

Historical Atlases 1848–1989 and Central European Area

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Abstract

Historical atlases are a specific type of document whose character gradually formed on the background of several traditional genres (geographical atlases, historical manuals and compendia, etc.). From their beginnings, dating back to the early modern period, they were thus on the borderline between the humanities and the natural sciences. Their significant modernisation and increase in production took place during the 19th century. Their form and content were influenced not only by the contemporary state of historical knowledge, the level of cartographic skills and technologies (printing techniques, development of colour print) but also by the education policies of individual states, as a significant part of the production of historical atlases were from the second half of the 19th century intended for the needs of school teaching (but there were also popular-educational and scientific works). The seemingly unbiased genre, which maps the past, was equally significantly imprinted with the present, especially the current political and social situation (e.g. the rise of modern nationalism or the totalitarian and authoritarian regimes of the 20th century) and therefore had undeniable persuasive potential. The primary role of atlases, i.e. the transfer of the current state of knowledge (historical discourse and cartographic skills), was often and quite consciously intertwined with the secondary, ideological role, influenced by the current political and social demand, power ambitions and interests of individual states, or other actors. Historical atlases, often serving as tools of political ideology and state propaganda, thus become a valuable and hitherto predominantly neglected source not only for the history of cartography, historiography and didactics but also, in a broader sense, for the social history and history of mentalities.

The dissertation focuses on historical atlases in Central Europe from the mid-19th century to the end of the 1980s. It maps nearly one and a half centuries of dynamic development of this genre in Central European space, which, especially since the end of the 19th century and during the 20th century, has become a frequently used and popular medium by the general public. The primary objective has become the analysis and interpretation of the historical development of Czech and Czechoslovak historical atlases in this period, which, unlike their Polish, Austrian and German counterparts, have not yet been elaborated in more detail. Attention is paid not only to the atlases themselves and the analysis of their content but also to their authors and

contemporary scientific and social reflection. Emphasised are the forms of manipulation with the cartographic and textual content of atlases, which the authors used for ideological purposes. The synthesis of the findings enables us to define the basic typology and trends in the development of Czech and Czechoslovak historical atlas cartography. The broader, central European perspective is provided by comparing the production of historical atlases in the surrounding states (Hungary, Germany, Poland, Austria). The acquired data showed many parallels and close interconnectedness of individual national cartographies but also some remarkable and long-lasting regional specifics (e.g. in the case of Polish historical atlases), whose roots often date back to the 19th century.