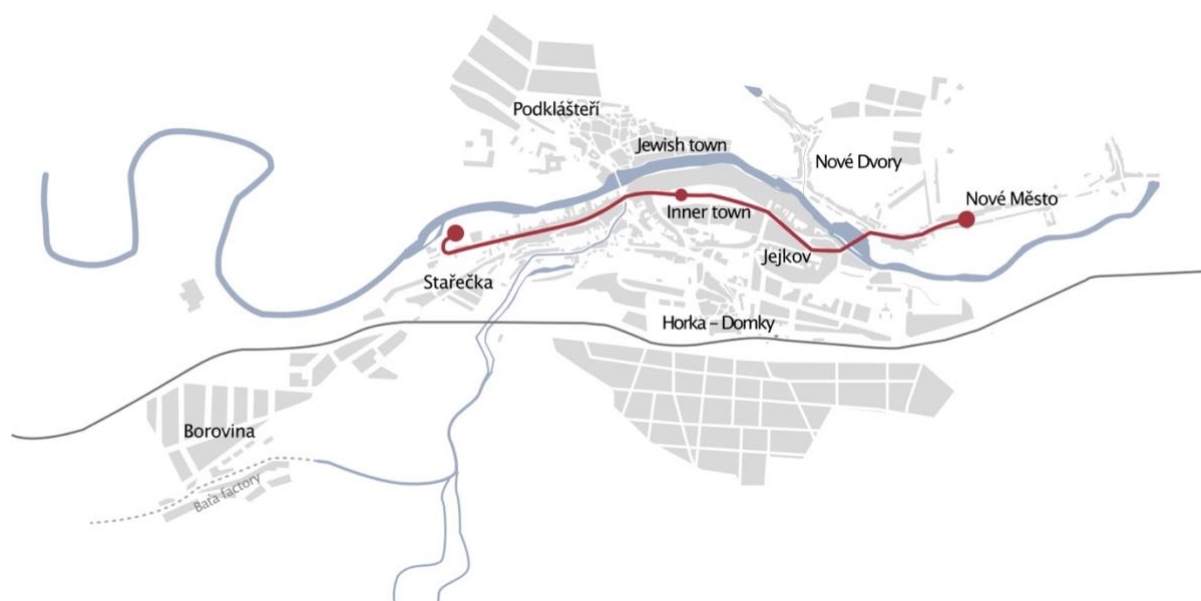
²⁵⁰ “Reports on May Day Celebrations.”

²⁵¹ “Reports on May Day Celebrations.”

²⁵² “Arnošt Bouzek Memoirs.”

factory. The topic of the speeches and slogans was mainly fight against fascism and social fascism – in compliance with the Comintern tactics²⁵³, as well as the economic crisis and harsh living conditions of the working class – “Our hunger, your grave .”²⁵⁴

Map 2. Communist marches on May Day in 1930s



Sources used: Reports on May Day celebrations.²⁵⁵

In 1932 the attendance decreased slightly, as there was 400 people in the communist march and 500 at the manifestation. It was however still the biggest attendance of all the parties. The decrease might be explained by the politization of the atmosphere in town before the 1931 elections. The celebration was started by a common alarm at 5am. The speaker from Brno talked about the crisis, unemployment, and was criticizing the government expenditure on the military and policing in contrast to the unemployment benefits. That year, music was

²⁵³ Jeremy Agnew and Kevin McDermott, *The Comintern. A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (London: Red Globe Press, 1996).

²⁵⁴ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1931]”.

²⁵⁵ “Reports on May Day Celebrations.”

not present, a measure that was meant to emphasize the speeches and slogans. The slogans were rather confrontational, attacking Sokol, religion, Social Democracy or oppression of the minorities in Czechoslovakia.²⁵⁶ According to the gendarmerie, the atmosphere in town was “glum”. In other report the gendarmes claimed that the Communists had biggest sympathies of the working class, especially because of high unemployment and new dismissals from the Baťa factory.²⁵⁷ Unfortunately, there are no official documents on the 1933 May Day. However, one of the local workers recalled in his memoirs a guerilla action in which a group of communists hung a red flag on the chimney of one of the defunct factories.²⁵⁸

The situation changed dramatically in 1934. That year, the Baťa company in Třebíč started their own celebrations of the May Day, which attracted much higher attendance than the celebrations of political parties. The Baťa company took over some of the traditional features of the celebrations but put its own twist on them. It also had its common alarm, at 5am in which 50 employees departed from a factory, with a band playing music and marched through the town. During the march, others joined in, and a mass of the people arrived back to the factory at 8 am. There, speeches were held, calling for the unity and cooperation of the workers and the company and celebrating the work done in the company. Apart from the speeches given by the local representatives of the company, there were also others transmitted from Zlín celebrations via radio. The speeches and manifestation were followed by a common lunch, paid for by the company. While the march was attended by 2000 people, the lunch had 4000 guests. The state authorities report said that the participants were not just

²⁵⁶ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1932]”.

²⁵⁷ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1932]”.

²⁵⁸ “Urbánek Memoirs,” n.d., fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 49, ič. 528, SOkA Třebíč.

the workers of the company, but of all classes and not just from Třebíč. The afternoon was then filled with a concert, dance and sport events.²⁵⁹



Pic. 10 March of the Baťa company May Day celebrations, second half of the 1930s

While the authorities expected 400-500 participants at the communist celebrations, it was in the end 300 people in the march and 400 at the manifestation. Probably to answer the challenge of the Baťa company, the Communist party organized a concert in front of its headquarters the day before the May Day and a garden party and a dance ball in the evening of the May Day. Other than this, the course of the celebrations was quite routine, except for the fact that the march started in the working-class neighborhood of *Nové Dvory*. While the gendarmerie expected some actions to be taken against Baťa, nothing was done, and the gendarmes appreciated the “indisputable discipline of the participants of the march”.²⁶⁰ Not

²⁵⁹ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1934]”.

²⁶⁰ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1934]”.

even the speeches and slogans did not focus on Baťa and concentrated on the international situation, unemployment benefits, possible general strike and a united revolutionary front.²⁶¹ The calm atmosphere and slogans had probably to do with the emergence of the Popular Front tactic in 1934, which was subsequently formally accepted by the Comintern in 1935.²⁶² This approach had a significant support in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, particularly in Slánský and Šverma leadership.²⁶³

The Baťa company celebrations grew larger every year. In 1935, it held 3 different marches through the town. Two of them were a part of an alarm at 5am. First one walked from *Borovina* to *Stařečka*, *Jewish town*, Main square, *Jejkov*, and *Nové Dvory*. There it met with second march which went from *Borovina* to *Horka* and *Domky*. After the two marches joined together, they walked back to *Borovina* through the main square and *Stařečka*. These marches walked through almost whole Třebíč, including communist strongholds *Nové Dvory* and *Jewish town*. The third march took place after the speeches at the factory and had roughly the same course as the second one. After the march, there was a usual common lunch, followed by an afternoon entertainment. The whole celebration was attended by 4000 people, same number as in 1934.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1934]”.

²⁶² Jeremy Agnew and Kevin McDermott, *The Comintern. A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin*.

²⁶³ Vítězslav Sommer, “KSČ a Kominternu. Náčrt Vývoje Nerovného Partnerství,” in *Kominternu* (Praha: NLN, 2011).

²⁶⁴ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1935]”.

Map 3. Baťa company May Day celebration marches in 1935



Sources used: 1935 Report on May Day celebrations.²⁶⁵

That year the gendarmerie was expecting aggressivity from the communist celebrations. They noticed increased intensity of meetings of the local leadership of the party before the May Day, as well as attempts to mobilize sympathizers from all over the region and spreading of the posters and leaflets on the night before May Day. The gendarmes were also preparing for the possibility of a violent actions by “Proletarian defense”, which was supposedly armed and uniformed. What they probably meant were the members of youth and sports organizations, assigned to defending communist meetings and disrupt rival ones. The increased activity of the communists was probably caused by the actions of Czech fascists, who wanted to have their demonstration in Třebíč for the first time on May Day. The communists were indeed preparing to disrupt this demonstration and already designated a

²⁶⁵ “Reports on May Day Celebrations [Report 1935].”

group under the leadership of youth and sports functionary Leopold Pokorný.²⁶⁶ However, the fascist demonstration was banned by the state authorities, so the communist celebrations took place without any problem.²⁶⁷ It was attended by 200-350 people, which can be explained by the crisis of the relations in the local leadership of the party.²⁶⁸ 1935 was in general a turning point in the relationship of the Communist party and the Czechoslovak state, largely thanks to the Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty, signed in March 1935 and the president elections in which the Communists unexpectedly supported Edvard Beneš. After this point, the Communists were much more open to forming coalitions in the Czechoslovak politics.²⁶⁹

In 1936, the Baťa company only had one march. The usual alarm was limited to *Borovina*. This was probably intertwined with the fact, that the construction of the factory housing advanced and most of the workers of the company already lived in *Borovina*.²⁷⁰ The alarm was followed by a meeting with speeches. Local speakers were talking about the meaning of the May Day, the achievements of the factory, rise in productivity and in wages and about creating a “spirit of labor”. These speeches were followed by the radio transmission of J.A. Baťa speech from Zlín about unemployment and fight against it via public commissions. Subsequently, the march to the town departed and went through *Horka, Domky, Inner town* and back. After a lunch, the most ambitious entertainment program so far followed. There was music and dance - Baťa company secured 7 bands with 173 musicians. There was also a festival with carousels, free cinema screenings whole afternoon and a highlight of the celebrations, sightseeing flights from the nearby airport. The Baťa company reported to the

²⁶⁶ Leopold Pokorný later on died as a member of the International Brigade while defending Madrid against Francisco Franco forces.

²⁶⁷ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1935]”.

²⁶⁸ “Evidence of the Communist Movement in Třebíč Region.”

²⁶⁹ Rupnik, *Dějiny Komunistické Strany Československa: Od Počátků Do Převzetí Moci*.

²⁷⁰ According to Radvanovský, 71 % of the employees lived in Borovina in 1936.

authorities in advance it was expecting 8000 attendees and even though the weather was not good, still 6000 people came to the celebrations.²⁷¹

The huge amount of people attending the Baťa celebrations weakened all the other celebrations, except for the communist one. It did not weaken the communists because, according to the gendarmerie, no communists work at the Baťa company.²⁷² While the gendarmes were preparing for possible attacks on the Baťa celebrations, those did not happen. The communist celebrations were calm and took place according to a routine framework – alarm, march, meeting, dance ball. Only conflict action was spreading of the communist leaflets around the Baťa factory in *Borovina* on the eve of the May Day. The speeches and slogans were less aggressive than in previous years and started to emphasize a united front against fascism. as the Popular front tactics were applied with higher intensity by the Czechoslovak communists. The attendance was similar as a previous year, around 300 people.

The communist celebrations in 1937 had a similar course and the state authorities report claimed that “All speeches, including the communist ones, were pro-democracy and pro-republic.”²⁷³ And they indeed were, as they included calls for a united Popular front, fight against fascism, help for Spain, defense of the republic or a few years ago inconceivable slogan “Communists, Socialists, Democrats – lets shake hands.”²⁷⁴ The Popular front tactics were applied with higher intensity by the Czechoslovak communists, who even started to support the Czechoslovak state, while they previously supported the irridentist efforts of minorities. The Baťa company continued with its successful celebrations full entertainment for free. This

²⁷¹ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1936]”.

²⁷² „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1936]”.

²⁷³ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1937]”.

²⁷⁴ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1937]”.

year, it had more of a national character, with state flags, national anthem and a concert of Bedřich Smetana's *Libuše*. As well as in the previous years, the company sent salutatory telegrams to the president, prime minister, J.A. Baťa and other important personas of the state and the company. The speeches combined the emphasis on the local work with the "Manifesto of a free world trade and free movement of our work and production abroad". The march through Třebíč, supplemented with floats, was attended by 4000-5000 people and the celebration itself by 8000 people.²⁷⁵

The development of the Baťa company May Day celebrations looked like it will soon give the company control over the course of the celebrations in the town – and symbolically also over the working class of the town. However, the year 1938 changed the direction of this development. The spring of 1938 was marked by an increase in tensions of the Czechoslovak international situation and relations with Nazi Germany, especially after the *Anschluss* of Austria.²⁷⁶ Under these circumstances, all the political parties represented in the municipality, including the Communist party, decided to have one, united celebration of a May Day, to represent the unity of a nation facing fascist danger. This was with accordance to the tactics of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, who in 1938 invested itself fully in the defense of Czechoslovakia against Nazi Germany.²⁷⁷ The celebrations started with an alarm at 5am. The alarm was attended by 500-600 people carrying state flags, and a band. At 9:30am a march started, with music, a giant state flag at the front of the march, followed by flags of all the participating subjects. Mayor of Třebíč, National Socialist Vaněk spoke about the isolated celebrations of all the parties in previous years and about newly achieved unity, reminding him of 1918. Another speech was held by a member of the World War I. Czechoslovak Legion,

²⁷⁵ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1937]”.

²⁷⁶ Zdeněk Kárník, *České Země v Éře První Republiky* (Praha: Libri, 2003).

²⁷⁷ Rupnik, *Dějiny Komunistické Strany Československa: Od Počátků Do Převzetí Moci*.

who spoke about the defense of the republic and its allies, including the USSR. The march was attended by 2500 people and the subsequent meeting by 6000-7000.²⁷⁸

The only major subject who refused to participate in the united celebrations was the Baťa company. In 1938, the company was displeased to witness the convergence of the Communists with other political parties. It was bothering J.A. Baťa to the extent, that he was threatening to cancel the factory in Třebíč altogether. The director Radvanovský wrote J.A. Baťa a letter, convincing him not to do that and claiming that the local politicians are cooperative and even the local Communists can be negotiated with.²⁷⁹ Even though the factory stayed in Třebíč, it refused to participate in the celebrations and organized their own. The Baťa company however knew it would not be strategic to organize a full celebration, competing with the united one, supported by all the main political parties in the town. Therefore, it organized a sports event at its newly built stadium. The march to the stadium was attended only by 400 people, mostly students of the Baťa's school of labor. The sports event itself was attended by 2000-3000 people.²⁸⁰

The May Day celebrations were an important part of the social and political life of Třebíč. The development of the atmosphere and relationships in the town was mirrored in the development of the celebrations. After the turbulent beginning of the 1930s, the situation stabilized and the Baťa company gained its ground among some of the citizens of the town. We may also observe through the celebrations, that different political and social groups of Třebíč learned how to coexist in the space of the town and in some cases, how to cooperate. Even though the marches and manifestations brought conflict situations, they also brought possibilities for acculturation to the society of the town.

²⁷⁸ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1938]”.

²⁷⁹ “Josef Radvanovský Letter to J.A. Baťa.”

²⁸⁰ „Reports on May Day celebrations [Report 1938]”.



Pic. 11 Communist May Day celebration march from 1930s

4.3 Cooperation of the Workers and the Baťa Company

In the beginning of the 1930s, the atmosphere in the town was adverse for the Baťa company. While the Communist party was the most vocal critic of the Baťa takeover of the factory, Radvanovský recalled, that other local political parties and actors were also reluctant and full of distrust.²⁸¹ They tried, without any major success, to prevent the massive dismissal of the workers from the factory.²⁸² Small local shoemakers and tradesmen, hit hard by the economic crisis, were afraid that the Baťa company will deprive them of their livelihood and

²⁸¹ "Josef Radvanovský Letter to J.A. Baťa."

²⁸² Jemelka, Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova komplexu*.

started to support the Communist party.²⁸³ A song was sung through Třebíč pubs – “Baťa, Busi – chokes the shoemaker.”²⁸⁴

In the I aim to show, how is it thus possible, that later in the 1930s the Baťa company became a respected part of the local society. Director Radvanovský stated that the local elites and political parties accepted over the time the presence and activity of the company. Even the communists in the town council voted in favor of the concessions for the Baťa company, knowing that the factory is the major employer in Třebíč.²⁸⁵ One of the main reasons for the acceptance of the Baťa company was a change of the company policies towards the factory in Třebíč. From 1933 onwards it started to be clear, that the Baťa company will try to preserve the factory and its production in some form and that it will invest into its development.²⁸⁶ This helped to appease the local political elites, but also at least part of the local working class.

For a historian, it is always difficult to grasp a historical process, whose main feature is that something is not happening. The sources have a tendency towards capturing actions, events or deviation and diversions from a “normal” way of things. Apart from the other reasons, this is a part of why the traditional social and labor history put emphasis on actions such as riots, strikes, demonstrations and marches. It is not easy to capture in a source material and memoirs of the actors of the historical processes, but the indirect evidence seems to indicate, that during the 1930s, the Baťa company managed to find a *modus vivendi* with a part of the local working class. This probably happened simultaneously with the fact, that the Baťa company also reshaped the local working class to fit its needs.

²⁸³ Mejzlík, *Dělnické Hnutí Na Třebíčsku 1917-1938*.

²⁸⁴ Jemelka, Ševeček, *Tovární město Baťova komplexu*.

²⁸⁵ “Josef Radvanovský Letter to J.A. Baťa.”

²⁸⁶ Petra Flokovičová, “Budišovský versus Baťa. Příspěvek k Dějinám Průmyslového Komplexu v Třebíči-Borovině.”

After the tense and violent period of the early 1930s and an attempt to gain power in the local politics, which ultimately failed, the Baťa company withdrew into *Borovina*. *Borovina* was geographically separated from the rest of the town and the Baťa company soon started to treat it as an independent town and thought about its actual secession. The factory housing, services such as shops and cultural enterprises all helped to separate the workers of the factory from the other elements of the Třebíč working class.²⁸⁷ New type of worker was being molded in *Borovina*. Since Baťa took over the factory, the structure of the employees changed dramatically. The victims of the first waves of dismissals were the communists, older and unhandy workers.²⁸⁸ The end of the leathermaking and the emphasis on hosiery also made significant changes, as most of the workers in the tannery workshops were men and most of the hosiery workers were women.²⁸⁹

It is clear from the personal files of the employees of the company, that majority of the workers were very young, from Třebíč, Třebíč region but also from places all over Czechoslovakia. The sample of the files I was able to access illustrates, that a majority of the employees were born in the early 1920s or during the World War I.²⁹⁰ The Baťa company in general was focusing on the young people and was able to offer them more than average wages, as well as prospects of an upwards social mobility.²⁹¹ This was very appealing for the young working-class people, as they were rarely given such opportunities in the interwar Czechoslovakia. As the fluctuation of the workers in the Baťa company was very high, some of

²⁸⁷ Jemelka, Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova komplexu*.

²⁸⁸ Mejzlík, *Dějiny Závodů Gustava Klimenta v Třebíči-Borovině*.

²⁸⁹ Jemelka, Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova komplexu*.

²⁹⁰ "Personal Files of the Employees," n.d., Fond Baťa a. s., Zlín, pobočný závod Třebíč, kr.20-21., MZA Brno.

²⁹¹ Jiří Pokorný et al., *Historie, Odbory a Společnost*.

the young people working at Baťa used the opportunity to earn above average money for a year or two in a very demanding conditions and then continue their lives elsewhere.²⁹²

The course of the Baťa May day celebrations is in my opinion a good analogy for what the Baťa company offered its employees and what it demanded from them. The company offered its employees a material welfare, such as housing, high wages, or a free lunch at the celebrations. It offered them entertainment and a way of a creative self-realization in a form of theater, music, possibility to do sports or to be a spectator of sports, education, or carousels and sightseeing flights of the celebrations. But it also offered them a collective identity and a sense of belonging to a wider community in a way of radio transmission of Zlín celebrations, reports about the events in other Baťa towns and factories in the *Borovina* newspapers, or a sense of partnership and collectivity built through common eating, housing, working or marching.

On the other hand, for all it was offering to its employees, the company expected an extreme effort in the workplace. It expected a full identification with the Bataist project and application of its principles of rationality to worker's labor as well as to their lives. While independent actions and thinking were supported, in the boundaries of Bataism, certain normality and uniformity was being enforced as well. The employees were also expected to be loyal to the company and to the moral code that the factory pursued. While Baťa wanted his company to be as a family, it was a very strict family and the participation in the events organized by the company, such as the May Day celebrations, was mandatory.²⁹³

Those, who did not want to or were not able to meet such expectations were subjected to quick and severe punishments. Inability to fulfill the expected quantity and quality of the

²⁹² Jiří Pokorný et al.

²⁹³ Martin Marek, "Prvomájové Oslavy ve Zlíně a Gottwaldově," *Zlínský Architektonický Manuál* (blog), n.d., <https://zam.zlin.eu/studie/prvomajove-oslavy-ve-zline-a-gottwaldove/5>. Accessed on 26.5.2021.

production resulted in financial penalties or a dismissal.²⁹⁴ The focus on young workers meant, that many of the workers were practically still children and had a hard time with complying with the tempo and discipline of the Bataist production. In 1935 a 14-year-old worker M.B. was dismissed because she “Does not suit the work. Young and silly. Still weak. Only 14 years old”.²⁹⁵ Any display of mental lability was not tolerated. In 1937 a 19-year-old worker K.B. was dismissed after she had a mental breakdown at the boarding school.²⁹⁶ Another 17-year-old female worker was dismissed the same year after a mental breakdown and an attempted suicide.²⁹⁷

The Baťa company felt authorized and obliged to control and interfere into the private lives of its workers, according to its own moral code. Most of the dismissals I found in the personal files of the employees were because of the pregnancy of the worker.²⁹⁸ The company deemed it unfitting for mothers to work in a factory and supported the idea of them staying at home as housewives. The personal department of the factory was observing not only what was happening in the factory or in factory housing but also in Třebíč. V.B., a 15-year-old worker, was dismissed in 1938 because she was drinking in Třebíč pubs with “lads of dubious reputation”.²⁹⁹ Interesting case is that of a Rožek family. Mr. Rožek worked in the factory and lived with his wife in a factory housing. After their divorced daughter moved in, the company decided to evict them, based on the accusations that their daughter is being visited by various men at night.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁴ “Personal Files of the Employees.”

²⁹⁵ “Personal File of M.B.,” n.d., Fond Baťa a. s., Zlín, pobočný závod Třebíč, kr.20., MZA Brno.

²⁹⁶ “Personal File of K.B.,” n.d., Fond Baťa a. s., Zlín, pobočný závod Třebíč, kr.20., MZA Brno.

²⁹⁷ “Personal File of A.B.,” n.d., Fond Baťa a. s., Zlín, pobočný závod Třebíč, kr.20., MZA Brno.

²⁹⁸ “Personal Files of the Employees.”

²⁹⁹ “Personal File of V.B.,” n.d., Fond Baťa a. s., Zlín, pobočný závod Třebíč, kr.20., MZA Brno.

³⁰⁰ “Soudní Výpověď z Bytu Továrního,” n.d., Fond Baťa a. s., Zlín, pobočný závod Třebíč, kr. 2. ič. 34., MZA Brno.

The gender dimension of such stories and actions of the Baťa company is striking. Most of the workers, who were dismissed because of the mental health issues or inability to comply with the system of production were young women. On the other hand, the reasons for dismissals of men were mostly not characterized as if they were not able to comply with the Bataist system, but because they were lazy or disorderly.³⁰¹ While the Třebíč factory was reliant on female work, since the turn to hosiery production, it still considered a male work and a male worker as a norm. The Bataist system required maximal effort from its workers and deemed women as not able to comply with it, especially in a long-term perspective. That is why women, who had mental health issues or got pregnant, were being dismissed immediately.³⁰² The story from a personal life of Tomáš Baťa is telling for such approach: in the early 20th century, Tomáš Baťa broke up with his fiancée, because she was seriously ill.³⁰³

* * *

However, even after all the control and high demands, most of the workers of the company and the citizens of the town complied with the Bataist system. Many of the stories leading to dismissals or other punishments were reported by the other workers, who were engaged in the upkeeping of the system.³⁰⁴ Their dismissals and other affairs, such as extra work on Sundays or on holidays, were authorized by the factory worker's council, who since 1933 was much more involved in the imposing of the Bataist methods.³⁰⁵ The fact, that there

³⁰¹ "Personal Files of the Employees."

³⁰² "Personal Files of the Employees."

³⁰³ "Tomáš Baťa - Opinion on Women; Description of a Relationship with Marie Babičková," n.d., fond Baťa a. s., Zlín, I/3, kr. 20, i.č. 32., SOKA Zlín.

³⁰⁴ "Personal Files of the Employees."

³⁰⁵ "Zápisy Závodního Výboru Fy. Baťa," 1929 1937, fond Dům politické výchovy, kr. 56, ič. 696, SOKA Třebíč.

were no strikes or any other major discontent in the factory in the latter half of the 1930s³⁰⁶ shows that most of the workers, who were not excluded from the Bataist project, consented with it to some degree. Similarly, the high attendance of the Baťa company celebrations of the May Day, even though partly motivated by free lunch and entertainment, illustrate the acceptance of the Baťa company and Bataism in the town.

³⁰⁶ Mejzlík, *Dějiny Závodů Gustava Klimenta v Třebíči-Borovině*.

5. Conclusion

Třebíč in the 1930s was a space of dynamic development of interactions between various local actors. Entering the 1930s, the local Communist party was a prime representative of a significant part of the local working class, especially in the working-class boroughs of *Nové Dvory*, *Jewish town* and *Podklášteří*. While the Communist party was able to mobilize its supporters in moments of intense political struggle, for instance local elections, it was the adjacent cultural, sport and youth organizations of the party and the trade unions that shaped the everyday experience of the members and supporters of the communist movement. In the early 1930s (1930-1933) with the situation of a massive unemployment, uncertain situation in the *Borovina* factory and with the confrontational tactics adopted by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Comintern, the local communists led a very confrontational and violent campaign against their political opponents and especially against the Baťa company.

The Baťa company purchased the *Borovina* factory in 1931 and benefited from it initially in form of government benefits and disposal of the competition of the Busi company, previously owning the factory. Baťa was initially probably considering closing the factory and started with dismissals of the workers and limiting the production. At the same time the Baťa company tried to influence the local politics in Třebíč, especially with fighting the communists both physically and in form of leaflets, posters and newspapers. However, after being opposed by the communists, small shoemakers and part of the local elites, the company failed to gain any significant influence on the social and political life in Třebíč at large and retreated into *Borovina*. There the Baťa company started with its program of implementation Bataism into production, as well as with the welfare programs for its workers.

From 1933 onwards, the Baťa company started with restructuring the production and rebuilding the factory. It also started with the construction of a factory town in *Borovina*. Over

the rest of the 1930s, the Baťa company managed to rebuild the factory, cancel the traditional leather production and replace it with hosiery and construct a significant part of the new factory town, containing mainly housing. It also succeeded in implementation of the Bataist system of production and in forming a new, Bataist workers. These workers were predominantly young and not affiliated to the Communist party or being politically active in any other party. The number of women working in the factory also increased significantly. By 1938, three quarters of the Baťa workers lived in the factory town and were also able to spend their leisure in the factory cultural facilities and clubs.

While the Baťa company tried to control its workers in *Borovina*, it also tried to improve its position in Třebíč. After it managed to dispel the apprehension of the local elite over the future of the factory, they were much more willing to cooperate with the company, in form of water prices, reduction of taxes or exchange of land with the municipality. Reduction of the unemployment and the slow recovery of the economic situation, as well as the attempts of the Baťa company to be active in the public space of Třebíč, helped to lower the intensity of the conflict between the company and the local working class.

While in the beginning of the 1930s, the atmosphere in the town and in the factory was very politicized, in the second half of the 1930s, the Baťa company managed to appease a considerable part of the local population and to lower the significance of the traditional political parties. While it demanded extreme productivity and unwavering loyalty from its workers, it also provided them with housing, alimentation, education and leisure opportunities. While the company managed to achieve a certain level of cooperation from the local workers, the company's activities and approaches also meant harsh treatment, especially of young female workers, who were deemed as not able to sustain the tempo of Bataist production and way of live.

On the other hand, other circumstances also helped to change the atmosphere in the second half of the 1930s. While the economic recovery helped to appease some of the workers, it was also the development inside the Communist party, that attributed to it. While on one hand, the party on the local level was disrupted by personal issues of its leaders, on the other hand it also started to follow less confrontational Popular front tactic. This weakening of the Communist party, as the most radical element of the conflict, helped with the appeasement of the situation. The partly depoliticized atmosphere in Třebíč between 1935 and 1938, stimulated by the Baťa company, however changed dramatically in 1938, when the imminent threat of the Nazi Germany helped to shape a new local coalition of the democratic political parties, together with the Communist party. This coalition gained a substantial support from the local population and disrupted the impending dominance of the Baťa company over Třebíč.

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³⁰⁹ Janák, *Dějiny Města Třebíče II.*

³¹⁰ Rudolf Fišer, Eva Nováčková, and Jiří Uhlíř, eds., *Proletářská Tělovýchova v Třebíči* (Třebíč: Západoomoravské muzeum, 1986).

³¹¹ Fišer, Nováčková, and Uhlíř.

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³²² Růžková, Škrabal, *Historický lexikon obcí České republiky 1869–2005*.

³²³ I created a database of the addresses of the core members of the Communist movement recovered from the archival sources: "Communist Movement of the Třebíč Region."; „Evidence of the Communist Movement in Třebíč Region,” 1933 1939, fond Okresní úřad, kr. 60, ič. 748., SOkA Třebíč. Calculations are my own.