



**Vladimír Rozhoň, CZECH TRAVELLERS AND THE IMAGE OF THE OVERSEAS  
IN THE CZECH SOCIETY, Nakladatelství Aleš Skřivan ml., Praha, 2005, 317 pp.**

**Reviewed by Oldřich Kašpar**

The publishing house, mentioned in the title of the present review, which is specialised in publication of works of contemporary Czech historians and also takes care of publishing of the journal *Historický obzor*, has gone, by one of its most recent publications, beyond its narrowly (in a positive sense of the word) delimited field of topics. The book by Vladimír Rozhoň is not only a historical publication, but it laps over to the fields of ethnology, political science, and by its chapter *Aboriginal Visitors in Prague* it successfully ranks among „Pragensia“. The accentuated penetrating into several disciplines is precisely expressed by the formulation of the basic questions appearing in the introduction to the book (pp. 7–8), the appropriate answers to which are (relatively very successfully) looked for later on. The individual chapters of the book in fact correspond with the questions appearing in the introduction (for example: *What grounds brought the explores to their journeys? What were the returns form the journeys like? What was the impact of the individual travellers on the society? What was their view of other races and nations? How did they mediate this to the society?* By this conception, Rozhoň's book in a way surpasses the existing Czech publications on Czech travellers and books of travels, starting from the classics like Bohuslav Horák (*Dějiny zeměpisu I.–III.*, Praha 1954–1957) or Josef Kinský (*Čeští cestovatelé I.–II.*, Praha 1961), up to the contemporary authors such as Ivo Barteček (*Cestovatelé z českých zemí v Latinské Americe*, Zlín-Prostějov-Vsetín 2001) or Jiří and Miloslav Martínek (*Kdo byl kdo? Naši geografové a cestovatelé*, Praha 1998). Only by several names I must remind some other authors on this axis delimited by two basic poles: especially Zdenka Tichá, Ivan Hrbek, Josef Polišenský and his fellow-workers belong among them.

Generally, it can be said that most works preceding the Rozhoň's book had mostly a character of dictionary handbooks of varied quality, or commented anthologies of famous, eventually also less known or nearly forgotten books of travels, mostly of the more distant past.

The book consists of seven chapters (divided into subchapters), Introduction, Epilogue, and biographical survey of travellers mentioned in the book (*Biographical Portraits of the Main Travellers*); the last three chapters can be considered to be the most

valuable, especially the fifth section *Czech Travellers' View of the Aborigine Population*. The main value of the section can be recognised already thanks to the names of the individual parts (*Observer Approach, Educational Approach, Colony Supporters, Equivalent Approach*). To put it briefly, this value consists – to some extent – in rendering the (more or less successfully carried out) *ethnographical research* of Czech travellers of 19<sup>th</sup> century in its basic categories (though not specified by the author). Also the seventh chapter *Image of the Travellers in the Present-Day Society* brings a new, in many respects inspiring view of the issue, which usually stays aside the interest of other authors.

Only several minor remarks can be made to the well-researched text, which – though pleasant to read and written in a vivid language – does not break the strict scientific criteria. On page 13 the author claims that Vojta Náprstek “did not write any book of travels or an article of this kind”. We can agree with this without any reservation, but it would be appropriate to mention Náprstek’s interesting material for his lecture on the Dakotas, presented on July 27<sup>th</sup> 1853 in Milwaukee. This text by Náprstek, written in German, was published in the Czech translation in the book *Tam za mořem je Amerika* (Praha 1986, pp. 183–193), included by the author in the bibliography; it would definitely enrich the chapter *Czech Travellers' View of the Aborigine Population* in an interesting way.

In no way the statement found in the note no. 30 can be agreed with: “By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, for about 40 Jesuit missionaries coming from the Czech lands acted in the Central and South America”. Though even in this case the author quotes appropriate literature, a misinterpretation concerning two facts has unfortunately occurred in this case. The first incorrectness consists in the fact that more than 150 members of the Czech Jesuit Province had acted in the area of the whole Latin America and some Pacific islands by 1767, when Jesuits were outlawed from the Spanish overseas domains. The list of their names is being completed continuously; for example, Ondřej Pokorný, a post-graduate student of ethnology of the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, discovered new names in “Archivo General de Indias” in Sevilla last year. Fewer than 40 of them acted only in the New Spain! Secondly, it is incorrect to speak only about missionaries; much greater number was formed by the so-called “laic brothers” (adjuncts), who worked as estate administrators, architects, doctors, apothecaries, etc.

At last, let us adduce one more piece of information confirming author’s claim concerning Dr. Emil Holub’s lectures in Moravia and his gifts for school collections (p. 103 and note no. 242). In the school library of the secondary school in Zábřeh, appearing in the text especially in connection with its famous native Jan Welzl, a letter from Emil Holub is kept, in which he offers objects for local school collections.

Despite the minor imperfections the book by Vladimír Rozhoň can be considered to be a valuable contribution to the chosen topic. Its worth consists especially in the fact that besides the classical historical descriptions it deals with new, so far neglected aspects of activities (as well as opinions and attitudes) of our 19<sup>th</sup> century’s travellers.

The text itself is complemented by detailed notes, often bringing further supplementary facts, as well as the list of abbreviation, a well-founded bibliography and a carefully elaborated name register, facilitating orientation in the relatively voluminous publication.