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Mira Yakovenko, Agnessa Mironova

Agnessa

Zpověď ženy stalinského čekisty

The recorded oral memories of Agnessa Mironova (1903–1982) is a must book for anybody who wants to know what was a personal life like under Stalinism. For the first time ever, Agnessa's notes open the secret door into living rooms and boudoirs of Stalin's "hangmen", top-ranked Soviet secret police officers during the purges of 1930-40s. However, anyone who reads this book with the intention to better understand the past, will also discover an outstanding female character, a proud predator, who reveals all truths about herself frankly and without keeping anything back. A life story of this unique woman, so beautiful and repulsive at once, has developed during the most terrible and bloody period of modern history.

Agnessa's husband, 'the main love of her life' as she dubbed him, was the NKVD officer Sergei Mironov. Thanks to his extremely fast and successful career, Agnessa got to the very top society of the Stalin era. We follow the amazing trajectory of her life full of most drastic contrasts: first she talks with Stalin at the New Year celebration party in Kremlin, and next freezes in a Gulag camp lost in cold Kazakh steppes; first she lives alone with her husband in a huge mansion once belonging to the royal governor of Siberia, and next in a miserable pigeonhole in communal apartment in Moscow; first she travels in a luxury saloon cars and limos, and next is a prisoner of the NKVD jail.

Oral memories of Agnessa Mironova recorded by Mira Yakovenko in the 60s and 70s were first published in 2008 by Memorial Society. In 2012, Irina Sherbakova, the head of Moscow Memorial Society, prepared an extensive commentary, a preface and the index of all historical figures mentioned in the book.

paperback; 262 pages + 26 pages of photos; 328 CZK; March 2021
ISBN 978-80-907771-0-1

Mira Yakovenko (1917–2005), a physicist by training, was not a professional writer. Rather, she was endowed with a gift for language. But, above all else, she was motivated by a profound interest in the fates of people who survived the Gulag.

Already at the end of the 1950s she began taking an interest in the stories of those who had been released from Stalin's camps. During those years, she stood in line for hours at the USSR Procurator's Office, the High Court, the War Tribunal, agitating for the rehabilitation of her relatives who had been persecuted, or "repressed," as it is termed in Russian. She herself was descended from a family of the Ukrainian intelligentsia—academics and teachers. She listened to testimonies about former prisoners, told to her by others who were waiting, as she was, at the doors of these government offices. At that time, one could learn about the realities of Stalin's camps only from the accounts of eyewitnesses, who had returned from those distant places years later. It was already clear, however, that only a very few had the courage and ability to describe what they had lived through. For this reason, Mira Yakovenko considered it vitally important to try to convey and transmit what the witnesses would have tried to tell. The story of Agnessa Mironova was the apex of Mira Yakovenko's achievement.

Reviews:

"There are many fine works that offer harrowing accounts of the fate of Stalin's innocent victims. This book is different. Agnessa was the beautiful, strong-willed, frivolous, and loving wife of a regional boss of Stalin's secret police who shut her eyes to the murderous activities of her husband. She offers a unique account of what it was like to be the wife of a high-ranking member of the Soviet elite, enjoying fine food, high fashion, 'ladies-in-waiting,' and lavish holidays at a time when millions were starving or being worked to death. Agnessa's life would be marked by tragedy, and she would rise to its challenges. But it is her partial complicity in the world of which she is a part, the fact that she is a very flawed heroine, that makes her account so compelling."

S.A. Smith, All Souls College, Oxford

Honoré de Balzac

Lilie v údolí

The Lily of the Valley (*Le Lys dans la Vallée*) is a long confession of a passionate love of a young man, Félix de Vandenesse, for a mature woman, Madame de Mortsauf. Unlike many others novels from *La Comédie humaine* that serve as a critique of social, political and moral conditions of his time, *The Lily of the Valley* depicts a timeless private theme of first love and its agony. In Henriette de Mortsauf's tyrannical husband Balzac paints the portrait of a decadent aristocracy: heirs of their father's illness, his children are condemned to a feverish life and Madame de Mortsauf sacrifices her happiness to keep them alive. Félix has never known true maternal love: attracted by the devotion of this mother, he ties himself to her with a strange and morbid eroticism. Félix and Henriette, two suffering beings, unite to oppose the violence of the world and search refuge in an impossible relationship. An unexpected closure of the novel brings liberating irony and authenticity to this masterpiece in which Balzac honoured the first woman of his life, Madame de Berny.

hardcover; 312 pages; 348 CZK; December 2020
ISBN 978-80-907771-1-8

Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) was a French writer, author of a vast number of novels and short stories collectively called *La Comédie humaine*.

His family wanted him to become a lawyer. It was in 1819 that the young Balzac won from his parents a temporary respite from his legal studies in order to try his luck in his own chosen career as a writer. He set to work with a fury, while living in a garret in Paris, producing mostly potboilers – gothic, humorous, historical novels – written under composite pseudonyms.

Then he tried a business career as a publisher, printer, and owner of a typefoundry, but disaster soon followed. From then on his life was to be one of mounting debts and almost incessant toil. Balzac led a tumultuous existence, spending his earnings in advance as a dandy and man-about-town. In his works Balzac emerged as the supreme observer and chronicler of contemporary French society. These novels are unsurpassed for their narrative drive, their large casts of vital, diverse, and interesting characters, and their obsessive interest in and examination of virtually all spheres of life: the contrast between provincial and metropolitan manners and customs; the commercial spheres of banking, publishing, and industrial enterprise; the worlds of art, literature, and high culture; politics and partisan intrigue; romantic love in all its aspects; and the intricate social relations and scandals among the aristocracy and the haute bourgeoisie.

Stephan Zweig

Balzac

Román jednoho života

Zweig devoted ten years of research and writing to *Balzac*, which he regarded as his crowning achievement. This late work reads like a picaresque novel, with Balzac's quest for "a woman with a fortune" and recurrent episodes of the author chasing an elusive pot of gold driving the story. This biography of one classic author by another is filled with Zweig's characteristic psychological insights. He portrays the energy and "exuberance of imagination" that produced some two thousand characters in *La comédie humaine*, as well as the daily details of the coffee-chugging writer's life, his manic writing schedule, method of correcting proofs, dealing with publishers and reviewers, signing contracts, doing marketing and publicity. Balzac blends biography and literary history in a highly readable volume that will teach you French cultural history as you laugh out loud. This new Czech edition serves as an introduction to a selection of Balzac's best works prepared by Maraton publishing house.

hardcover; 424 pages + 24 pages of photo annex; 448 CZK; December 2020

ISBN 978-80-907771-2-5

Stefan Zweig (1881–1942) was an Austrian writer who achieved distinction in several genres – poetry, essays, short stories, and dramas – most notably in his interpretations of imaginary and historical characters. His first book, a volume of poetry, was published in 1901. He travelled widely in Europe before settling in Salzburg, in 1913. In 1934, driven into exile by the Nazis, he emigrated to England and then, in 1940, to Brazil by way of New York. Finding only growing loneliness and disillusionment in their new surroundings, he and his wife committed suicide in 1942.

Zweig's interest in psychology and the teachings of Sigmund Freud led to his most characteristic work, the subtle portrayal of character. Zweig's essays include studies of Friedrich Hölderlin, Heinrich von Kleist, Friedrich Nietzsche and many others. He also wrote a psychological novel, *Beware of Pity* (1938), and translated works of Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, and Émile Verhaeren.

Reviews:

"[Balzac] is sure to entertain, instruct and charm ... It is a work of art, ... alive with the teeming life of its model ... It is true both to facts and to the more elusive psychological and spiritual truth of a man who ... has remained one of the most mysterious of great creators."

Henri Peyre, Sterling Professor of French Literature, Yale University, *The New York Times*

Iva Tajovská
Než se rozdělíme

Iva Tajovská's new novel *Než se rozdělíme* (*Before We Part*) draws from the events of the 1990s and deals with the disintegration of states and families that occurred during the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and the civil war in Yugoslavia. In this strong and straightforward story the characters are confronted with loneliness, aging and alienation in times that were supposed to be peaceful, but instead brought new guilts and rages.

paperback; 240 pages; 268 CZK; March 2021
ISBN 978-80-907771-4-9

Iva Tajovská (1959) made her debut in 2006 with the book of short stories *Jepičí hvězdy* (Ephemeral Stars). Seven successful novels followed, including *Matky matek* (Mothers of Mothers, 2007), *Jarmark obnažených duší* (The Fair of Naked Souls, 2010) or *Podlaha z trávy, strop z hvězd* (The Floor Made of Grass, The Ceiling Made of Stars, 2016).

Ève Curie Paní Curieová

Madame Curie is a story of Marie Skłodowska-Curie (1867–1934), the first woman scientist to win worldwide fame, and indeed, one of the great scientists of the 20th century. Winner of two Nobel Prizes (for physics in 1903 and for chemistry in 1911), she performed pioneering studies with radium and contributed profoundly to the understanding of radioactivity.

The history of her story-book marriage to Pierre Curie, of their refusal to patent their processes or otherwise profit from the commercial exploitation of radium, and her tragically ironic death are legendary and well known but are here revealed from an inside perspective. But, as this book reveals, it was also true. An astonishing mind and a remarkable life are here portrayed by Marie Curie's daughter in a classic and moving account.

paperback; 376 pages + 31 photos; 398 CZK; April 2021
ISBN 978-80-907771-8-7

Ève Curie (1904–2007) was a French and American writer, journalist and pianist, and the younger daughter of Marie Skłodowska-Curie and Pierre Curie.

She worked as a journalist and authored her mother's biography *Madame Curie* and a book of war reportage, *Journey Among Warriors*. *Madame Curie* was instantly popular; in many countries including the United States, it was a bestseller. In the U.S. it won the third annual National Book Award for Non-Fiction.

From the 1960s Ève Curie committed herself to work for UNICEF, providing help to children and mothers in developing countries.

Alena Wagnerová
Dvojitá kaple

The Double Chapel is an intimate confession about the childhood and adolescence of a young woman, about relationships between parents and children.

The novel is powerful in its intensity; although it is an introspective prose, a current of internal dialogues and memories of the main heroine, the reader sees a true and profound drama of a family.

paperback; 176 pages; 198 CZK; April 2021

ISBN 978-80-907771-7-0

Alena Wagnerová (1936) is a Czech author and journalist writing in both Czech and German.

She was born in Brno and studied biology at Masaryk University. Wagnerová went on to study teaching, theatre, German and comparative literature. She taught at the Dům pionýrů in Brno, then was head of the Veterinary Faculty laboratory at the Agricultural University and later was a playwright at the Divadlo Julia Fučíka. From 1968 to 1969, she was editor of *Studentské listy*. She went to Germany in 1969 and was married there. Wagnerová also worked on the *Paměť žen* (Women's Memories) project in Prague.

She has written about German authors from Prague such as Franz Kafka and Milena Jesenská and Bohemian cultural figures such as Sidonie Nádherná von Borutín. In both her fiction and non-fiction, she explores the issues of the status of women and Czech-German relations.

Edward N. Luttwak
Státní převrat
Praktická příručka

Coup d'État: A Practical Handbook astonished readers when it first appeared in 1968 because it showed, step by step, how governments could be overthrown. Translated into sixteen languages, it has inspired anti-coup precautions by regimes around the world. In addition to these detailed instructions, Edward Luttwak's revised handbook offers an altogether new way of looking at political power – one that considers, for example, the vulnerability to coups of even the most stable democracies in the event of prolonged economic distress.

The world has changed dramatically in the past half century, but not the essence of the coup d'état. It still requires the secret recruitment of military officers who command the loyalty of units well placed to seize important headquarters and key hubs in the capital city. The support of the armed forces as a whole is needed only in the aftermath, to avoid countercoups. And mass support is largely irrelevant, although passive acceptance is essential. To ensure it, violence must be kept to a minimum. The ideal coup is swift and bloodless. Very violent coups rarely succeed, and if they trigger a bloody civil war they fail utterly.

Luttwak identifies conditions that make countries vulnerable to a coup, and he outlines the necessary stages of planning. But much more broadly, his investigation of coups – updated for the twenty-first century – uncovers important truths about the nature of political power.

paperback; 272 pages; 298 CZK; June 2021
ISBN 978-80-907771-3-2

Edward N. Luttwak (1942) served as a consultant for the Office of Net Assessment of the U.S. Department of Defense, for the U.S. armed forces, and to the U.S. National Security Council. His official – and unofficial – advisory work has been praised by generals and secretaries of state.

He believes in what he calls “the logic of strategy”, which usually involves doing the least efficient thing possible in order to gain the upper hand over your enemy by confusing them. His books and articles have devoted followings among academics, journalists, businessmen, military officers and prime ministers. His 1987 book *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* is a set text at universities and military academies across the world.

In his long career, Luttwak has been asked by the president of Mexico to help eliminate a street gang that was burning tourist buses in the city of Mexicali; the Dalai Lama has consulted him about relations with China, European governments have hired him to root out al-Qaida operatives.

But Luttwak is still best known for his book *Coup d'Etat: A Practical Guide*, published in 1968. The book explains in clinical detail how to seize power in various types of states. The book was praised by John le Carré and warmly reviewed by critics on the left and the right. But for Luttwak the best notice came in 1972, when General Mohammad Oufkir was assassinated during an attempted coup against King Hassan in Morocco; it was rumoured that a blood-spattered copy of *Coup d'État* was found on the general's corpse. The Czech version follows the edition from 2016 – updated for the twenty-first century – and is prefaced by the author himself.

Reviews:

“This book is long on practice and short on theory. It remains in print more than forty years after it was written and still commands sales. The reason may be that it is a good read: wry, observant and practical.”

The Times Literary Supplement, June 3, 2016

Muriel Spark
Dívky bez prostředků

The Girls of Slender Means is a novel that takes place “long ago in 1945, when all the nice people in England were poor, allowing for exceptions.”

In the May of Teck Club – a London hostel ‘three times window shattered since 1940 but never directly hit’ – the young lady residents do their best to act as if the war never happened. They practice elocution, and jostle one another over suitors and a single Schiaparelli gown. But behind the girls’ giddy literary and amorous peregrinations they hide some tragically painful secrets and wounds.

paperback; 160 pages; 228 CZK; July 2021

ISBN 978-80-907771-5-6

Muriel Spark (1918–2006) was born and educated in Edinburgh. She was active in the field of creative writing since 1950, when she won a short-story writing competition in the Observer, and her many subsequent novels include *Memento Mori* (1959), *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963) and *Aiding and Abetting* (2000). She also wrote plays, poems, children’s books and biographies. She became Dame Commander of the British Empire in 1993, and died in 2006.

Reviews:

“Reading the novel as a young woman was a random gift; rereading it today is to encounter the rarest of fiction and to appreciate the early and enduring genius of Muriel Spark.”

Carol Shields, Guardian

“One of Spark’s most evocative novels.”

Anne Taylor

Yuri Buida

Modrá krev

Buida's *Blue Blood* (2011) tells the story of Ida Zmoiro, whom Buida based on Soviet actress Valentina Karavaeva. "Actress" sounds glamorous, but Ida's life is filled with pain: a brief marriage to an Englishman, an accident that ruins her film career by making her face look like a broken plate, the Stalinist repression, and the sudden appearance of a former husband's wife and child. As Ida likes to say, "happiness makes you fat". In this dark, Soviet-era transformation of a fairy tale, Buida creates his own myth of a bright soul in a world inhabited by drunkards, madmen and crooks.

Yuri Buida (1954), whose short stories, novellas, and novels combine historical, grotesque and metaphysical elements, won the 1999 Apollon Grigoriev Award for his short story collection *The Prussian Bride*.

paperback; 280 pages, 298 CZK; September 2021
ISBN 978-80-907771-6-3

Yuri Buida (1954) was first published as a fiction writer in the early 1990s after a career in journalism. He grew up in the small town of Znamensk in the Kaliningrad region. The much-disputed territory of former East Prussia was occupied by Soviet troops in 1945; the German inhabitants were deported en masse. The Russians among whom Buida was born were effectively immigrants, and a sense of the transitory courses right through his short stories and novels. Deprived of a sense of the past, his war cripples, bereaved wives, madmen and magicians inhabit a dislocated world. Death is all around them, yet Buida animates their lives with unforgettable vitality and humour, and with a peculiarly Russian sense of the miraculous. His own prose style, by turns baroque, magic realist and savagely terse, is a formidable match for the subject.

Yuri Buida is one of the most exciting discoveries of post-Soviet literature and a worthy winner of the prestigious Apollon Grigoriev award in Russia. His novel *Blue Blood*, which uses literary allusions and quirky Soviet-era situations to transform Soviet actress Valentina Karavaeva into a fictional heroine, was a 2011 Big Book award finalist, winning third prize among readers.

Reviews:

"Buida is often compared to the magic realists of Latin America. In his measured, succinct style, Buida creates a seemingly imaginary universe. Little girls called „doves“ march in funeral processions with birds in their hands, a clock accidentally immured in a building called „Africa“ chimes at three every morning, and the local policeman Pan Paratov drinks his customary gass of double-strength vodka. Few authors manage to convey the reality of this very unimaginary world better than Yuri Buida."

The Times Literary Supplement, March 2, 2012

Honoré de Balzac
Neznámé veledílo a jiné prózy
Povídky o umělcích

Besides the large novels that make up the so-called *Human Comedy*, Honoré de Balzac is the creator of a vast number of small-scale works, unknown masterpieces waiting to be rediscovered. *The Unknown Masterpiece and Other Stories* presents readers with five acclaimed stories about art and artists in which Balzac endowed a theme particularly close to his heart with a fusion of romance and realism.

In *The Unknown Masterpiece* and *Gambara* Balzac portrays a painter and a composer who, each in their own way, become obsessed with their search for utter perfection. These examinations of the conflict between an artist's commitment to his work and his obligations to others offer a perfect introduction to Balzac's masterly storytelling.

In *Sarrasine* an impetuous young sculptor falls in love with a diva of the Roman stage, but rapture turns to rage when he discovers the reality behind the seductiveness of society. By contrast, *Pierre Grassou* is an amusing caricature of a mediocre painter who gains success by virtue of pleasing to the social taste.

Finally, the novella *At the Sign of the Cat and Racket* confronts two different worlds with a love story between a bohemian painter and a simple bourgeois girl.

All the stories are published in new original translations. The novela *Gambara* is presented to the Czech reader for the first time.

hardcover; 248 pages; 298 CZK; October 2021
978-80-88411-01-7

Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) was a French writer, author of a vast number of novels and short stories collectively called *La Comédie humaine*.

His family wanted him to become a lawyer. It was in 1819 that the young Balzac won from his parents a temporary respite from his legal studies in order to try his luck in his own chosen career as a writer. He set to work with a fury, while living in a garret in Paris, producing mostly potboilers – gothic, humorous, historical novels – written under composite pseudonyms.

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In his works Balzac emerged as the supreme observer and chronicler of contemporary French society. These novels are unsurpassed for their narrative drive, their large casts of vital, diverse, and interesting characters, and their obsessive interest in and examination of virtually all spheres of life: the contrast between provincial and metropolitan manners and customs; the commercial spheres of banking, publishing, and industrial enterprise; the worlds of art, literature, and high culture; politics and partisan intrigue; romantic love in all its aspects; and the intricate social relations and scandals among the aristocracy and the haute bourgeoisie.

Victor Sebestyen

Lenin

Osobnost, ideologie, teror

Victor Sebestyen's *Lenin: The Man, the Dictator, and the Master of Terror* is the first major work in English for nearly two decades on one of the most significant figures of the twentieth century. In Russia to this day Lenin inspires adulation. Everywhere, he continues to fascinate as a man who made history, and who created a new kind of state that would later be imitated by nearly half the countries in the world.

Lenin believed that the 'the political is the personal', and while in no way ignoring his political life, Sebestyen focuses on Lenin the man – a man who loved nature almost as much as he loved making revolution, and whose closest ties and friendships were with women. The long-suppressed story of his ménage à trois with his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, and his mistress and comrade, Inessa Armand, reveals a different character to the coldly one-dimensional figure of legend. Told through the prism of Lenin's key relationships, Sebestyen's lively biography casts a new light on the Russian Revolution, one of the great turning points of modern history.

paperback; 448 pages + 16 pages of photo annex; 498 CZK; November 2021
978-80-88411-00-0

Victor Sebestyen (1956) was born in Budapest. He was a child when his family left Hungary as refugees. As a journalist, he has worked for numerous British newspapers, including *The London Evening Standard*, *The Times* and *The Daily Mail*. He has contributed to many American publications, including *The New York Times*. He reported widely from Eastern Europe when Communism collapsed and the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. He covered the wars in former Yugoslavia and the breakup of the Soviet Union. At *The London Evening Standard* he was foreign editor, media editor and chief leader writer.

Victor Sebestyen's first book, *Twelve Days* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2006, Pantheon 2006), was an acclaimed history of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising. It was translated into 12 languages. His second, *Revolution 1989* (W&N 2009, Pantheon 2009) was a highly praised account of the fall of the Soviet empire.

In 2017 he published *Lenin: The Man, the Dictator, and the Master of Terror*, an Intimate Portrait, a full-scale biography of the man who led the Russian Revolution and created the world's first Communist State.

Reviews:

„Can first-rate history read like a thriller? With Lenin the Dictator the journalist Victor Sebestyen has pulled off this rarest of feats. How did he do it? Start with a Russian version of House of Cards and behold Vladimir Ilyich Lenin pre-empt Frank Underwood's cynicism and murderous ambition by 100 years. Add meticulous research by digging into Soviet archives, including those locked away until recently. Plow through 9.5 million words of Lenin's Collected Works. Finally, apply a scriptwriter's knack for drama and suspense that needs no ludicrous cliffhangers to enthrall history buffs and professionals alike.“

Josef Joffe, The New York Times

„In his engagingly written biography the author ... captures all the drama of Lenin's leadership against a background of imperial collapse, the ravages of war and the building of a dictatorship ... the Bolshevik leader emerges from these pages as a man unencumbered by critical self-awareness, by doubts or by any moral conflict over the extraordinary costs inflicted on others by the pursuit of his revolutionary goals.“

Daniel Beer, The Guardian

Kyle Harper

Pád Říma

Podíl klimatických změn a epidemií na zániku římské říše

How devastating viruses, pandemics, and other natural catastrophes swept through the far-flung Roman Empire and helped to bring down one of the mightiest civilizations of the ancient world.

Here is the monumental retelling of one of the most consequential chapters of human history: the fall of the Roman Empire. *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire* is the first book to examine the catastrophic role that climate change and infectious diseases played in the collapse of Rome's power – a story of nature's triumph over human ambition.

Interweaving a grand historical narrative with cutting-edge climate science and genetic discoveries, Kyle Harper traces how the fate of Rome was decided not just by emperors, soldiers, and barbarians but also by volcanic eruptions, solar cycles, climate instability, and devastating viruses and bacteria. He takes readers from Rome's pinnacle in the second century, when the empire seemed an invincible superpower, to its unraveling by the seventh century, when Rome was politically fragmented and materially depleted. Harper describes how the Romans were resilient in the face of enormous environmental stress, until the besieged empire could no longer withstand the combined challenges of a "little ice age" and recurrent outbreaks of bubonic plague.

A poignant reflection on humanity's intimate relationship with the environment, *The Fate of Rome* provides a sweeping account of how one of history's greatest civilizations encountered and endured, yet ultimately succumbed to the cumulative burden of nature's violence. The example of Rome is a timely reminder that climate change and germ evolution have shaped the world we inhabit – in ways that are surprising and profound.

paperback; 408 pages; 498 CZK; January 2022
978-80-88411-03-1

Kyle Harper is Professor of Classics and Letters and Senior Vice President and Provost at the University of Oklahoma. He is the author of *Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275–425* and *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity*. He lives in Norman, Oklahoma.

Reviews:

"A work of remarkable erudition and synthesis, Harper's timely study offers a chilling warning from history of "the awesome, uncanny power of nature"."

P.D. Smith, *The Guardian*, Thu 11 Apr 2019

"An excellent new book... [Harper] has managed a prodigious scholarly output that uses date-driven, twenty-first-century methods to solve enduring problems of ancient history."

Noel Lenski, *Times Literary Supplement*

Igor Lukeš
Dějiny a doba postfaktická
Eseje, úvahy a glosy

In his texts (*History and the Post-Factual Age. Essays, Reflections and Commentaries*), Igor Lukeš offers two poles of his perspective—history and politics. He examines the Czech history of the 20th century with its catastrophes and myths, and today’s political problems in the Czech Republic, the United States, Russia and in the world context. He assumes that we can draw lessons from history. History may not repeat itself, but with a sufficiently critical and value-based perspective, we can uncover our own mistakes and preconceptions and find parallels between the present and the past that are not obvious at first glance. Lukeš does not hide the fact that he is an active defender and supporter of Western liberal values such as freethinking, tolerance, respect for truth, respect for others, decency and humanity, and he does not hesitate to call out the actions of those politicians and public officials who openly and brazenly lie, deny facts and thereby create a “post-factual age”.

The book is a selection of the author’s historical essays, political commentaries and reflections on the contemporary world from 2004 to 2021. The texts are divided thematically into several areas in which the author maps the Obama and Trump presidencies, Putin’s Russia, Czech statehood, the Cold War, the secret services and political ideologies. In addition to his insights and critical observations, the author’s style and commitment make for substantial reading and an emotional experience.

paperback; 224 pages; 298 CZK; April 2022
978-80-88411-04-8

Igor Lukeš (*1950) is a Professor of International Relations and History at Boston University’s Pardee School of Global Studies. His publications deal with the interwar period, the Cold War, and contemporary developments in East Central Europe and Russia. His Czech works are *Československo mezi Stalinem a Hitlerem. Benešova cesta k Mnichovu* (1999 and 2018) and *Československo nad propastí. Selhání amerických diplomatů a tajných služeb v Praze 1945–1948* (2014). He is also the author of *Rudolf Slansky. His Trials and Trial* (2006) and co-author of *The Munich Crisis, 1938. Prelude to World War II* (1999), *Inside the Apparatus. Perspectives on the Soviet Union* (1990) and *Gorbachev’s USSR. A System in Crisis* (1990). He was born in Prague and grew up in Letná district in the shadow of the Stalin monument. He studied Philosophy and English at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University. In the 1970s, he emigrated to the USA, where after further studies he obtained a PhD in International Relations. In 2012, he received the CIA award for “Outstanding Contribution to the Literature on Intelligence”.

Iva Tajovská
A lampa ještě hořela

Oldřiška, the narrator of Iva Tajovská's new novel *The Little Lamp Was Burning Still*, takes us from the beginning of the 20th century through to the summer of 1972 when the demolition of the famous Veselka Hotel in Pardubice symbolically completed her life story. As a result of her troubled family circumstances and her platonic love, she spent her youth and adulthood in loneliness and seclusion, which made her all the more sensitive to the fates of others.

The beginning of the 20th century was hopeful; the times favoured art, science, technology and progress. Through Oldřiška's narrative, we can follow the story of Jan Kašpar, who was the first Czech to fly in a heavier-than-air machine in 1910. Equally interesting are the lives of the men from Oldřiška's extended family who had to enlist in the Austrian army four years later. The novel examines their different attitudes towards their homeland and family and the motives that influenced their decisions. Many of those who remained faithful to their oath to the Emperor were no less brave than those who demonstrated their courage in the legions in Russia.

Twenty years later, the Nazi rampage claimed more victims among Oldřiška's family and friends. It brought back times of uncertainty and waiting and marked a period that required new courage and sacrifice.

Alongside Oldřiška, the female perspective on historical events and human relations is provided by her sister and niece who for their love from "life would gladly part", to use a Jaromír Erben's verse. Their love is challenged, manifests itself in different forms and defies time.

paperback; 232 pages; 298 CZK; May 2022
978-80-88411-05-5

Iva Tajovská (1959) made her debut in 2006 with the book of short stories *Jepičí hvězdy* (Ephemeral Stars). Seven successful novels followed, including *Matky matek* (Mothers of Mothers, 2007), *Jarmark obnažených duší* (The Fair of Naked Souls, 2010) or *Podlaha z trávy, strop z hvězd* (The Floor Made of Grass, The Ceiling Made of Stars, 2016).

Fitzroy Maclean **Výpravy na východ**

Sir Fitzroy Maclean's famous account of his diplomatic and military career between 1937 and 1945 is published in Czech for the first time. Maclean's adventurous narrative, delivered with unmistakable wit and personal charm, served as one of the models for Fleming's series of James Bond novels.

The first part of *Eastern Approaches* is set in the Soviet Union between 1937–1939 when Maclean is on a diplomatic mission in Moscow, travelling at considerable risk to remote parts of Russia and Central Asia and closely following Stalin's monstrous trials. The second recounts his wartime service as a desert commando in North Africa, fighting Rommel's army. The third part traces the years 1943–1945, when Churchill put him in charge of the airborne unit that was to support and coordinate Tito's partisans in Bosnia and Serbia. Maclean established a friendly relationship with Tito and in the book, he devotes a lot of space to Tito's person and the vicissitudes of his relationship with the Allies – he is also involved in crucial negotiations and peace agreements.

Maclean's memoirs are multifaceted in genre – they take the form of an engaging travelogue, an adventurous war novel and insightful geopolitical essays. They provide crucial testimony on Stalinism, the struggles of World War II, Tito and the situation in the Balkans at the time. The book is written in an engaging and brisk style and provides an extraordinary reading experience in addition to historical insight.

paperback; 424 pages + photo annex; 498 CZK; June 2022
978-80-88411-06-2

Sir Fitzroy Maclean was a Scottish diplomat in Stalin's Soviet Union in the 1930s, a longtime Conservative Member of Parliament, Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for War in the 1950s, a traveler and the author of a score of books, including *Eastern Approaches*, in which he recounted three extraordinary series of adventures: travelling, often incognito, in Soviet Central Asia where foreigners were not allowed at that time; fighting in the Western Desert campaign, where he specialised in commando raids behind enemy lines; and living rough with Josip Broz Tito and his Yugoslav Partisans while commanding the Maclean Mission there.

Honoré de Balzac

Sbohem a jiné prózy

Balzac is often remembered as the author who, despite his romantic beginnings, embraced realism and critically portrayed the life and morals of French society in the first half of the 19th century. *Farewell and Other Stories* includes eight of his finest novellas and short stories on a wide range of topics and fully demonstrates the mastery of suspense and revelation that were the hallmarks of Balzac's genius. This collection aims to present Balzac not as a critic of society and human vices, but as a writer of many different genres and topics. He explored military themes in his novella *Farewell* – in extremely impressive, almost apocalyptic scenes, he depicts the catastrophe of the demoralised French army on the banks of the Berezina River during their retreat from Russia in November 1812; in another part of the novel, he portrays a woman who has gone mad as a result of the hardships of war. In the novella *The Secrets of the Princess de Cadignan*, an experienced, even sophisticated woman from high society who has seen a lot and squandered more than her fortune, flirts and manipulates a young, shy writer who, blinded by love, sees her as a saint, a pure and noble soul, a suffering victim of her surroundings. Here Balzac unfolds, as only he can, the dynamics of their relationship. Fantasy, religious mysticism and crime are the themes of *The Reconciled Melmoth*. Whether the novella ultimately results in a moral lesson, esotericism, or mere farce is for the reader to judge. *The Masked Lover* is written in a seemingly naive and romantic style. However, the author addresses the modern topic of radical female emancipation and independence – from her husband and the father of her child. *The Red Inn* is a representative of the crime genre. Balzac unravels the circumstances of a brutal murder of a German merchant and deals with the problem of conscience and moral complicity. The three shorter stories – *Passion in the Desert*, *The Atheist's Mass* and *Episode from the Terror* – are examples of Balzac's brilliant use of detail when treating specific topics.

hardcover; 328 pages; 398 CZK; June 2022
978-80-88411-07-9

Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) was a French writer, author of a vast number of novels and short stories collectively called *La Comédie humaine*.

His family wanted him to become a lawyer. It was in 1819 that the young Balzac won from his parents a temporary respite from his legal studies in order to try his luck in his own chosen career as a writer. He set to work with a fury, while living in a garret in Paris, producing mostly potboilers – gothic, humorous, historical novels – written under composite pseudonyms.

Then he tried a business career as a publisher, printer, and owner of a typefoundry, but disaster soon followed. From then on his life was to be one of mounting debts and almost incessant toil. Balzac led a tumultuous existence, spending his earnings in advance as a dandy and man-about-town. In his works Balzac emerged as the supreme observer and chronicler of contemporary French society. These novels are unsurpassed for their narrative drive, their large casts of vital, diverse, and interesting characters, and their obsessive interest in and examination of virtually all spheres of life: the contrast between provincial and metropolitan manners and customs; the commercial spheres of banking, publishing, and industrial enterprise; the worlds of art, literature, and high culture; politics and partisan intrigue; romantic love in all its aspects; and the intricate social relations and scandals among the aristocracy and the haute bourgeoisie.

Maryse Condé

Já Tituba, černá čarodějnice ze Salemu

This wild and entertaining novel expands on the true story of the West Indian slave Tituba, who was accused of witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts, arrested in 1692, and forgotten in jail until the general amnesty for witches two years later. Maryse Condé brings Tituba out of historical silence and creates for her a fictional childhood, adolescence, and old age.

She turns her into what she calls “a sort of female hero, an epic heroine, like the legendary ‘Nanny of the maroons,’” who, schooled in the sorcery and magical ritual of obeah, is arrested for healing members of the family that owns her. As history and fantasy merge, Maryse Condé, acclaimed author of *Tree of Life* and *Segu* writes a richly imagined life of a fascinating woman.

paperback; 224 pages; 298 CZK; August 2022
978-80-88411-08-6

Maryse Condé was born in Guadeloupe in the French Caribbean. She studied at the Sorbonne, where she took her doctorate in Comparative Literature (1975). Her research was on Black stereotypes in Caribbean literature. For twelve years, she lived in West Africa: Guinea, Ghana, Senegal, where she taught French at various levels.

Early in her career, she tried her hand at dramatic writing but took to the novel in 1976, producing *Heremakhonon* inspired by events of her life in West Africa. Since then, she has published regularly while continuing an academic career which brought her to Columbia University in 1995. At Columbia, she chaired the Center for French and Francophone studies from its foundation in 1997 to 2002.

Condé’s major works are the best-selling novel *Segu* (1984), set in historical Segou (now part of Mali), that examines the violent impact of the slave trade, Islam, Christianity, and white colonization on a royal family during the period from 1797 to 1860, and *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* (1988), based on the story of an American slave who was tried for witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts.

Maryse Condé holds a preeminent position among contemporary Caribbean writers. In 2018 she won the New Academy Prize in Literature.

Reviews:

In less sure hands, this short, powerful novel might well have become merely an extended denunciation of a perverted and evil society. What makes it larger and richer are Ms. Condé’s gift for storytelling and her unswerving focus on her characters, combined with her mordant sense of humor.

New York Times Book Review

Condé is one of the most prolific writers of the Caribbean and perhaps the most powerful woman’s voice in contemporary literature of the Americas. Her interpretation of the Salem witch trials, recast from her own dreams, is a remarkable work of historical fiction that is a haunting and powerful reminder of the dangers of intolerance of differences.

Choice

Mavis Gallant
Pozdní navrátilce
Short stories and novellas

In this selection of 13 stories which were published in *The New Yorker*, Gallant shows herself to be one of the century's most accomplished, and least conventional, writers of short fiction.

Gallant was never afraid to push the boundaries of the form: many of her longer stories stray into novella field, and even her shortest pieces often defy the expectations created in the first few pages. Gallant's characters are almost all exiles of one sort or another, twentieth-century seekers often marked by World War II and its aftermath.

Gallant, a Canadian expatriate, spent much of her life in Paris, and that city of exiles and emigres provides the setting for some of her most memorable stories.

paperback; 288 pages; 368 CZK; September 2022

978-80-88411-10-9

Mavis Gallant wrote stories regularly for *The New Yorker* from 1951 and was one of the most distinguished writers in English. She was born in Montreal and after working as a journalist there she decided to travel and settled eventually in Paris. *The Collected Stories of Mavis Gallant* came out in 1996. *The Cost of Living*, a collection of early and uncollected stories, was published by Bloomsbury in 2009. She died in 2014.

Reviews:

One of the best living short-story writers ... She is one of the great chroniclers of exile, her fictional landscapes inhabited by misfits and lost souls, characters far from home, literally or emotionally.

The Guardian

One of the most gifted short-story writers of The New Yorker's heyday – a master of the art in an age when fiction writers and poets could make a living from the form.

Financial Times

Alena Wagnerová
Překotná srdce

In the new prosaic book entitled *Hearts Too Fast* by Alena Wagnerová the reader is about to meet a range of real historical characters – the Catholic bishop Antonín Podlaha, the writers Karl Kraus and Reiner Maria Rilke, the painter Max Švabinský or the personalities of Johannes and Sidonie Nádherný. Yet it is not a historical novel.

By means of fictitious correspondence between Podlaha, Kraus and Johannes Nádherný respectively the author aims to depict the inner life of the protagonists and to provide an insight into their relations and emotional experience. Thus the reader is given a picture of the search of what it means to be close to the other, and above all, of various forms of romantic relationship – be it spiritual affection and closeness, rejected love, or deep feeling between siblings bordering on the incest.

paperback; 136 pages; 228 CZK; September 2022

978-80-88411-09-3

Alena Wagnerová (1936) is a Czech author and journalist writing in both Czech and German.

She was born in Brno and studied biology at Masaryk University. Wagnerová went on to study teaching, theatre, German and comparative literature. She taught at the Dům pionýrů in Brno, then was head of the Veterinary Faculty laboratory at the Agricultural University and later was a playwright at the Divadlo Julia Fučíka. From 1968 to 1969, she was editor of *Studentské listy*. She went to Germany in 1969 and was married there. Wagnerová also worked on the *Paměť žen* (Women's Memories) project in Prague.

She has written about German authors from Prague such as Franz Kafka and Milena Jesenská and Bohemian cultural figures such as Sidonie Nádherná von Borutín. In both her fiction and non-fiction, she explores the issues of the status of women and Czech-German relations.

Amin Maalouf

Dezorientovani

One night, a phone rings in Paris. Adam learns that Mourad, once his closest friend, is dying. He quickly throws some clothes in a suitcase and takes the first flight out, to the homeland he fled twenty-five years ago. Exiled in France, Adam has been leading a peaceful life as a respected historian, but back among the milk-white mountains of the East his past soon catches up with him. His childhood friends have all taken different paths in life—and some now have blood on their hands. Loyalty, identity, and the clash of cultures and beliefs are at the core of this long-awaited novel by the French-Lebanese literary giant Amin Maalouf.

978-80-88411-14-7

Amin Maalouf, one of the most influential contemporary writers, weaves extraordinary tales in his novels, mixing historical events, romantic love, fantasy, and imagination. Yet at the core of all these well-crafted works lies a deep element of philosophical and psychological inquiry into the nature and condition of man.

A Lebanese writer who lives in France and writes in French, Maalouf explores fundamental problems of identity, the pressures of religion and nationality, and the concerns and values of different cultures in the Middle East, Africa, and the Mediterranean world. He frequently probes the clashes between East and West.

Born and raised in Lebanon, after receiving a Jesuit education in sociology and economics, Amin Maalouf took up journalism. When the Lebanese civil war broke out, totally destabilizing his homeland, Maalouf, his wife, and three children emigrated in 1976 to Paris, where they have lived ever since. His literary work is today translated into more than 40 languages. It includes novels, essays and opera librettos, notably: *The Crusades through Arab Eyes* (Les Croisades vues par les Arabes, 1983), *Samarkand* (Samarcande, 1988), *The Gardens of Light* (Les Jardins de lumière, 1991) or *The Rock of Tanios* (Le Rocher de Tanios, 1993) He is a winner of the Prix Goncourt and a member of the Académie Française.

Reviews:

The Disoriented, published in French in 2012 and at last in Frank Wynne's assured English translation, is a profound reckoning...While the title alludes to being wrenched from the east, The Disoriented also signifies the universal loss of a moral compass.

Maya Jaggi, The Guardian

There are novels which reverberate long after you've finished reading them. Amin Maalouf's The Disoriented is such a novel. This is a voyage between the Orient and the West, the past and the present, as only the 1993 Goncourt Prize winner knows how to write it.

Le Figaro

Václav Polívka

Deníky 1945–1948

Václav Polívka (1927–1971) was born into Czechoslovakia's elite, roughly eight years after the country emerged from the ruins of Austria-Hungary. In *Diaries 1945–1948*, found in an attic in Oslo, Norway in 2012, the young medical student with a strong interest in classical music describes three crucial years for Europe, which, beginning in 1945, was moving from World War with Nazi occupation to Cold War with communist dictatorship.

In the summers of 1946 and 1947, Václav travels to Denmark where he meets a young Danish woman, Vibeke Hauer, with whom he falls in love, and later marries. In this respect, Václav Polívka's diary is a Czech-Nordic love story with a happy ending. But Czechoslovakia would not enjoy such good fortune.

Almost immediately after the country was liberated, Polívka expresses his doubts about the intentions of the Russians. Early on he realizes that indoctrination, censorship, and outright lies do not bode well for the future of freedom, and he shares his thoughts with surprising clarity in the pages of his diary.

paperback; 360 pages; 398 CZK; October 2022

Václav Polívka was born in Czechoslovakia in 1927. After the Communist takeover in 1948, he immigrated to Scandinavia. He settled in Norway, where he completed his medical studies and worked as a physician until his premature death in 1971.

Alena Wagnerová

Literární reportáže

The writer, editor and oral historian Alena Wagnerová has been involved in the significant genre of literary reportage for more than 50 years. The collection selected by the Maraton publishing house comprises the best of her texts written in 1965–2016, i.e. both texts published in magazines in the Czech Republic, Germany and Switzerland, and those that could not be published in the late-1960s Czechoslovakia due to political reasons.

The early texts trace the mindset and inner life of young Czech intellectuals who founded the resistance movement Předvoj (Avant-garde) in the time of the German occupation.

In the late 1960s the author recorded the unique, emotionally intense eye-witness account of the widows and mothers whose husbands and sons died during the Prague Uprising in May 1945.

Next the author deals with collectivization and its social and cultural impact, e.g. in the story of South Bohemian villages and the so-called rustic baroque

In her later writing Wagnerová confronts the past with the present, touching on Ypres in Belgium, Košice in Slovakia, Ravensbrück in Germany or the Villa Tugendhat in Brno, the Czech Republic.

Finally, the author reports on the so-called refugee crisis, in general published in the Czech and German-language press simultaneously.

Alena Wagnerová treats the topics in her typical style, with deep empathy for the weak and underprivileged. She neither glosses on the reality or historical crime nor glorifies minorities. In her writings she strives to mediate knowledge, reach understanding and find all that brings together.

Alena Wagnerová (1936) is a Czech author and journalist writing in both Czech and German.

She was born in Brno and studied biology at Masaryk University. Wagnerová went on to study teaching, theatre, German and comparative literature. She taught at the Dům pionýrů in Brno, then was head of the Veterinary Faculty laboratory at the Agricultural University and later was a playwright at the Divadlo Julia Fučíka. From 1968 to 1969, she was editor of Studentské listy. She went to Germany in 1969 and was married there. Wagnerová also worked on the Paměť žen (Women's Memories) project in Prague.

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Jacques de Saint Victor

Neviditelná moc

Mafie a demokratická společnost od 19. do 20. století

The Mafia may have been born out of the ruins of the feudal system, but it only flourished with the rise of democracy and capitalism. It soon took root in Naples, Sicily and Calabria and owes its rise to the criminal pacts it made with some of the political and social elite—thus gradually building its invisible power and subverting the social order. *The Invisible Power. The Mafia and Democratic Society from the 19th to the 20th Century* by the renowned French legal historian, writer and literary critic Jaques de Saint Victor reconstructs the history of the mafias and their expansion on the European continent.

The author visits their cradle and finds the first protagonists of the story: corrupt nobles, unscrupulous socialites, wealthy landowners, assassins... He reveals the invisible links of these “criminal sects” to the newborn democracy and follows their conquest of America. He also shows how the fascist regime failed in its efforts to eradicate the mafia plague that fed on its totalitarian rule.

During the Cold War, a profiteering mutation of Mafia networks emerged, and the author unravels their methods of freeloading off the liberal economy. We are in the midst of a boom in drug trafficking, the rise of tax havens, the compromising of the Vatican bank and real estate scandals, with mafia bosses shaking hands with politicians, industrialists and financiers. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, new underground groups have been growing in Europe, using this ‘model’ to conquer more territory. The phenomenon of the mafia is not necessarily something inherent in democracy and capitalism, writes Jacques de Saint Victor, but it thrives on exploiting the weaknesses of both systems.

Jacques de Saint Victor is a french historian of law and political ideas, college professor and literary critic.

He began his career as a lawyer and lecturer at the Sorbonne, and then became a journalist at *Figaro Économie*. In 1996, after his Ph. D. in the history of law, he started working at the university, while remaining a writer for the *Figaro littéraire*.

Author of numerous books on the history of political ideas, including liberal thought, the crisis of democracy and populism, the legal systems and organized crime, he is a member of the editorial board and co-editor-in-chief of the magazine *Cités*, and a member of the editorial board of the *Revue des deux Mondes*. Since 2009, he is a professor at the University Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis. His research also focuses on the legal history of globalization. In addition to this, Jacques de Saint Victor works as a visiting professor at the Università degli Studi Roma Tre. He is a member of the French Association of Political History Historians (AFHIP) and the Association of Historians of Law Schools. Some of his famous works are *Couple interdit* (2006), *Critique des nouvelles servitudes* (2007), *Un pouvoir invisible : Les Mafias et la Société démocratique (XIXème-XXIème siècle)* (2012), *Via Appia, Voyage sur la plus ancienne route d'Italie* (2016).

Jean-Christophe Rufin

Cesta krále Sobola kolem světa

The novel *Le Tour du Monde du Roi Zibeline* is inspired by the life and the memoirs of the traveler Maurice Benyovszky (1746-1786), who is considered a national hero in Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia.

Benyovszky was born and raised in Verbó, Kingdom of Hungary. In 1769, while fighting for the Polish armies under the Bar Confederation, he was captured by the Russians and exiled to Kamchatka. He subsequently escaped and returned to Europe via Macau and Mauritius, arriving in France. In 1773, Benyovszky reached agreement with the French government to establish a trading post on Madagascar.

Rufin's novel finds the hero on a visit to Benjamin Franklin, depicting his life and asking for help to create an enlightened state on the island and support the islanders in their fight against the French colonists...

Jean-Christophe Rufin is a doctor, historian, novelist, and the former French Ambassador to Senegal and Gambia. Having worked for NGOs for over 20 years, Rufin has led missions in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Soudan, Rwanda and the Balkans. He is one of the founders of Doctors Without Borders. He was the administrator for the French Red Cross (1994-1996) and the president of Action contre la faim (2003-2006).

Rufin has written historical and political essays, as well as science fiction and adventure novels. He is the author of numerous bestsellers, including *The Abyssinian*, for which he won the Goncourt Prize for a debut novel in 1997 and *Brazil Red*, the winner of the 2001 Goncourt Prize.

In 2008, he was elected to the Académie Française and became one of its youngest members.