often disproportionate, emphasis on the financial aspect of the Academy's development. However, it is fair to say that the authors point this out in the introduction.

The story of ÖAW is undeniably interesting for those in Slovakia interested in the history of science. It can be seen as depicting a possible alternative development of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. ÖAW operates in a relatively small country, had an experience of operating in a dictatorship, and had to cope with significant financial problems as well as periodic attempts at fundamental reform. However, contrary to Slovak Academy, in the last decade, the Austrian Academy has experienced a significant boom (as the number of ERC projects confirms). In addition, this book shows that the academies of sciences as state-supported institutions are not harmful inventions of communist regimes. On the contrary, non-university research institutions can play an important role in supporting cutting-edge science. In particular, the description of the last 20 years of ÖAW development can be recommended not only to historians but especially policymakers looking for an example of successful science policy in Central Europe.

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JESCHKE, Felix. *IRON LANDSCAPES. National Space and the Railways in Interwar Czechoslovakia*. New York; Oxford: Berghahn, 2021, 221 p. ISBN 978-1-78920-776-7.
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The monograph by historian Felix Jeschke is a welcome addition to the historiography on the history of railway transport and the building of the First Czechoslovak Republic 1918–1938. In Slovak and Czech historiography, railway history is currently not a very popular topic. Works on the development of the railway network in the past were written as part of economic history. However, these studies were often too focused on the technical specifics of railway transport. For this reason, they are primarily works intended for a small circle of experts and readers.

Although Felix Jeschke works with traditional themes, his approach is innovative and not usual in the field of transport history in Czech and Slovak historiography. This is not a history of technology or economic history but a cultural history of railways. The work thus certainly belongs to Berghahn's "Explorations in Mobility" series, which aims to *"rethink our common assumptions and ideas about the mobility of people, things, ideas and cultures from a broadly understood humanities perspective"*. The author examines the entire railway infrastructure, including station buildings and personnel. He is interested in both tangible and intangible elements of the infrastructure, such as the language used on the railways. However, he does not just analyse the railways themselves but sees them as the instrument through which the state and the nation were to be formed.

He draws his methodological approach to the impact of the railways on society from a number of works. Beginning with the classical works of Wolfgang Schivelbusch, he

uses the theories of Peter Haslinger to understand the process of the formation of national space. It is a pity that this theoretical introduction does not incorporate more recent works on Czechoslovakism, such as the collective monograph edited by Adam Hudek, Michal Kopeček and Jan Mervart. According to the author, it was the idea of Czechoslovakism that was behind the projects aimed at the development of railway infrastructure in the interwar period. In the introduction I would also have appreciated a section that briefly introduces the reader to the economic situation in Czechoslovakia. Especially in Slovakia, where most of the new lines were built, the existence of industrial enterprises depended on fast and cheap transport. The reasons for building the lines were, therefore often less prosaic than they may seem after reading the book. This is clear from the work of economic historians such as Ľudovít Hallon or Václav Průcha and Josef Faltus.

It should be appreciated that when Jeschke writes about the history of Czechoslovakia, he also deals with it in a realistic way. Nowadays, we also encounter works which, according to their title, declare that they are about Czechoslovak history, but this is not the case. The problem is that often conclusions based on research in the Czech Lands are automatically applied to Slovakia. To our knowledge, the situation in Slovakia was often specific. Otherwise, the research is supported by a sufficient amount of archival material, newspapers, magazines, and primary and secondary literature. It is a pity that the author didn't visit archives in the Slovak Republic. I understand that the railways administration was highly centralized in Prague, but such research could have enriched the topic.

Jeschke uses the term "iron landscapes" to define the space in which his story takes place. But by the term "landscape" he does not consider how the rail, buildings and so on changed the landscape. "Iron landscapes" should therefore be understood as the space and time where the ideas that accompanied the creation of the plans, through the discussions to the ceremonies that took place at the opening of the completed railway lines, were conceived.

The book has a total length of approximately 200 pages of text. It is enough for the author to present his arguments. Apart from the introduction and conclusion, it is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is entitled *Forging a Nation from Tracks: Railway Construction and Representation in Interwar Czechoslovakia*; the second chapter *The Heart of Europe and Its Periphery: Travelling and Travel Writing*; chapter Three "*Germanized Territories*" *or* "*Pure German Soil*"*? The National Conflict on Railways*; chapter Four *Stations between the National and the Cosmopolitan: Railway Buildings and De-Austrianization*; chapter Five *"Bratislava to Prague in 4h 51min*"*: Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism and the Slovenská strela*. The content of the chapters is clear enough from their titles. I want to concentrate only on the parts that raised further questions in my mind.

I consider that the reader may get the impression of the exceptionalism of the Czechoslovak story. The author suggests that railways were used in the sense of marking territory from their inception. Thus, it would be necessary to explain at least briefly what the practice was in the construction of railways in Austria-Hungary before 1918. Especially this question might be interesting for the period after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise in 1867, when Hungary began to create its own transport policy influenced by Magyarization. It would then have been evident that the leaders of Czechoslovakia

imitated the earlier model in some way and adapted it to their own needs (Chapter 1). One cannot agree with the assertion on p. 34 that Hungary did not deliberately develop the transport infrastructure in the territory of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. After 1918 this was one of the main arguments of Czechoslovak politicians and engineers legitimizing their actions.

Especially in the case of Slovakia, it would be useful to pay more attention to the statements of Slovak politicians and economic experts. If the idea of forming a national space was to work anywhere, it was especially in Slovakia (and Subcarpathian Ruthenia). Probably few people believed that such a thing could be successfully achieved in a German-speaking environment. The case of the Czech teacher Josef Jireš (Chapter 3) is an example of this. Among politicians, for example, Andrej Hlinka was not professionally competent to comment on railways; Kornel Stodola was much more competent. However, there were also prominent economists, first and foremost Imrich Karvaš. He calculated exactly how much industrial enterprises in Slovakia had to spend on increased transport costs before transport tariffs were unified. Did not economic reality outweigh ideals? After all, the economic benefits of tourism have always been emphasised (Chapter 2). In the case of the Slovenská strela, economic reasons also played a role. The railways were gradually replacing steam locomotives with diesel locomotives and making plans for electrification because it was simply more profitable. The modernity coming from the design of the Slovenská strela was just a bonus, which was used for propaganda purposes (Chapter 5).

The question is also offered as to what extent the proclaimed Czechoslovakism behind the plans was meant seriously, or to what extent and whether it really contributed to the formation of the national space. Milan Ducháček, for example, argues that the idea of Czechoslovak unity became a cliché during the 1920s. It was still used in the public space and in journalism, but it had essentially only the declarative character of official rhetoric, and the actual social practice was different. What were the feelings and attitudes of the unemployed, for example, when they were refused as workers on the construction of the Červená Skala – Margecany line?

I understand that the book does not have an answer to this question because the construction workers were not the ones whose views the author analysed. But it is excellent that the book provides us with opportunities for reflection and generates new questions. The publication is undoubtedly beneficial and, above all, inspiring. It is an innovative treatment of the subject, so it might encourage other historians to look at things from a different perspective. I also believe that the book has the potential to revive the debate on the development of railways and transport infrastructure (not only) in interwar Czechoslovakia.

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