

Prof. PhDr. Alice Teichová, Dr. h.c.mult.
(* 19. 9. 1920, † 12. 3. 2015) — in memoriam



There are only few scientific personalities who have by means of their work, innovations and capability to connect and over-bridge essentially influenced the development of the whole field of study. When speaking of economic history it was Alice Teichová who was indeed such a personality. Her international fame was born in the half of 1970s and it culminated at the end of 1990s and at the beginning of the new century. She was born in a middle class Jewish family. Her parents, Artur and Gisela Schwarz, owned in the XIIIth Vienna district a small jewellery and horologic shop and were the third generation of goldsmiths and horologists in their family. The mother came from the family of a shopkeeper selling brushes and broomsticks. Alice attended a second grade of primary school in Vienna Hietzing, then also a secondary school. When her family found themselves on the verge of poverty during the industrial crises in 1930s she worked as a shop assistant in a textile shop. Due to lack of finances she never completed the secondary school. However, she finished her studies at a commercial school attending evening classes. In spring 1938 when the anti-Semitism in Austria intensified the Schwarz family decided to emigrate. They had a “stand-by” in a person of Alice’s sister Marta, employed in a small company in London. After she had got to England Alice worked as a house help in the family of a retired land improvement engineer from Burma. In 1940 she met for the first time in the European refugee club, set up by Quakers in Exeter, her life partner Mikuláš Teich, a native from Slovak Ružomberok, also from a Jewish family who being a medicine student at Charles University managed (like her) to escape at the very last moment to Great Britain.

In autumn 1942 Alice Schwarz was admitted to the University of Leeds to study economic sciences. She graduated as a bachelor of economy in 1945. Mikuláš Teich whom she married in 1944 decided to return to Czechoslovakia after the war. The couple was preparing for this return for several years. Mikuláš completed his Ph.D. degree in chemistry; Alice applied for a position of a teacher in Nottingham. In 1949, when a majority of Czech intellectual elites was leaving Czechoslovakia after the February, the Teich couple were travelling the very opposite direction. They very truly believed in high ideas of Marxism. Alice Teichová, though being a foreigner in a new country, very soon mastered in an excellent way the Czech language and at the same time she was studying history at the Pedagogical Faculty of Charles University. She graduated in 1952 with a work called “*Velká Británie v předvečer 2. světové války*” [Great Britain in the Eve of the WWII]. In no time she became a fellow lecturer at the department of history where she had previously studied. In the meantime working hard she managed to raise two children. In 1960 she completed her academic set up and achieved a doctor degree (CSc.) with a theme “*Britská zahraniční politika a anglo-francouzsko-sovětská jednání v roce 1939*” [British Foreign Policy and Anglo-French-Soviet Negotiations in 1939].

A turning point in Alice’s professional career was her habilitation work “*Zahraniční kapitál v předmnichovském Československu*” [Foreign Capital in pre-Munich Czechoslova-



kia] that she defended in 1964. It started a new phase of her professional development. At that time she also got involved in a rigorous conflict with one of the most controversial personalities in the Czech radically dogmatic pro-regime historiography, i.e. — Václav Král. The studies by Alice Teichová — though not accepted too kindly by Czech historiography circles — were bringing forth a fundamentally new opinion as for the interwar period of the economic development of the Czechoslovak Republic. The publishing of her habilitation work was put through as late as in 1968 at the department of history at the Pedagogical Faculty of Charles University lead by the professor Arnošt Klíma in the period of intellectual alleviation of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. It is quite symptomatic that the manuscript, having been already prepared for printing, was handed in on 19th August 1968, i.e. a few days before the fatal Warsaw Pact invasion that once for ever suppressed a promising democratization process of the Prague Spring. As early as in 1968 Alice Teichová stood for a remarkable personality of European economic history. She proved her erudition in this field of study among others also by means of her meticulousness on the pages of the successful “*Dějiny světa*” [World History] published by the publishing house Státní pedagogické nakladatelství.

At the time of a critical collapse of the Prague Spring the Teich couple got an invitation to the world congress of economic historians in American Bloomington. They were not to return to “raped” Czechoslovakia. They got around prestigious universities in the USA where Mikuláš received in the meantime a scholarship, among others at Yale University and Harvard University. In 1970–72 Alice Teichová was elected a member of the then “girls college” of Girton College University in Cambridge. She was a lecturer of economic and political history. At the same time she was a lecturer at St. Anthony’s College in Oxford. In 1973 Alice Teichová became a senior lecturer of economic history at the University of East Anglia in Norwich and two years later even a regular professor there. In 1986 she changed then for the Faculty of Economic Sciences of Cambridge University. Her work at prestigious English schools got started with a publishing of her senior lecturer thesis from Prague under the title: “*An Economic Background to Munich : International Business and Czechoslovakia 1918–1938*” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1974) which brought her an international acclaim. The work based upon primary archive sources was systematically analysing international funds investments into Czechoslovak industry and it pointed out their relationship with the political history. The relatively weak funds relationship of Czechoslovakia with France and Great Britain corresponded to the British–French appeasement policy. The work at the same time indicated sensitivity of international funds as for threats for Central Europe from the side of Nazi Germany. There is no chance that this work was at the end published also in Czech under the title “*Mezinárodní kapitál a Československo v letech 1918–1938*” [International Capital and Czechoslovakia in 1918–1938 (Prague: Karolinum 1994)]. The monograph was innovative not only due to its theme, but also due to its method. It was based upon an economic perception of historic substance and it made use of not only a statistic method, but it exceeded mainly due to its endeavour to comprehend economic correlations the very principles of which were trust covenants and interest networks of an international scope recorded by means of a great variety of remarkable graphic images and charts. Alice Teichová thus paved out a way for a research of international funds movement.

Her contribution to a big three part Oxford collective monograph called “*An Economic History of Eastern Europe*” is also notable. This project was bringing into economic history another novelty; we may thus speak about “comparative economic history”. Alice Teichová used to publish in the prestigious publishing house the Cambridge University Press in an interval of two or three years more and more works of a considerable impact. She introduced into economic history of 1980s and 1990s a new way of cooperation by means of a creation of new research teams. Thanks to their cooperation authentic, thoroughly sophisticated and constructed monographs that focus upon essential issues of the economic environment and entrepreneurial world of the 20th century were born. Let us remind of her work: “*International Business and Central Europe 1918–1939*” ([London]: Leicester University Press 1983). The year 1986 that introduced into economic history a research of multinational enterprise brought into life a fundamental collective work (*Multinational Enterprise in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986); the history of multinational enterprise was treated also in the work from 1991 (*Historical Studies in International Corporate Business*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991). Big projects carried out within the British Council were succeeded by numerous works of a lesser extent. Her lectures series gave life to economic history of Czechoslovakia in 1918–1980 both in English and German or the work “*Kleinstaaten im Spannungsfeld der Großmächte*” (München: R. Oldenbourg 1988). Alice Teichová focused there again upon central Europe where she belonged and that she understood. At the end of 1980s she started to pave the way to Western historiography also for research workers in her home Austria, i.e. historians of Vienna University and of Vienna Economic University.

The collapse of the state socialism in the lands of the Soviet bloc opened for the Teich couple a possibility to return to their second home — Czechoslovakia. Frail contacts, only surreptitiously kept during the period of normalization then got a new quality. Alice’s students, at that time already prominent Czech historiographers, being it e.g. prof. PhDr. Jaroslav Pátek or doc. PhDr. Jana Englová and distinguished Czech historians established in the field of economic history of Central Europe such as: prof. Ing. Václav Průcha, prof. PhDr. Zdeněk Jindra, PhDr. Vlastislav Lacina, PhDr. Zdeněk Sládek or a prominent representative of Slovak economic history, prof. Ing. Jozef Faltus and others used to invite her and her husband to Czechoslovakia. Alice Teichová reciprocated with her projects, conferences and publications by virtue of which she opened for them the Central European and Western European research space. She managed to integrate the Czech historiography within the Hungarian, Polish and first of all Austrian one. It is also necessary to state that she did her best as for founding of the Institute of Economic and Social History at Charles University and she also initiated publishing of the department foreign language journal under the title “*Wirtschafts- und sozialhistorische Mitteilungen / Prague Economic and Social History Papers (WISOHIM/ESHHP)*” that was to help the Czech historiography with presenting its work in abroad (has been published so far). However, it was most of all a group of younger historians, then historians of middle generation who profited the most from a new climate and methodology of economic history. They became then the main research power of projects initiated and managed by Alice Teichová and financed from European, British and Austrian funds. Thanks to them constitutive





works of central European economic history of the 20th century were born focused upon Czech-Slovak-Austrian economic relationships, Czechoslovakia and Central Europe in between the wars, a market in Central Europe and Central European bank sector. These projects together with others financed by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic and the Economics Institute “Nadání Josefa, Marie and Zdenky Hlávkových” had a great impact upon a development of the economic history field of study in Czech lands after November 1989.

In 1990s there are only Central European themes to be found in professional interest of Alice Teichová. One example is e.g. a thin original monograph “*Německá hospodářská politika v českých zemích v letech 1939–1945*” [*German Economic Policy in the Czech Lands in between 1939–1945*, Prague: Vysoká škola ekonomická v Praze 1998]. The works on universal banking and mainly on the relationships of the nation, state and economy in the history (*Nation, State and the Economy in History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003) are also of a great European, but also world significance. In the autumn of her life Alice Teichová played a big role in managing of a large project of the Austrian government that established a board of historians in charge of a research as for property injustice of the WWII and their reparations.

The collective monograph from 2009 under the title “*Gaps in the Iron Curtain. Economic relations between neutral and socialist countries in Cold War Europe*” (Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press 2009) was the last work of the Central European “workshop” integrated, or as you like inspired by Alice Teichová that describes economic relationships of the Soviet bloc with neutral states of Europe in the period of the Cold War. Thus the whole complex of researches of economy history of the Czech lands and Europe from the WWI to a rise of economic transformations that were of a primary interest in Alice’s scientific life was symbolically closed. It was the very last volume that then 89 years old professor Teichová co-edited.

Even though Alice Teichová was a typical representative of a modern interpretation of economic history making use of interdisciplinary and most of all methodological instrumentarium independent of ideological constructions she was far from a generalizing criticism of the Marxist historiography as the whole and she respected many older, on material based works. She also made use of them in her synthetic and synthesising works. Alice Teichová called a group of historians within the Institute of Economy and Social History of FF UK who thematically and methodologically innovated economic history of Central Europe and to a great extent participated in her home and European projects “*Pražská hospodářsko-historická škola*” (Prague Economic History School). In such a way she expressed her courtly respect to changes in the Czech historiography of economic history that had managed pretty soon to get rid of a not long ago compulsory Marxist methodology “shirt of mail” and had sailed into renowned European history researches. In this respect the Czech economic historiography owes a lot to Alice Teichová and it should never forget her merits.

More detailed data on the work and life of Alice Teichová are to be found in two jubilee volumes published in the Czech Republic on the occasion of her 75th and 88th birthday *Československo a střední Evropa v meziválečném období* [*Czechoslovakia and Central Europe in the Interwar Period*], Jaroslav Pátek (ed.), Acta Universitatis Carolinae, Philosophica et Historica 3–1994, Studia historica XL, Praha: Univerzita Karlova 1994;

„Discourses — Diskurse“. *Essays for / Beiträge zu Mikuláš Teich and Alice Teichova*, Gertrude Enderle-Burcel — Eduard Kubů — Jiří Šouša — Dieter Stiefel (eds.), Prague — Vienna 2008), and also a collective monograph: Alice Teichova — Mikuláš Teich, *Zwischen der kleinen und der großen Welt. Eingemeinsames Leben im 20. Jahrhundert*, Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau 2005 and the work *Sto českých vědců v exilu: encyklopedie významných vědců z řad pracovníků Československé akademie věd v emigraci* [100 Czech Scientists in Exile: Encyclopaedia of Prominent Scientists from the Czech Academy of Sciences], Soňa Štrbáňová — Antonín Kostlán (eds.), Praha: Academia 2011.

The world economic historiography has lost with Alice Teichová one of the most important researchers, original both due to her thorough integration of economic sciences into economic history and most of all due to her defining of new research fields where Alice Teichová either herself, or with the help of her research teams paved the way. This merit resulted in numerous international awards, both in a form of honorary degrees at prestigious universities in Vienna and Uppsala, medals (in 2010 she was awarded a gold commemorative medal of the Charles University Rector), and invitations to lectures and financing of her internationally oriented projects. Alice Teichová dealt most of her life with the Czech history in the Central European context. No surprise then that the Czech historical circles perceive her as their member. That is also demonstrated in the entry in *Lexikon českých historiků* (Thesaurus of Czech Historians) published by the Philosophical Faculty of Ostrava University in Ostrava in 2012. The entry is a decent thank you of the Czech historians to this personality.

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