

IN MEMORIAM PROF. MARKUS CERMAN (* 27. July 1967, † 3. October 2015)

A few days ago we learned of sad news. Our colleague and friend, Professor Markus Cerman from the Institute for Economic and Social History at Vienna University passed away at the age of 48 years.

I had met Markus Cerman as a young assistant of professor Michael Mitterauer in Budapest in May 1994 during an international conference, which was entitled a bit provocatively – Where Europe ends? At this international forum for family researchers, where professors Rudolf Andorka, Peter Laslett or the already mentioned Michael Mitterauer were engaged also we, the younger generation, some of them already known or in the future “start-up” scholars such as Jasna Čapo-Žmegač, Mojca Ravnik and Jože Hudales, Tamás Faragó, and others, we discussed the European model of family structure and ecotypes – approaches which led to understanding family characteristics and the forming the thinking on its research. For me Markus stood as an allied person. He was kind and friendly, the one who never put forward his knowledge or personality, although his expertise was highly appreciated by us at that time. After all, it was only a few years after the change of the regime in Czechoslovakia and we found ourselves still in overlapping that obscure knowledge-based, but also the methodological gap in the development of our disciplines on the other sides of the iron curtain. Markus gave his advice about things which, at that time were not known in Slovakia, journals, economic theories and scientific discussions,

which he also applied innovatively and productively in his own research.

Not more than a year passed and Professor Mitterauer with Markus Cerman accepted our invitations to Bratislava. The neighbours from Vienna came to our meeting, a seminar organized by the Department of Ethnology at Comenius University. I guess it used to be normal in the free/opened/liberal world, but for us it seemed simply amazing – and what’s more, we were pleased that we were able to publish the contributions of this seminar, where we asked Markus Cerman to prepare an overview study on the issue of protoindustry and its reflection in family life (Cerman, M.: The protoindustrial family economy. In: J. Michálek (Ed.), *Central European Contexts of Folk Culture in Slovakia*. Bratislava: Stimul, 1995).

I was lucky to meet Markus Cerman in summer 1997 in England, in The Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure. Here again, I felt his collegial friendship, assistance in networking with colleagues, whom he had met earlier. In Cambridge I met his then girlfriend and later wife Dana Štefanová. Dana was so kind that together with Markus they organized a presentation of our book on Slovak family traditions in Vienna at the Faculty for Interdisciplinary Research and Continuing Education in May 2001 in Vienna.

Our collaboration lasted, although the meetings may have been less regular, those occasions always brought interesting content and have been rewarding also for our



Prof. Markus Cerman. Picture from the archives of Vienna University (Universität Wien).

students. In 1998, I invited Markus and he came and lectured on protoindustrialization for our students within the course of ethnocultural aspects of the family studies. In the spring of 2003 we managed to organize an international (mostly) student and doctoral research seminar on gender and family (New perspectives in social science and historical anthropology. Kolloquium. Bratislava, 20. – 21. 3. 2003). This time again the two inspiring souls of the meeting fierily commenting on the contributions of young scholars were Dana Štefanová Cerman and Markus Cerman. Students from the University of Vienna visited Bratislava and participated in this seminar together with our students and PhD students of the Institute of Ethnology and the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Markus Cerman graduated at the Vienna University, where he obtained his PhD. degree and worked from 1993 as an assistant, and from 2001 in the position of associated professor and professor.

Although the University of Vienna was his Alma mater, his personality and the scientific activity could be characterized by

interest in international affairs. From 1990 on he spent several research stays at the world's top universities, for example the University of Cambridge, or the Charles University in Prague, a research stay at the famous Birkbeck College, University of London in 2003 – 2004, to complete his education with the title Master of Economics. He worked at the Humboldt University of Berlin as a researcher in the year 2000, and again as a Humboldt Fellow in 2005 – 2006.

Markus Cerman contributed through his study topics to many international research discussions related to economic and social history. His main interest was researching the long-term socio-economic transformation from the late Middle Ages to the Industrial revolution, comparing the regions across the whole of Europe. From the end of the 1990-ies, he worked on the theme of the transformation of rural communities. He was the central figure in a large and long-term research project concerning on the organisation of social structures in Bohemia, which was based on the cooperation with Czech universities and archives, Collegium Carolinum in Munich and the

Max Planck Institutes in Göttingen and Potsdam. This project studied the micro level of the family, the household and village communities, as well as great historical questions about the nature of the so-called “Gutsherrschaft” (a Manor Estate Management) and “second serfdom”. The project results make a decisive contribution to the critique of the traditional historiographic concepts of presented topics. In his latest monograph, *Villagers and Lords in Eastern Europe, 1300 - 1800* (2012), he expanded the theme on the whole region of Central and Eastern Europe. From 2013 he led the research project supported by the Austrian Research Fund (FWF) with the title *Busy Tenants; The Land Market North and South of the Alps in Late Medieval Times*. These studies show strong economic and social dynamics and the importance of market relations in pre-modern Europe. They are also an example of the academic interests of Markus Cerman, who, although his research was firmly anchored in German and English material, showed great interest in the terms and conditions of similar research in Eastern and Central-Eastern Europe. His working methods were the case studies, which he created on the basis of the analysis of archival sources. His talent for languages and his social contacts with many scholars around the world have contributed significantly to the international recognition of the research at the Institute for Economic and Social History at the University of Vienna.

At the same time, he was an excellent

teacher and performed a number of functions in University management. As a teacher he was interested in the problems and needs of students, at the same time, however, he insisted on maintaining a high standard of academic teaching. He was a willing mentor for students and colleagues, domestic and foreign colleagues interested in cooperation. Whether just on short visits to Vienna or during the 3-year research stay at his Institute, he used to be assiduously helpful and care taking, simply with the effort to make life in Vienna a scientifically fruitful and pleasant time.

From 2014 onwards he worked as the Head of the Institute of Economic and Social History and he proved admirable in linking his many activities. His sudden death in the 48th year of his life was totally unexpected and surprising. We all are losing not only a recognized scientist, but an always reliable, sympathetic and friendly colleague. We lose a great, always helpful fellow, with an interest in common themes and challenges and pleasant, compassionate man who was also willing to share, for example, a family recipe for vanilla Christmas rolls. We express our condolences to his wife Dana Cerman-Štefanová.

Honour his memory.

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WHAT SHOULD ENGAGED SCIENCE BE LIKE?¹ THE CONFERENCE *Civil Activities and Engaged Research* (3–4 November 2015, Bratislava)

On 3–4 November 2015, the conference “Civil Activities and Engaged Research” was held in Impact Hub, Bratislava. The event was organised as part of project VEGA

2/0024/14 *Civic activities as a determining factor of sustainable development of cities (an ethnological perspective)* carried out by the Institute of Ethnology SAS (IE SAS).

1 This report was originally published online on the website of the Institute of Ethnology SAS www.uet.sav.sk.