

Review

Love in Exile 1949-1950, From the diaries and letters of Sylva Šimsová and Karel Janovický

Whenever someone illegally crossed the Western border after the communist takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1948, there would be a universal sigh of relief from friends and family. The worst was over, they were in camps, 'safe' and 'looked after' by Germans or Americans. Not quite. From the diary and letters of Sylva Šimsová (née Maiwald) and Karel Janovický (real name Bohuš Šimsa) we learn about the dire conditions in those camps - lack of hygiene, lack of food, fights between various nationalities, communist spying and crippling bureaucracy.

Sylva and Karel met in Prague through the Scout movement before Karel emigrated with the Maiwald family to Germany. For Sylva ideals and culture of the Czech Scouts were a great moral compass when

she was losing heart. She started working as a teacher and organised a Scout group, while Karel was composing music in these difficult circumstances. Once across the border, both aged 18, they managed to get married to stay together, although according to German law they were under-age.

Sylva's father, a politician and a university lecturer, would have been prosecuted in Czechoslovakia and had to emigrate. Through his contacts he helped to bring the family to Britain, where they eventually settled. Karel Janovický changed his name to protect his parents who remained in Czechoslovakia. He is a composer and worked for the BBC Czechoslovak Service.

Hana Laing

*This book is available in Czech only. To obtain a copy, please visit www.dolezalova-lezaky.cz
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EVENTS ORGANISED WITH THE COOPERATION OF THE EMBASSY OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Emperor Rudolf II

Collector & Patron of the Arts & Sciences

Tuesday 5th November at 6.30pm



Under Rudolf II Prague again became the capital of the Holy Roman Empire. Following the example of his Habsburg ancestors, he assembled an exceptional collection of works of art for which the imperial palace on the Hradčany was adapted. He patronised painters, sculptors, goldsmiths who flocked to Prague, and also men of learning including Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler. For a brief period Prague became the most important cultural centre in Europe.

Caroline Cannon-Brookes, art historian, was trained at the Courtauld and teaches at the University of Oxford Department for Continuing Education. She has led many tours to the Czech Republic to which she is a regular visitor

From the village to the city: urbanisation in Slovakia 1896-1972

Tuesday 3rd December at 6.30pm

In his talk, Dr Lorman will explore how Slovak culture was initially characterised by its rural quality and alienation from the beginnings of mass industrialisation and urbanisation in Hungary. He will examine how Slovak national identity was then substantially (but not entirely) transformed by similar processes of industrialisation and urbanisation in Czechoslovakia, symbolised by the post-war rebuilding of Bratislava and the opening of the new SNP Bridge in 1972.



Dr Thomas Lorman is a teaching fellow in Central European History at UCL's School of Slavonic and East European Studies. He has published widely on various aspects of nineteenth and twentieth century Central European history