

REVIEWS

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JÄHNER, HARALD. ČAS VLKOV: ŽIVOT V TROSKÁCH TRETEJ RÍŠE [AFTERMATH: LIFE IN THE FALLOUT OF THE THIRD REICH 1945–1955]. BRATISLAVA: N PRESS, 2022, 333 PP. ISBN-13: 978-80-8230-111-6.*

Book *Čas vlkov: Život v troskách Třetí říše* (Original version: JÄHNER, Harald. *Aftermath: Life in the Fallout of the Third Reich 1945–1955*. London: WH Allen, 2021) dives deep into a fascinating era of history that often gets overlooked. It covers everything from society and politics to economics and culture in an engaging way. It is well-researched but still easy to read, making it perfect for anyone interested in modern European history, even if you are not an expert on the topic.

The author Harald Jähner is a cultural journalist and former editor of the *Berliner Zeitung*. He was also an honorary professor of cultural journalism at Berlin University of the Arts. *Aftermath* was first published in Germany as *Wolfszeit*,¹ where it was Spiegel's bestseller and won the Leipzig Book Fair Prize for non-fiction. His newest book *Höhenrausch. Das kurze Leben zwischen den Kriegen* from 2022² is devoted to a hidden object picture of the politics, economy, society and culture of the Weimar Republic which, viewed from the present, seems to him like a "wobble picture", "surprisingly contemporary and yet again bizarrely alien".

The author states in the Preface that after the war over half the population of Germany were neither where they belonged nor wanted to be, including 9 million bombed-out people and evacuees, 14 million refugees and exiles,³ 10 million released forced labourers and prisoners, and countless millions of slowly returning prisoners of war. In Germany, where the average adult caloric intake had been 2,445 calories per day in 1940–1941 and subsequently reduced to 2,078 calories per day in 1943, a further drastic decline occurred, reaching a mere 1,412 calories for the year 1945–1946. However, it is important to note that this figure represents an average.

By June 1945, within the American Zone of occupation, the official daily ration allocated for "normal" German consumers, excluding privileged categories of workers, had diminished significantly to a mere 860 calories. These statistics lend a rueful significance to the wartime German jest: "Better enjoy the war – the peace will be terrible."⁴

The question is, how was this horde of ragged, displaced, impoverished and leftover people broken up and reassembled? And how did former "national comrades" (Volksgenossen), as German nationals were known under Nazism, gradually become ordinary citizens again? The issue was not only a German one – the whole of Europe was facing similar problems. Countries with governments that had collaborated with the Nazis⁵ were hit severely (the massacres in Bleiburg are a good example).⁶

The most important changes were played out in everyday life, in the organization of food, for example, with looting, money-changing, shopping. And also in love, as a wave of sexual adventurousness followed the war. There was some keen disappointment when much-missed husbands failed to return home, but equally, many Germans now saw things with different eyes, they wanted to start everything afresh, and divorce rates leapt. As stated by author: "The Holocaust played a shockingly small part in the consciousness of most Germans in the post-war period." Some were aware of the crimes on the Eastern Front, and a certain fundamental guilt at having started the war in the first place was acknowledged, but there was no room in many

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1 JÄHNER, *Wolfszeit: Deutschland und die Deutschen 1945 – 1955*.

2 JÄHNER, *Höhenrausch: Das kurze Leben zwischen den Kriegen*.

3 Altogether, around 8 million ethnic German refugees and expellees from across Europe eventually settled in West Germany, with a further 3 million in East Germany. KURTHEN, *Germany at the Crossroads*.

4 JUDT, *Postwar*, 21.

5 Since 1945 the term "collaborators" has acquired a distinctive and pejorative moral connotation. But wartime divisions and affiliations often carried local implications altogether more complicated and ambiguous than the simple post-war attributions of "collaboration" and "resistance" would imply. JUDT, *Postwar*, 33.

6 GILLIS, *Commemorations*, 4–5; BARTLETT, *Croatia*, 23–24; PAVLAKOVIĆ – BRENTIN – PAUKOVIĆ, *The Controversial Commemoration*.

people's thoughts and feelings for the murder of millions of German and European Jews. Only a very few individuals, such as the philosopher Karl Jaspers, addressed the issue publicly.⁷

The book explores the transformation of post-war Germany, initially focusing on everyday life and then delving into cultural shifts, including questions of conscience and denazification. It highlights the influential role of the arts in shaping the nation's identity, with a unique emphasis on the aesthetic struggle between East and West during the Cold War, involving powers like the CIA. The text questions how a nation tainted by the Holocaust navigated discussions on culture and morality. It reflects on the post-war years, where a "hunger for meaning" spurred societal reconstruction, emphasizing the search for meaning amid the ruins of existence.

The author starts the first chapter, *Zero Hour?*, with the memory of Friedrich Luft who recalled the day that the Red Army arrived in Berlin:

It was an inferno outside. If you peered out you saw a helpless German tank pushing its way through the blazing rows of houses, stopping, firing, turning round. Every now and again a civilian, darting from shelter to shelter, stumbled along badly bombed streets. A mother with her pram rushed from a bullet-riddled, burning house towards the nearest bunker.⁸

The author describes how the end of the war was perceived from various perspectives of its actors, both from a formal standpoint and in our collective memory. However, in reality, 8 May 1945 did not signify much:

In Duisburg the war had been over in the districts to the west of the Rhine since 28 March, but on the east of the Rhine it raged for another 16 days. There are even three dates for the official capitulation of Germany. Generaloberst Alfred Jodl signed the unconditional surrender on 7 May in Reims in the headquarters of US General Dwight Eisenhower. Even though the document expressly acknowledged the Western Allies and the Red Army as the victors, Stalin insisted that the ceremony be repeated, so on 9 May Germany capitulated again; this time Generalfeldmarschall Wilhelm Keitel signed the document in the Soviet headquarters in Berlin-Karlshorst. And for the history books, the victorious powers agreed on the day in between, 8 May, on which nothing had actually happened at all.⁹

Jähner's thoughts are interspersed with memories and descriptions of everyday life, while photographs complete a complex picture (such as the image on p. 24 of a Berliner collecting firewood in the remains of the Tiergarten park).

Chapter two is titled *Ruins starts with rubble*. Yes, it is clear to everyone that war leaves behind waste, but what happens to it? The aftermath of the war left approximately 500 million m³ of rubble, posing a monumental challenge for reconstruction. Various calculations were employed to illustrate the magnitude of this debris. For instance, the *Nürnberger Nachrichten* used the Reich Party rally grounds' Zeppelin field as a benchmark, envisioning a mountain 4,000 m high if the rubble were piled up in that space. Other comparisons imagined the Berlin ruins, with a volume of 55 million m³, as a wall 30 m wide and 5 m high, extending westwards to Cologne. Such visualizations aimed to convey the vast quantities of debris requiring removal. In cities like Dresden, Berlin, Hamburg, Kiel, Duisburg, and Frankfurt, where entire districts had been obliterated, residents found it inconceivable to envision the clean-up and reconstruction. Dresden, for instance, had 40 m³ of rubble for each surviving resident. The

7 CLARK, *A Prophet without Honour*.

8 JÄHNER, *Aftermath*, 20.

9 Ibidem, 21.

rubble did not manifest in a compact form but rather as fragile and precarious ruins spanning city-wide expanses. Residents navigating these ruins often faced challenging conditions, crawling through high piles of debris, passing through free-standing walls, and contending with structures that threatened collapse due to missing supporting walls.

The Great Migration is the title of chapter three, which presents one of the most important findings in the context of the whole book. In the summer of 1945, about 75 million people lived in the four occupied zones of Germany. More than half – some 40 million individuals – were not where they belonged or wanted to be. This included the majority of the German soldiers who had been prisoners of war, numbering over 10 million; 9 million city-dwellers who, for fear of air raids or because they were already bombed out, had been evacuated to the countryside; and between 8 and 10 million prisoners who had been torn from their homelands and forced into concentration and labour camps within Germany, from which they had now been liberated. It is an incredible number – equal to the population of today's Poland. Emigration from Germany was a different case and, as after the First World War, it played a subordinate role because of the Allies' restrictive emigration regulations towards German citizens. Immigration was only open to German spouses and children of foreign nationals who were recognised persecutees of the Nazi regime.¹⁰

The problems associated with such numbers of people were numerous – as shown in the photograph of one of the “Rhine meadow camps” near Remagen in April 1945, which was full of imprisoned German soldiers. The sheer space needed to hold these masses alone posed a significant challenge. The journalist Ursula von Kardorff reported on the misery in Halle Railway Station in September 1945: “Terrible images. Rubble, amongst which wander creatures that seem no longer to be of this world. Homecomers in ragged, wadded uniforms, covered with boils, creeping along on makeshift crutches. Living corpses.”¹¹ People slept in allotment plots, with relatives in cramped apartments, in bunkers or outside on any park benches that had not been broken up for firewood. Others simply lay down just off the road, often in basement doorways or under bridges, or found shelter in the rubble despite the threat of collapse from the ruined buildings. All of them were easy prey for criminals. The police statistics for crimes of theft leapt by 800 percent. The changed living conditions also affected the German countryside, as uprooted people drifted through areas that had been outwardly untouched by the war. As Jähner describes:

The trek consisted largely of two very different groups: the non-German ‘displaced persons’ (Verschleppte) and the ethnic German ‘expellees’ (Vertriebene)¹² who were expelled or who were fled from their homes in the eastern and central European annexed territories at the end of the war.¹³ ‘Displaced persons’ (DPs) was the term used by the Western Allies for those foreign nationals dragged from their homes by the Nazi state. Among Germans, however, the word *heimatlos* – homeless – was more current, and was often followed by *Gesindel* or rabble. Most Germans, however, simply called the DPs *Ausländer* – ‘foreigners’.¹⁴

10 The first solid stats on German emigration only emerged in the late 1960s, when Germany established a proper population register. After World War II, everything became rather scrambled and it took a while to straighten the details out. By the 1970s, around 56,000 Germans were emigrating each year. The numbers kept climbing – 62,000 in the 1980s, and a bump up to 92,000 in the 1990s. Emigration accelerated further in the early 2000s, with an average of 125,000 Germans emigrating each year. Numbers have remained around that mark ever since, hitting 132,000 in the years from 2010 to 2018. ERLINGHAGEN – ETTE – SCHNEIDER – WITTE, *The Global Lives of German Migrants*, 45–46.

11 JÄHNER, *Aftermath*, 58–59.

12 KRAUSS, *Integrationen*, 223.

13 For further information, see APPLEBAUM, *Iron curtain*; PHILLIPS, *Power and influence after the Cold War*; EBERHARDT, *Political Migrations*; FRANK, *Expelling the Germans*; AHONEN, *After the expulsion*; DOUGLAS, *Orderly and Humane*.

14 JÄHNER, *Aftermath*, 61–62.

During World War II, Germany transported around 7 million foreign nationals as forced labourers, including prisoners of war, to replace workers sent to the front.¹⁵ Towards the end of the war, fearing uprisings, the Nazi regime brutally maltreated these slave labourers. As the situation became more uncertain, German authorities, in a state of panic, resorted to mass killings of forced labourers who were deemed no longer useful. Some massacres were driven by fear of retaliation, while others resulted from a destructive mindset. Survivors faced a precarious existence, moving through the country in the aftermath of the war, triggering paranoid reactions among many Germans.

Jähner devotes a significant portion to the question of Jewish displaced persons, especially life in Föhrenwald Camp.¹⁶ One of its inhabitants, Yossel, who later emigrated to Palestine in 1946 but returned to Föhrenwald in 1952, explained his actions to an American army rabbi as follows:

You'll think that I am crazy. But from the time I was 21 until now, the past fourteen years I have spent my life in camps. I was sent from one concentration camp to another. Then, after liberation, I lived in a Displaced Person's Camp. When I finally arrived in Israel, I was sent to a British detention camp. After a year there, I volunteered for the Israeli Army. Oh, I did quite well. I fought in the Negev and in the mountains of Galilee. Then, in 1951, I was permitted to take off my uniform and to try to become what I always wanted to be, a normal human being. By then, I was 33 years old.¹⁷

After the devastation of World War II, post-war Germany is often remembered as a serious and challenging time. But the chapter *Dancing Frenzy* describes the "brighter" side of life in post-war Germany. Alongside the hardship and uncertainty was a hidden side of joy, laughter, and exuberance. Having survived the bombing raids and occupation, people embraced life with intensified energy. Despite shortages and challenges, there were outbreaks of delight, dancing, and pleasure-seeking. The joy of survival led to a heightened intensity of life, and people lived for the moment. Dancing frenzies, laughter and socializing became a form of celebration, offering moments of relief from the pervasive threats to life. The post-war period, though difficult, witnessed a resilient spirit and a determination to savour life to the fullest.

As the author suggests, the process of returning home may seem straightforward at first glance, but in reality it was extremely complex. Many men still felt as if they were still returning years after their physical return. What they were confronted with was not always the reality they had dreamed of. "I didn't recognize my wife," one returnee later recounted. "I had been away for ten years. There was a certain resemblance to the woman I left behind, but years of hardship in Berlin had aged her. She was no longer the young, upright girl I had so often dreamed about. She was emaciated and graying, she looked wretched."¹⁸

Relationships with children often proved to be the most problematic. Most returnees had seen very little of their children, and some had never met them. This made it difficult for them to form a bond. Some jealously perceived their child had a conspiratorial, close bond with their mothers. They considered their children to be ill-mannered and began to discipline them, drill them and bully them, as they had learned in the Wehrmacht.

15 E. Homze mentions 8 million forced labourers. This remarkable number was accomplished by three means: the total war measures advocated by Albert Speer and executed by Joseph Goebbels, the Speer reforms that rationalized German production, and the foreign labour program. The foreign labour program alone recruited well over 8 million new workers for the Reich during the course of the war, such that foreign workers represented one fifth of the total labour force in Germany by the end of 1944. The importance of these millions of foreign workers to Nazi Germany's war economy from a numerical standpoint is undeniable. HOMZE, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany*, VII.

16 KÖNIGSEDER – WETZEL, *Waiting for Hope*, 95; BAUER, *Out of the Ashes*, 294–295.

17 JÄHNER, *Aftermath*, 76.

18 Ibidem, 112.

The author also delves into the topic of post-war society portrayed in contemporary women's magazines such as *Die Frau* (The Woman), *Lilith*, *Regenbogen* (Rainbow) and *Constanze*. These magazines pondered the state of the defeated country, striving to make it cozy despite all the challenges. *Constanze* became the most popular magazine in terms of circulation. After 1947, it became the most successful pictorial women's magazine in West Germany. It ceased publication in 1969, replaced by its thoroughly rejuvenated successor, *Brigitte*.

An essential component of women's lives in the post-war reality in the context of the "huge increase in survival due to constant proximity to death," was the erotic dimension.¹⁹ Many women longed to experience romance again. The ecstatic moods of a new beginning during the first post-war months, coupled with the shocks caused by fear and loneliness, led to a sexual hunger that could take on bizarre characteristics.²⁰ The sexual activity of post-war women was driven by a phenomenon that everyone talked about at the time – the surplus of women. There were many beautiful women and very few men. Moreover, the men who survived were in a deplorable state, limping on crutches, gasping for breath and coughing up blood. Over five million German soldiers fell in the war. Additionally, by the end of September 1945, 6.5 million men were still in captivity by the Allies. More than two million prisoners were starving in Soviet camps. Even in 1950, there were 1,362 women for every 1000 men.

An integral part of the German post-war reality for some was the experience with the Soviet military power. Estimates regarding the number of rapes vary widely, but they are generally believed to have reached several hundred thousand. At least two million women were raped, often repeatedly.²¹ Rape was accompanied by brutal displays of admiration, torture and killing. Preserved records from Berlin women of those days are full of graphic descriptions of terrible crimes. Almost no night passed without wild plundering, door-breaking, beating and rape. Margret Boveri summed it up: "I must say that the nightly wait for bombs and grenades seems far less nerve-wracking to me than the wait for strange men. I simply fear exploding people less than exploding iron. I slept through two nights with sleeping pills, and so I heard nothing, and only in the morning did I learn what had happened: Mrs. Hartmann from the back house was raped four times, Miss They, whom I don't know at all, a two hundred percent Nazi, who we all heartily wish it to, once."²²

The author also highlights the difference in perception within the context of this issue, namely the experience in East and West Germany. Rapes by occupying soldiers also occurred in the West, but the image left by Western occupying forces was much friendlier, if not downright attractive. It is all the more surprising that this difference is rarely discussed when seeking an explanation for the much greater mistrust of foreigners in the East. However, this "perfect" image was not entirely untouched – North African soldiers of the French Grande Nation reportedly behaved particularly poorly. The fact that this group of perpetrators engraved itself into memory especially deeply may have been due to racism. What was considered typical for Moroccans could be seen as an isolated case by Americans, and accordingly downplayed. Caution should be exercised in making common judgments. After the invasion of French troops, 1,389 women filed rape complaints in Stuttgart alone.²³

19 For more information see: EVANS, *Life among the Ruins*; HEINEMAN, *Before Porn Was Legal*; MCLELLAN, *Love in the Time of Communism*; STEINBACHER, *Wie der Sex nach Deutschland kam*; TIMM, *The Politics of Fertility*.

20 HARSCH, *Eroticism, Love, and Sexuality*.

21 Estimates of rape victims from the Berlin's two main hospitals ranged from 95,000 to 130,000. One doctor deduced that out of approximately 100,000 women raped in the city, some 10,000 died as a result, mostly from suicide. The death rate was thought to have been much higher among the 1.4 million estimated victims in East Prussia, Pomerania and Silesia. Altogether at least two million German women are thought to have been raped, and a substantial minority, if not a majority, appear to have suffered multiple rape. BURDS, *Sexual Violence in Europe*.

22 JÄHNER, *Aftermath*, 135.

23 The journalists blamed African troops, though they were uncertain about the ethnic and national origin of the soldiers in question: they implicated Senegalese, Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian men alike. According to some reports, later taken up by US senators, the soldiers were wearing US Army uniforms and the local population

Chapter six, *Robbing, Rationing, Black-market Trading – Lessons for the Market Economy*, starts with the assumption that after World War II many Germans experienced hunger for the first time, as they had relied on plundering occupied territories for sustenance. Despite the collapse of infrastructure towards the war's end, most Germans managed to survive the immediate aftermath with relatively full stomachs, thanks to resilient efforts from bakers and traders who continued to supply food amidst the chaos. The onset of the “hunger winter of 1946/47” was delayed due to the remarkable ability of both victors and vanquished to cope with crises, with heroic individuals sustaining food supplies through resolute actions, such as personally procuring provisions and organizing delivery routes.

Though challenges persisted, the food supply system operated surprisingly well, defying expectations of a complete collapse. The food ration card is one of the best known and most notorious objects of the post-war period, even if many Germans today have forgotten precisely how the management of the shortage economy actually worked. Food rationing in post-war Germany was a tightly controlled system where individuals received monthly cards with stamps for essential items like bread, meat and sugar. These stamps were exchanged for goods at set prices, and without them one could not purchase anything. Shopkeepers had to account for every stamp received and provide explanations for any discrepancies.

Looting²⁴ became the routine everyday life of the Germans, as journalist Margret Boveri wrote in her diary early in May 1945 when she took part in the looting of a pharmaceutical warehouse:

People climbed through the doors and windows, pulled goods from the shelves, threw what they didn't want to the floor, trampled each other down, 'like wild animals', as an Austrian beside me put it. Of course glucose, which was all I was interested in, was long gone, but I grabbed a few things: throat lozenges, cough syrup, toilet paper. All the soap products were gone too, of course. So I came back under a cloud and shared what I had with Frau Mitusch.²⁵

Chapter seven, *The Economic Miracle and the Fear of Immorality*, focuses on economic issues but the final part, “Is Germany drowning in filth? The fear of waywardness” brings important question: what should the “new” Germany look like? As Jähner states, those of a nationalist and conservative tendency feared the spirit of the young republic. The liberal influence of the Allies, the new films and books, abstract art and cheerful, swinging, “exciting” music were a source of horror to them. They suspected, quite rightly, that these influences would fundamentally change German society. During the post-war years, teachers confiscated and publicly burned comic books²⁶ such as Mickey Mouse, Akim, Sigurd, and Fix & Foxi. Concerns about “sexual squalor” and delinquent youth emerged, attributed by some to the influence of the “modern world” rather than the aftermath of war or Nazi indoctrination.

Chapter eight, *The Re-educators*, provides a detailed account of the Allies' efforts to reshape the German mindset following World War II. It delves into the psychological warfare strategies employed by both the Soviets and the Americans, highlighting the recruitment of German emigrants to aid in propaganda efforts. The chapter sheds light on the establishment of newspapers and magazines aimed at disseminating Allied ideals and rebuilding trust among the German population. Through meticulous planning and execution, the Allies sought to eliminate Nazi influence and foster reconciliation, laying the groundwork for lasting peace.

Chapter nine, *The Sound of Repression*, offers a compelling exploration of the psychological aftermath of World War II in Germany. The chapter effectively sets the stage by recounting the

mistook them for African Americans. The soldiers were from the French First Army, but since September 1944 had been fighting under US command. LAWLOR, *The Stuttgart Incident*; KRIMMER, *Philomela's Legacy*.

24 ZBOROWSKA, 'Abandoned' things.

25 JÄHNER, *Aftermath*, 183.

26 For an interesting view on the culture of comics books in East Germany, see: EEDY, *Four-Color Communism*.

military events leading up to Germany's defeat, offering a clear timeline of the country's gradual surrender to Allied forces. It delves into the perplexing shift in behaviour observed among German civilians and soldiers post-surrender, exploring the sudden collapse of resistance and the emergence of a subdued demeanor. While the chapter offers a rich tapestry of historical events and psychological phenomena, there are moments where the analysis could be clearer. For instance, in discussing the reluctance to acknowledge guilt regarding the Holocaust, a more explicit connection between societal shame and the evasion of responsibility could enhance comprehension. At times, the tone shifts between descriptive and analytical modes. Ensuring a consistent tone throughout could enhance the coherence of the chapter. While the chapter touches upon themes such as guilt, shame and moral responsibility, a more in-depth exploration of each could provide deeper insights into the complexities of post-war German society. Providing additional contextual information, such as the socio-economic conditions and political landscape of post-war Germany, could enrich the reader's understanding of the broader historical backdrop against which these psychological dynamics unfolded.

The book is very readable and offers many interesting insights that remain hidden in common perceptions of the end of the war, such as the tons of waste that needed to be disposed of. However, there is much more for the reader to discover. The diverse range of topics covered in the visual appendix is fascinating: its variety is appreciated by not only many readers but also members of the professional community. We acknowledge the criticism raised by Tosin Adeoti that the book focused more on what happened in Eastern Germany after the Third Reich fell, seemingly neglecting the western side of things. I am curious about how East Germany's struggle with poverty compared to West Germany's path to prosperity during the recovery period. More insight into this would have been very interesting and informative.²⁷ Despite these shortcomings, the book offers a high-quality insight into the events in post-war Germany.

Mgr. Maroš Melichárek, PhD.
Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovak Republic
ORCID iD: 0000-0003-0122-0235

Mgr. Lucia Heldáková, PhD.
Slovak Academy of Sciences, Košice, Slovak Republic
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-3176-5829

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ANDERSON, JEFFREY E. *VOODOO: AN AFRICAN AMERICAN RELIGION*. BATON ROUGE: LSU PRESS, 2024, 272 PP. ISBN 978-0-8071-8132-4.

Jeffrey Anderson's monograph *Voodoo: An African American Religion* combines several fields of historical research (cultural history, urban history, religious history) in order to provide "a much-needed modern account of the faith as it existed in the Mississippi River valley", as described by the publisher. Professor Anderson, a researcher at the University of Louisiana Monroe, is a recognized scholar on African American religious traditions. He has published several books and scientific studies on the topic of Voodoo, magic, religion and the American South. Anderson's primary goal is to describe the constituents of Voodoo as a religion practiced in the Mississippi River valley from the eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, and to explain its associations with the city of New Orleans.

At the beginning of the monograph, Anderson introduces two key words that are heavily used in the text – Voodoo and hoodoo. He outlines the complexity of the use and distinction between these two words, as well as the difficulties in defining the geographical scope of Voodoo as a belief, which, according to him, makes it rather difficult for historians to even attempt to examine this topic. In addition, a particular issue in the research of Voodoo is the primary source base, which is not very extensive. A large part of the history of Voodoo in the Mississippi River valley has thus been lost forever, but the author attempts to at least systematize all available information and expand our knowledge of this marginalized and often misunderstood faith. The reviewed book can be seen not only as the culmination of Anderson's twenty-year research and study in this field, but also as a beneficial and very important tool for other scholars devoted to researching Voodoo in the Mississippi River valley.

The monograph consists of five chapters. The subject of Voodoo is interesting and complicated, and the book's structure helps the reader to follow presented ideas smoothly. Through these five chapters, Anderson introduces various entities and elements that influenced the formation of Voodoo in the Mississippi River valley, including deities and their counterparts in other religions, spiritual leaders and their practices, the rituals and ceremonial life of Voodoo's followers, and also the death and surviving legacy of this lost faith. Anderson concludes his monograph with an appendix consisting of surviving primary sources, including various chants, songs, and prayers.

The first chapter, "The Peoples of the Mississippi River valley", analyses the region's diverse population, with particular regard to New Orleans as a place that has shaped the character of Voodoo since the late eighteenth century. In his interpretation, Anderson proceeds from the premise that Voodoo had diverse roots in the region, due to the fact that the inhabitants of the Mississippi River valley never formed a stable or homogeneous population. Voodoo emerged from a fusion of the deities, rituals, words and practices of Native Americans, French and Spanish Catholic colonists, enslaved Africans, and Haitian immigrants. Despite many similarities with other religions, especially Haitian Vodou and African creole religions, Anderson believes that Voodoo remains a unique faith that is intrinsically linked to the Mississippi River valley and reflects the multiculturalism of the peoples who shaped this environment.

The influence of African religions on Voodoo is addressed in the second chapter, "African Spirits in the Mississippi River valley", in which Anderson reconstructs the creole spiritual universe of Africans living in the area and their descendants, as well as the faith that, under various influences, became unique to this specific territory. Anderson faced many challenges in his research because Voodoo as a faith was despised and marginalized by white people and was not thoroughly documented. As a result, only fragments of primary sources on the topic have been preserved. This is probably why Anderson provides more assumptions than indisputable facts, which he tries to compensate for, where possible, by acquainting the reader with various theories and interpretations from other authors dealing with the issue of Voodoo. In addition to the description and analysis of the characteristics of individual deities, there are two useful tables at the end of the chapter which summarize information about individual deities and their connection to their Haitian counterparts. The first contains the names, basic characteristics, recorded source(s), confirmation and origin of the mentioned deities. The second table visualizes

the significant Haitian influence on Voodoo in Mississippi River valley through the table of Voodoo gods and their Haitian equivalents.

Voodoo ministers and their assistants form the topic of the third chapter, giving the reader an opportunity to delve deeper into the lives of important spiritual leaders who served as the link between Voodoo gods and their followers. This chapter details how they became leaders and what their roles entailed. Anderson offers a truly in-depth exploration of the subject of Voodoo spiritual leaders. He places particular emphasis on elucidating the origins of the names of individual leaders, enabling readers to construct a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding. A particularly valuable component appears at the outset of the chapter, where attention is given to women and their position within the framework of Voodoo. The female dimension plays a significant role and is, in fact, essential for a fuller comprehension of the subject. A compelling and unusual parallel emerges in the suggested connection between Voodoo and Christianity, established through the use of shared ritual objects. Anderson mentions candles, altars, and numerous other items. Detailed descriptions are employed with salient features carefully highlighted – whether contextualizing the roles of practitioners or depicting everyday life, rituals, objects and specific events. Particularly commendable is the section on the economic dimension, which addresses the various forms of income and monetary exchange inherently tied to the Voodoo tradition.

Chapter Four, “Working with Spirits”, offers a more in-depth exploration of the role of rituals, ceremonies, feast days, and holy dates within the Voodoo tradition. The chapter opens by highlighting divergent perspectives through a comparative analysis of Voodoo practices in Haiti and New Orleans. The structure of the chapter is clearly organized, enabling readers to navigate the subject matter with clarity and ease.

To elucidate ritualistic and ceremonial practices, Anderson draws on specific case studies of individual practitioners. Particularly noteworthy are his descriptions of the activities of Marie Laveau, a figure of significant renown in New Orleans and surrounding areas. The subsequent section of the chapter shifts focus to feast days and key dates in the Voodoo calendar. Special emphasis is placed on All Saints’ Day (1 November) and Saint John’s Eve / Day (23–24 June), which occupy a distinctive place in the ritual calendar and spiritual landscape of Voodoo.

The final chapter, “The Death of a Religion?” already poses the central question in its title – one to which Anderson seeks answers throughout the entire section. A significant portion is devoted to examining whether Voodoo can still be regarded as a living faith or whether it has become merely a part of history. While many scholars in the field have tended to avoid this question, Anderson strives to offer the reader the most comprehensive perspective possible. The twentieth century proved to be a turning point, during which many practitioners became increasingly reluctant to openly admit their engagement with Voodoo rituals or even to publicly reference the religion itself. Although Voodoo was never explicitly outlawed, legislation and legal practices frequently targeted its various forms, thereby placing the faith under growing pressure and marginalization. In the concluding section of the chapter, Anderson focuses on the contemporary state of Voodoo and Hoodoo in New Orleans, examining modern practitioners and efforts to reconstruct the tradition. His analysis offers a nuanced view of how a once-vibrant religious system has evolved, survived, or been reimagined in a changing social and cultural landscape.

The presented monograph offers a detailed and comprehensive examination of the subject of Voodoo and its diverse aspects. Anderson’s work fills a significant gap in the study of this topic and provides a much-needed scholarly contribution that will undoubtedly be of value to both academic audiences and the broader public. The monograph encompasses all the essential knowledge and information necessary for understanding the complexity of Voodoo, and it unquestionably holds a rightful place within the historiography of the subject.

Mgr. Andrea Skybová
Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovak Republic

Mgr. Viktória Švigárová
Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovak Republic

LUKÁČOVÁ, KATARÍNA – SVATOVÁ, MIRIAMA. *LOCAL HISTORY – REGIONÁLNE DEJINY INOVATÍVNE, BÁDATELSKY A DIGITÁLNE* [LOCAL HISTORY – REGIONAL HISTORY IN INNOVATIVE, RESEARCH-BASED AND DIGITAL WAYS]. KOŠICE: SPOLOČENSKOVEDNÝ ÚSTAV CENTRA SPOLOČENSKÝCH A PSYCHOLOGICKÝCH VIED SAV, V. V. I., 2025, 103 PP. ISBN 978-80-8298-008-3.

The methodological guide *Local History – Regional History in Innovative, Research-Based and Digital Ways* is designed for history teachers in primary and secondary schools, contributing to the integration of contemporary trends into history education. The guide was published under the auspices of a joint project between the Institute of Social Sciences of the Centre for Social and Psychological Sciences of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV) and the Centre for Lifelong Learning and Project Support at Pavol Jozef Šafárik University (UPJŠ). Through this guide, the authors, Katarína Lukáčová and Miriama Svatová, provide a didactic transformation of historical events that took place in Košice between 1938 and 1945. As noted in the introduction, local history holds particular significance today, as it conveys history through specific places, events, and individuals whose stories are relatable to students. This approach enables a better understanding of major historical processes within local contexts, while simultaneously fostering historical awareness and a connection to one's city or region. Although the guide has a regional focus, its activities are also applicable to the teaching of Slovak history more broadly, addressing highly significant topics such as the Holocaust, authoritarian regimes, war and everyday life.

The guide is structured into two main parts, the first of which is theoretical. In addition to introductory remarks outlining the primary objective of the guide, it presents a historical analysis of events that took place in Košice between 1938 and 1945, but focuses primarily on the didactically motivated theoretical perspectives that informed the authors' approach in developing the guide. Within this framework, the authors highlight the challenges facing history education in Slovakia, reflecting a certain stagnation and predominance of traditional teaching methods despite numerous reforms. They propose research-oriented teaching as a solution, emphasizing active student engagement in the learning process, with the teacher assuming the role of facilitator. Particular attention is devoted to the chapter on student assessment, which emphasizes that assessment should go beyond the traditional evaluation of acquired knowledge. The authors rightly stress the importance of students being able to critically evaluate not only what they have learned but also their own learning process. This includes reflecting on newly acquired knowledge as well as identifying areas that require further development or remain unclear to them.

The second part of the guide is methodological and contains a collection of methodological sheets for individual activities, each reflecting various historical events in wartime Košice. The basic structure of each methodological sheet includes the activity title, the guiding research question and the target grade levels, as well as the performance and content standards, which the authors have aligned with the current revised State Education Program. Each sheet also features a QR code, providing direct access to the respective activity on the online portal www.localhistory.sk. The guide further provides a description and didactic analysis of the primary sources with which students work. The selection of sources is highly commendable, including photographs, contemporary diaries and memoirs. This approach allows students to gain an authentic experience of historical events and to obtain information directly from lived experiences rather than solely from reproduced "textbook" facts. At the same time, these activities enable students to adopt multiple perspectives on a historical event, emphasizing a key element of modern constructivist teaching: multiperspectivity. The formal layout, together with the didactic transformation of the content, is also beneficial for teachers, facilitating quick orientation and enabling them to select the most suitable activities for their students. The titles of the activities themselves are also thoughtfully chosen. For instance, the activity *Students at the Front*, accompanied by the guiding question *Why did they have to go?*, helps students develop historical awareness by showing that men who participated in the war had authentic personal stories – they had families, dreams, and, despite this, were compelled to fight involuntarily. This approach can also foster emotional intelligence, which can be applied to understanding

and critically evaluating contemporary events. Consequently, the activity's title is far from dry and does not portray soldiers merely as an anonymous mass.

The methodological guide represents a significant achievement, advancing history education toward a modern, constructivist approach that fosters the development of critical thinking and numerous other essential competencies and skills among students. Through this guide, the authors demonstrate that history is not merely about rote memorization of dates and facts, but rather its depth lies in understanding and critically evaluating historical events. Such an approach can help prevent young people from becoming lost in the flow of information, where it is all too easy to fall into the sphere of disinformation and distortion of both contemporary and historical facts. Moreover, the application of the principles offered in the guide can support the responsible use of digital technologies as well as the development of emotional intelligence and self-reflection in young people. The guide also constitutes an important step in elevating discussions on the significance of history to the level of professional discourse and teacher education, encouraging educators, through their enthusiasm, to contribute to meaningful change.

Mgr. Helena Kuncová
Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovak Republic