

# **Batawa: A Small Zlín in the New World**

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce se soustředí na firmu Baťa a vliv, který měla na vytváření a rozvoj industriální společnosti. Zkoumá město Zlín v České Republice a vesnici Batawa v Kanadě. V první kapitole je popsána historie firmy a principy, které byly dodržovány při výstavbě měst v blízkosti Baťových továren. Následující kapitoly popisují historii i současnou situaci na obou místech. Práce obsahuje příklady jejich podobnosti i rozdílnosti a objasňuje, proč se Batawa označuje jako „malý Zlín.“

Klíčová slova: firma Baťa, obuvnický průmysl, modernismus, architektura, zahradní města, územní plánování, Zlín, Batawa

## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor's thesis examines the role of the Bata Shoe Company in creating and developing industrial communities. Its focal point is the city of Zlín, the Czech Republic, and Batawa, Canada. The first chapter of this work describes the company's history and the pattern used while building new towns around their plants. The following two chapters focus on Zlín and Batawa, their history as well as the current situation. The whole thesis describes some similarities and differences between both places and it explains why Batawa has been called a "small Zlín."

Keywords: Bata Shoe Company, footwear industry, modernism, architecture, Garden cities, urban planning, Zlín, Batawa

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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## INTRODUCTION

When I firstly visited Zlín, its uniqueness and uniformity astonished me. When I learned that Bata established more cities and towns like this, I thought it would be beneficial to examine that. I feel like many people are not aware of the fact that Bata is remembered not only for footwear but also for creating new communities.

The Bata Company is listed as one of the greatest shoe manufacturers. It was based in Zlín at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its leaders guided it to become an international company. Under Tomas Batas' supervision, Zlín became an industrial city in gardens. The company's prosperity caused its growth beyond Zlín. Thus, additional company-supervised towns were developed, many of them abroad. The company's development is described to understand why Zlín grew from a small town into an industrial city inspired by the garden city movement, modernism, and functionalism. This thesis describes how Zlín became a model town for other newly established towns around Bata plants through the years.

When World War II threats became obvious, moving the company's base overseas was necessary. Tomas Jan Bata and the company's management choose Canada as the most suitable country for the continuity of its operation. In 1939, Tomas Jan Bata decided to establish a new company town in the Ontario region and named it Batawa. This work intends to determine why is Batawa seen as a small Zlín.

Since the most significant growth of both places was happening under the supervision of the Bata Shoe Company, their similarities and differences are described in this thesis. Specific examples serve to illustrate architecture as well as community life.

## 1 THE BATA SHOE COMPANY

In order to understand the development of both, Zlín and Batawa, it is crucial to know what those places have in common. The Bata Shoe Company is a unique shoe manufacturing and retail concern. It was established by the Bata family, in which being a cobbler had been a family tradition for many generations. This company has since expanded to every continent except for Antarctica.

The success of this company is based on this principle: “Whoever chases money will never catch it. Serve the customer to the utmost of your ability and the money will chase you automatically.”<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 Setting up the Business

Men in the Bata family had been shoemakers for generations, reaching back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. None of them was ambitious and goal-directed enough to become responsible for a shoe company until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Antonín Baťa a shoemaker from Zlín had eight children. Three of them, Anna, Antonín, and Tomas, were interested in his work, and they were proud of him and the ability to earn a living by selling footwear. Early on they knew how to make shoes themselves, and as they grew older, they got an idea of establishing a family business.<sup>2</sup>

The A. Bata Company was established on August 24, 1894, in Zlín. The company had a name after Antonín Bata, because he was already an adult and could apply for a license. Its registered capital consisted of money the three siblings inherited from their mother. To employ citizens of Zlín and its surroundings, they bought a building in Zlín, some machinery, and tools, using the inherited money.<sup>3</sup> However, their capital was not the only asset. The company's most valuable assets were its founders and employees' morale, brains, and skillful hands.

During the early years of the company's existence, Anna Bata was not an active part of the business and she took care of their home. Antonin Bata was in charge of the paperwork and the manufacturing process. Tomas Bata Jr. was in charge of sales and fascinated by shoemaking machinery, and he worked closely with mechanics and engineers.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Cekota, *The Stormy Years of an Extraordinary Enterprise: Bata 1932–1945* (Perth Amboy: Universum Sokol Publications, 1985), 125.

<sup>2</sup> Ladislava Horňáková, *The Baťa Phenomenon: Zlín Architecture 1910–1960* (Zlín: Regional Gallery of Fine Arts, 2009), 251; František Valach, *Fenomén Baťa* (Prague: Práce, 1990), 21–3.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary: Biography of Tomas Bata* (Rome: International University of International Studies, 1968), 20; Valach, *Fenomén Baťa*, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 19–22; Horňáková, *The Bata Phenomenon*, 251.

The company got into financial difficulties one year after it was established, mainly because of its owners' generosity. Thankfully, Tomas was very goal-directed, and in order not to let their business fail, he decided to work at the same level as their employees and sold shoes in a local marketplace on Sundays. This act underlined the fact that Tomas was not afraid of becoming one of them, and from this time on, he simply called his employees co-workers. Fortunately, it was a big success, and soon he managed to clear the company's debts.

In 1897, the business decided to enter the market with a brand-new type of light textile shoes named Baťovky. It was a cheaper option of footwear for a large scale of customers. Those iconic shoes caused an exponential increase in the production, sales, and prosperity of the A. Bata Company. In 1900, the A. Bata Company was renamed to the T. & A. Bata, public limited company.<sup>5</sup> The profit of the company was divided between Tomas, who owned 55% of the shares and Antonín, the holder of the other 45% of shares.<sup>6</sup>

## 1.2 The Rise of the Company

Tomas always tried to make his employees' work easier, so he was spending plenty of time searching for new machines. In 1905, he sailed to the United States of America to gain some experience, confidence, and new ideas. To do so, he became an employee at an American shoe manufacturing plant. He became amazed by the management system and the American lifestyle, in general. One year later, he decided to start the factory construction in Zlín.

Even though the competition was gradually increasing, Bata Shoe Company was still quickly expanding and became the largest Czechoslovakia company during the pre-war period. In 1912, Jan Kotěra, the company's architect, designed the first houses for workers and their families.<sup>7</sup>

During World War I, the company received an order from the Czechoslovak government to manufacture 50,000 pairs of military shoes. The company was not able to make so many shoes in such a short period of time, so Tomas Bata decided to ask for help. Four skilled shoemakers from Zlín became his partners. This order had more than one benefit. None of the people working on this project needed to join the Czechoslovak army and the company also earned enough money to build another residential part of Zlín. That included houses, canteen, spa, post office, hotel, department store, reading hall, casino, cinema, and hospital.

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<sup>5</sup> Horňáková, *The Baťa Phenomenon*, 251.

<sup>6</sup> Romana Lešingrová, *Baťova soustava řízení*, 2nd ed. (Uherské Hradiště: Lešingrová Romana, 2007), 13.

<sup>7</sup> Zdeněk Pokluda, *Baťa v kostce*, 2nd ed. (Zlín: Kniha Zlín, 2014), 13–22.

Furthermore, being Bata's employee was a promise to survive the war because the company guaranteed the availability of essential products during the war years, mainly food and sanitary products.<sup>8</sup>

Even though the Czechoslovak Government's order helped the factory a lot, it was in financial difficulties when World War I was over. The source of low incomes was mainly a significant decrease in sales and a shortage of leather.<sup>9</sup> Tomas's risky step to offer his customers a 50% discount on all products saved the business. Afterward, he established subsidiaries in Holland, Poland, Great Britain, Yugoslavia, and Denmark. In doing so, the enterprise soon gained enough capital needed for the company's growth and financial stability. The company became famous in Europe on behalf of destroying competitors by low prices of the merchandise. All the profits the company earned were invested in the manufacturing process and into the construction of living areas for employees.

Shoemaking was not the only activity of the Bata Company. Since Tomas Bata's priority was to increase his employees' living standards, he decided to educate his employees and buy some agricultural land. To minimize costs, he was progressively starting food production for the community of Zlín and establishing tanneries, power plants, rubber and chemical plants, brickworks, paper mill, etc. In 1929, Bata started producing rubber shoes, shoe polish, socks, nylons, tires, rubber rugs, and rubber toys for children. At this time, the company got rid of most suppliers since it could manufacture almost everything needed. The independence led to a faster and cheaper manufacturing process.

In 1931, the company was transformed into the Bata, joint-stock company. Tomas Bata had the function of the chairman of the board. Jan Antonín Bata, Dominik Čipera, and Rudolf Gerbec were the board members.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.3 The death of Tomas Bata, Pre-War and War Periods

Tomas Bata died at the age of 56 years in a plane crash in July 1932. His stepbrother Jan Antonín Bata became the company representative, Čipera and Vavrečka remained directors of the concern. Between the years 1932 to 1945, many things changed within the company. It has expanded out of former Czechoslovakia and became an international enterprise.<sup>11</sup> In

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<sup>8</sup> Pokluda, *Baťa v kostce*, 26–7; Ondřej Ševeček, *Zrození Baťovy průmyslové metropole: továrna, městský prostor a společnost ve Zlíně v letech 1900–1938* (Ostrava: Veduta, 2009), 87.

<sup>9</sup> Zdeněk Pokluda, *Ze Zlína do světa, příběh Tomáše Bati = From Zlín into the World: the Story of Tomas Bata*, 3rd ed. (Zlín: Nadace Tomáše Bati, 2015), 16.

<sup>10</sup> Pokluda, *Ze Zlína do světa*, 17–20, 30–2, 54.

<sup>11</sup> Cěkota, *The Stormy Years of an Extraordinary Enterprise*, 9; Pokluda, *Ze Zlína do světa*, 54–5.

1938, the shoemaking empire employed more than 65,000 people, 23,000 of them in plants abroad.<sup>12</sup>

Later, as the result of World War II, it lost two-thirds of its branches. The Czechoslovak political situation, Nazi occupation, and World War II caused the loss of 21 of 32 companies in central, eastern, and southern Europe, all of the countries controlled by Germany. In 1939, when the enterprise lost its base in Zlín, its experienced workers formed small teams and settled in Bata Companies all over the World. During the same year, Tomas Jan Bata, his mother Marie, the widow of Tomas Bata, and a team of skilled workers moved from Zlín to the newly established company town of Batawa, Canada.<sup>13</sup> Its facilities were used to produce goods for the Canadian armed forces, such as military footwear and gyroscopes. A part of the profit acquired by this order was sent to the Czechoslovak national resistance fund.

When Tomas Jan Bata became a person of higher importance six years after his father's death, he had a clear vision of taking care of the remaining eleven companies and how to expand again. By the end of the World War II, The Company owned 24 plants in Czechoslovakia and 100 factories abroad. In total, it employed 106,000 people.<sup>14</sup>

#### 1.4 Post-War Development

In October 1945, the Bata business of Zlín and all of its sister companies in Czechoslovakia and some European countries (Poland, Eastern Germany, and Yugoslavia) were lost due to nationalization. As a part of it, the most influential people of the company, were forced to leave their posts in the company of Zlín. Those who did not manage to run away from the country were arrested, because their job was not in harmony with the communist regime. Jiří Voženílek, a communist, became a leader of the nationalized enterprise in Zlín that was renamed Svit.<sup>15</sup>

Even though there had been an enormous loss of the company's assets, from 1946 to 1984, Tomas Bata, his wife Sonja, and their co-workers had developed an even stronger Bata Shoe Organization consisting of 98 companies in 92 countries, employing 80,000 people.<sup>16</sup>

In the early 1960s, the company's head office was located in London and in 1964, it was moved to Toronto. Soon Tomas Jan Bata became the head of the concern. Eleven years later,

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<sup>12</sup> Ševeček, *Zrození Baťovy průmyslové metropole*, 92.

<sup>13</sup> Cekota, *The Stormy Years of an Extraordinary Enterprise*, 9, 163; Pokluda, *Ze Zlína do světa*, 59.

<sup>14</sup> Cekota, *The Stormy Years of an Extraordinary Enterprise*, 9; Katrin Klingan and Kerstin Gust, *A Utopia of Modernity: Zlín: Revisiting Baťa's Functional City* (Berlin: Jovis, 2009), 118–34.

<sup>15</sup> Klingan and Gust, *A Utopia of Modernity*, 33, 66.

<sup>16</sup> Cekota, *The Stormy Years of an Extraordinary Enterprise*, 9.

the company employed 90,000 people in its 90 factories and 5,000 retail shops, whose work brought 250 million pairs of shoes into the international footwear market.

In 1991, after the fall of Communism, The Bata company conquered the Czechoslovak market once again, reestablished its business in Zlín and Dolní Němčí, and opened 47 shops throughout Czechoslovakia.<sup>17</sup>

## 1.5 The Bata Company in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

In 2002, the operation of the Bata business in Zlín was officially over. In the same year, Thomas George Bata, the son of Tomas Jan Bata became the Chief Executive Officer of the shoemaking empire, two years later, the company's headquarters was moved to Laussane, Switzerland.<sup>18</sup>

The Bata Shoe Organization consists of three parts: Bata Europe, Bata Emerging Markets, and Bata Branded. Nowadays, Bata owns 72 retail shops in the Czech Republic.<sup>19</sup> The factory in Dolní Němčí is still in operation and is the only one in central Europe. The hands of 150 employees in this small factory manufacture shoes. In the future, they would like to restructure it into a place where custom shoes are made. The largest Bata company is located in Dhaka, Bangladesh and annually manufactures 26.7 million pairs of shoes.

The Bata family is still in charge of the business that was established 126 years ago and it has remained a company that provides footwear for millions of people. In 2018, Bata was in charge of plants and shops in 73 countries. More than half of the number of shoes sold annually were manufactured by them, and its yearly sales were 2.5 billion USD. Currently, the concern still headquarters in Laussane and is led by Sandeep Kataria.<sup>20</sup>

## 1.6 Competition

At the time when the Bata company was established, 137 individual cobblers were present in Zlín. The Bata Shoe Company soon became a great example to follow, so small shoemaking businesses were formed by former Bata workers. Some of them were very

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<sup>17</sup> Klingan and Gust, *A Utopia of Modernity*, 34–5; Pokluda, *Ze Zlína do světa*, 75.

<sup>18</sup> Klingan and Gust, *A Utopia of Modernity*, 36; Zdeněk Pokluda, Jan Herman, and Milan Balaban, *Baťa na všech kontinentech* (Zlín: UTB, 2020), 17.

<sup>19</sup> “Baťa Česká Republika,” Baťa, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://www.bata.cz/stranka/spolecnost-bata>; Pokluda, *Ze Zlína do světa*, 70.

<sup>20</sup> Pavel Kalouš, “Baťa i po 125 letech obouvá svět. Jak funguje nejslavnější podnikatelská Rodina z Česka?” *Forbes*, September 21, 2019, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://forbes.cz/bata-i-po-125-letech-obouva-svet-jak-funguje-nejslavnejsi-podnikatelska-rodina-z-ceska/>; Salil Panchal, “How Bata’s Sandeep Kataria clinched the global CEO post,” *Forbes India*, December 10, 2020, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://www.forbesindia.com/article/take-one-big-story-of-the-day/how-batas-sandeep-kataria-clinched-the-global-ceo-post/64859/1>.

ambitious and remained Bata's competitors for many years, for example, Štěpánek, Zapletal, Wassermann, and the Kuchař brothers. In 1907, the shoemaking companies of Zlín employed 318 workers in total. By 1917, there were 4,990 employees of the shoemaking industry of Zlín. The most significant part of them, 4,000 people, were working for the Bata Company, and for Štěpánek, his biggest competitor, only 600. Štěpánek was trying to be as successful as Bata but he, as well as the other competitors, could not resist the deflation that came after the World War I due to political change. Zlín was no longer a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire but of the newly established Czechoslovak Republic.<sup>21</sup>

Through the years, the footwear industry has exponentially grown, and Bata has gained many competitors. In 2009, Deichmann, Humanic, Reno, John Garfield, and CCC became Bata's most significant competitors on the Czech shoe-selling market. However, the Bata Company was still in the lead.<sup>22</sup> Currently, Bata is the leader of the Indian footwear industry, but international rankings listed Nike as the World's biggest footwear manufacturer with its market value of 222.080 Billion USD.<sup>23</sup>

## 1.7 Company Towns of the Bata Business

A company town is a town built by a businessman in order to accommodate workers near a newly established plant that is the primary source of employment in the area. Company towns, in general, provide good living standard for employees and have become examples of industrialization and modernization all over the world.<sup>24</sup> Company towns are also referred to as pop-up towns, because they have grown in unpopulated areas within a short period of time. Since the management of newly established companies wanted to attract workers to move to these new towns, they had to offer something attractive. They provided newcomers with spacious apartments or family houses and a range of shops, educational facilities, parks, churches, dance halls, hospitals, restaurants, social services, and sports facilities. Such places

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<sup>21</sup> Ševeček, *Zrození Baťovy průmyslové metropole*, 76–89.

<sup>22</sup> “Baťa je dál největší obchodník s obuví v Česku. Ale konkurence ho dohání,” *Hospodářské noviny*, July 28, 2010, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-45286560-bata-je-dal-nejvetsi-obchodnik-s-obuvi-v-cesku-ale-konkurence-ho-dohani>.

<sup>23</sup> “India Top Companies List by Market Cap as on Jan 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020,” Value.Today, accessed April 30, 2021, [https://www.value.today/headquarters/india?title=&field\\_headquarters\\_of\\_company\\_target\\_id=&field\\_comp\\_any\\_category\\_primary\\_target\\_id=footwear&field\\_market\\_value\\_jan\\_2020\\_value\\_1=](https://www.value.today/headquarters/india?title=&field_headquarters_of_company_target_id=&field_comp_any_category_primary_target_id=footwear&field_market_value_jan_2020_value_1=); “World Top Footwear Companies List by Market Cap as on Jan 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020,” Value.Today, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://www.value.today/world-top-companies/footwear>.

<sup>24</sup> Ondřej Ševeček and Martin Jemelka, *Company Towns of the Bata Concern: History-Cases-Architecture* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2013), 189.

were safe for their inhabitants during hard times, for example, during the economic crisis in the 1930s.<sup>25</sup>

According to Klingan and Gust (2009), the ideal industrial city should consist of a minimum of 10,000 inhabitants, who have access to recreational, commercial, and social facilities and are provided by housing constructed by an employer.<sup>26</sup>

The Bata Company is not known only for its affordable and high-quality shoes. Even in developing countries, every Bata's employee was able to pay rent, and buy food and clothes for their families. As a result of the increasing number of employees, Tomas Bata decided to build them places to live that would be near their workplace. The Bata Company set up many towns at sparsely inhabited spots, therefore, his team of architects had almost no limitations. Their only restrictions were standards developed in Zlín. Company towns of the Bata enterprise were one of the first examples of how a successful international company used architecture to build a new society willing to achieve better living conditions through work.<sup>27</sup>

This concept was established in Zlín, former Czechoslovakia, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The management crew, architects, engineers, and urban planners of the Bata company developed a building strategy that could be applied in any country. Making minor modifications according to climate conditions or availability of building materials was possible. Due to this strategy, there was a small part of Zlín in every town established by the Bata Company. Bata's company towns had been influenced by ideas of the garden city movement, modernism, functionalism, and linear planning. The majority of towns were built with the purpose of creating a new Bata plant in an unpopulated area. The number of citizens was conditional on the size of the company. In most cases, approximately 1,000 occupants lived there. As the factory thrived, the community grew as well.<sup>28</sup>

Bata towns were constructed in Europe (Otrokovice, Třebíč, Zruč and Sázavou, Sezimovo Ústí, Šimonovany, Svit, Borovo, Bošany, Ottmuth, Chelmek, Möhlin, Hellocourt, Tillbury, Best, Martfü), Asia (Batanagar), Africa (Rufisque), America (Batawa, Belcamp, Peñaflor, Batatuba).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ševeček and Jemelka, *Company Towns of the Bata Concern*, 193–4.

<sup>26</sup> Klingan and Gust, *A Utopia of Modernity*, 118.

<sup>27</sup> Ševeček and Jemelka, *Company Towns of the Bata Concern*, 267–8.

<sup>28</sup> Cekota, *The Stormy Years of an Extraordinary Enterprise*, 126; Clemens Zimmermann, *Industrial Cities: History and Future* (Frankfurt on Main: Campus Verlag, 2013), 239–40.

<sup>29</sup> Pokluda, Herman, and Balaban, *Baťa na všech kontinentech*, 48.



When business people noticed that somewhere in the world, mostly in Asia, a cheap workforce was available, they decided to manufacture goods there, and plants in company towns started to close their gates. The Bata plants in the Bata towns may not be in operation anymore. However, the company's impact is still noticeable. The houses and plant buildings are being reconstructed, changed in purpose, and some still reflect history. However, some of them had to be demolished.<sup>30</sup>

### 1.7.1 Essential Principles of Bata Towns

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most factory workers in Europe lived in unsuitable apartment buildings in small rooms with a lack of daylight and had to share bathrooms and kitchens with their neighbors. There were three main problems connected with this type of accommodation. First, loss of intimacy, second, lack of oxygen, third, no excess of money. Loss of intimacy was a standard practice that led to mental health issues and increased criminality rate. In such places, mortality rates were extremely high too. The biggest problem was the lack of oxygen. Prisoners had to have at least 20% oxygen in their cell, an average resident of Munich, Germany, had less than 15% oxygen in a bedroom. Statistics show the fact that the more space a child has, the better it grows. Living conditions in Berlin, Germany, were poor too, where home environments disrupted children's growth process, and only 38% of young men were physically capable of compulsory military service. The rent for this type of accommodation was excessively high. All of the above-mentioned problems inspired urban planners to invent garden cities.<sup>31</sup>

Agricultural land had been noticeably cheaper than estates near densely populated areas. This is something that people had been aware of for many years. Sir Ebenezer Howard brought new ideas to urban planning at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and decided to develop an industrial community at a place that had been previously used only for agricultural purposes. His plan combined aspects of industrial and country life. He planned a community on a circular base. The inner ring of the town was meant to be a place of entertainment, including a town hall, concert hall, theatre, library, hospital, and art gallery. Everything mentioned was surrounded by a central park and connected by wide roads. Further from the city center, family dwellings could be found with gardens and schools. Manufacturing businesses as well as warehouses, woodworks, markets, and dairies, were located on the

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<sup>30</sup> Horňáková, *The Bata Phenomenon*, 144; Víctor Muñoz Sanz, "Beyond the Company: Intended and Unintended Legacies of Modern Industrial Urban Planning and Design. The Case of the Bata Shoe Company Satellite Towns (1929-2015)," *International Planning History Society Proceedings* 17, no. 3 (2016): 29–40.

<sup>31</sup> Rudolf Wels, *Zahradová města = The Garden City Motion* (Prague: Pokrok, 1911), 4–15.

outer ring of the town. This provided the town and its entrepreneurs efficient transportation solutions. The merchandise could be quickly loaded onto trucks or freight trains and be sent to nearby and distant markets. It can also be applied in the opposite direction. The remote areas of the town serve as farmlands. Such communities offered their inhabitants everything that urban life did. Apart from that, adults were employed by local employers and children were educated in local schools.

The rents at such places were low due a good purchase made by an entrepreneur. Yearly rent in a garden city consisting of 1,000 inhabitants was 8 GBP. This amount of money was enough to pay interest on the purchased land, construction, and maintenance. The surplus was used mainly as an insurance or pension fund for the dwellers.<sup>32</sup>

The zoning of Zlín and Bata towns in general is not situated like an ideal garden city, but rather the layout is linear. Zlín is located along a road and a railway and its center is comprised of plant buildings. Dwellings, recreational areas, and markets in Bata towns, unlike garden cities are, situated around the central plant.<sup>33</sup>

Modern architecture was developed during the 1920s with the vision of fighting against experimentalism and decorativeness. Typically, it is characterized by geometrical purity, flat roofs, huge windows, and reinforced concrete and steel usage. The leading representative of this artistic movement was the Swiss architect Charles Edouard Jeanneret, known as Le Corbusier. His work was oriented towards industrialization and modern technology. Interiors designed by him were meeting functional needs and, in many cases, were asymmetrical. The exteriors, however, were symmetrical and monochromatic. Family dwellings designed by him have balconies or terraces. Unlike Bata, Le Corbusier was interested in constructing high-density living and created, for example, high-rise apartment buildings consisting of duplex living units with gardens on the roofs. Another example of Czech modern architecture, in addition to Zlín, is Villa Tugendhat in Brno, designed by Ludwig Mies and constructed in 1930.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow*, 2nd ed. (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1902), 23–41.

<sup>33</sup> Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, 4th ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 182; Muñoz Sanz, “Beyond the Company,” 29–40.

<sup>34</sup> Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture* (New York: Oxford University, 2002), 137–49; Paolo Favole, *The Story of Modern Architecture* (Munich: Prestel, 2012), 48–53; Frampton, *Modern Architecture*, 155.

Functionalism in architecture reflects the function of the building. In Europe, it has emerged after the First World War from socialism to raise residents' living standards. The functionality of buildings is rooted in Europe.<sup>35</sup>

### 1.7.2 People Taking an Important Part in the Creation of Bata Towns

This chapter describes people of higher importance whose ideas were implemented during the development of Zlín and Batawa. The team was much bigger, so only the leading figures are depicted.

#### 1.7.2.1 Tomas Bata

Tomas Bata and his siblings were born as the ninth generation of cobblers of the Bata family from Zlín. They were raised in a small house consisting of a kitchen and one bedroom that was also their father's workshop. Their family ranked among the poor, and sometimes they struggled with hunger. Tomas desired to earn enough money not to suffer from hunger ever again and to become a gentleman, who is always well dressed, clean, and worked rather using his brain than his own hands. However, he had been capable of working among his employees, if needed. After some time developing the company, he decided to control something more significant, the city of Zlín itself. He offered voters a transformation of Zlín into a city in gardens. The inhabitants of Zlín knew that Bata was intensely goal-oriented, no matter how ambitious his plans were. The trust they had in Bata made him win the election for the mayor of the city in 1923. From this time on, he was not only a shoe manufacturer, a leader of an enormous shoe empire in Czechoslovakia, and the mayor of Zlín. Furthermore, he became an architect and a builder responsible for creating cities, towns, and villages. Despite the quickness of the construction, the durability of buildings he had planned with his colleagues was achieved and their work is noticeable in many parts of the world. Until his death in a plane crash in 1932, he was at the mayor's post working on projects, such as constructing roads, water and sewage system, power plant, schools, dormitories, houses for young and single employees, a hospital, a cinema, and a hotel.<sup>36</sup> Under his influence, the population of Zlín rose from 5,300 to 25,400.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Favole, *The Story of Modern Architecture*, 34; Niall P. Walsh, "12 Important Modernist Styles Explained," *ArchDaily*, March 18, 2020, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://www.archdaily.com/931129/12-important-modernist-styles-explained>.

<sup>36</sup> Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 3–13, 225–33.

<sup>37</sup> Klingan and Gust, *A Utopia of Modernity*, 22.

### 1.7.2.2 *Jan Kotěra*

Jan Kotěra is best described as the founder of Czech modern architecture. He was born in 1871 and studied Decorative Arts and Fine Arts in Prague. As a young man, he worked in the studio of Otto Wagner, a well-known architect from Vienna. He was known as a leading figure of Czech architecture by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His work focused on a modernistic conception of architecture rather than its decorativeness. In 1911, he joined the Bata Company as an architectural consultant. His first task was remodeling Tomas Bata's Villa. Next, he came up with a plan for the first residential part of Zlín's Letná district. His zoning plan was followed for constructing other parts of Zlín. While working for the Bata Company, he designed more than 170 buildings, for example, family houses, apartment buildings, hotels, theatres, museums, exhibition pavilions, monuments, and memorials. He trained other architects, such as Gahura, who modified Kotěra's urbanistic plans due to the high development rate of Zlín during the interwar period.<sup>38</sup>

### 1.7.2.3 *František Lýdie Gahura*

František Lýdie Gahura was a native from Zlín, born in 1891. He studied the same school as Kotěra, and during the early years of his architectural activity, he was influenced by his teachers, one of them was Kotěra, who recommended him to Bata. He was an essential figure of Czech interwar functionalism, recognizable by the added artistic value of his work. He started his career in the company by cooperating with Kotěra while building the first part of Zlín. After Kotěra died in 1923, Gahura became responsible for Zlín's completion. Another essential job was creating blueprints of a city hall in the center of Zlín in 1924, planning the construction of the hospital in Zlín, followed by a department store, the grand cinema, and many more buildings. He designed a piece of work of great importance, the Tomas Bata Memorial, in 1933. He then worked for the company as the principal architect and urban planner. Under his supervision, Zlín became an industrial city full of gardens, and parks, connected to the surrounding nature. Gahura was not only the person who stands behind the standardized structure of brick and glass panels, but he also cooperated with social institutions by organizing exhibitions of art, housing, and more cultural events. Furthermore, his blueprints were helpful while building settlements around company's branches all over the world.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Horňáková, *The Bata Phenomenon*, 261–2.

<sup>39</sup> Horňáková, *The Bata Phenomenon*, 257–8; Pavel Novák, *Zlínská architektura 1900-1950* (Zlín: Agentura Čas, 1993), 289.

#### **1.7.2.4 Vladimír Karfík**

Karfík graduated from the faculty of Architecture and Building Construction at the Czech Technical University in Prague. The fundamental principle of his work was achieving unity and economic design of buildings. From 1930 to 1946, he was working as the head of the planning department in Zlín. He applied experiences gained in Paris and America into his designs. Even though he is known mainly for planning the construction of building number 21, the skyscraper, many more places grew based on his blueprints, for instance, family dwellings, managers' villas, schools, dormitories, churches, sports facilities, and film studios of Zlín, as well as Bata department stores in Brno, Olomouc, Liberec, Bratislava, Amsterdam, and community halls of Bata satellite towns.<sup>40</sup>

#### **1.7.2.5 Jan Antonín Bata**

Jan Antonín Bata, a half-brother of Tomas Bata was a person of higher importance, too. After Tomas's death, he developed other city districts for the middle class, upper-middle-class, and colonies for engineers, doctors, and managers of the company. He was interested in art, music, literature, film, and theatre, so he supported such activities. Furthermore, he was in charge of Bata towns in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Jan, escaping overseas before World War II, lost his good name because of illegal activities concerning the inherited properties of his brother Tomas. For this reason, he was arrested in New York for two weeks. Eventually part of his brother's property was returned to the hands of Marie, the widow of Tomas, and their son Tomas Jan Bata. Jan died in Brazil in 1965.<sup>41</sup>

#### **1.7.2.6 Tomas Jan Bata**

Tomas Jan Bata was born on September 17, 1914, in Zlín as the only son of Tomas Bata. As the heir of the family business, his parents raised him in a way that allows him to become a successful entrepreneur, self-reliant, language-wise, and with a strong sense of responsibility. He spent his youth studying in England and Switzerland. After coming back to Czechoslovakia, he was taught marketing, chemistry, and technology in the Bata College in Zlín. With World War II coming, Tomas started preparing himself for a mission of saving the family business. In March 1939, he was driven to Brussels, and then he sailed overseas into Canada, a country that offered a lot of space for everyone. His job was to obtain everything he needed to establish a new plant before a chosen team of qualified workers and

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<sup>40</sup> Hornáková, *The Bata Phenomenon*, 258; Novák, *Zlínská architektura 1900–1950*, 290.

<sup>41</sup> Klingan and Gust, *A Utopia of Modernity*, 33–35, 63–64.

their families reach the New World's target destination.<sup>42</sup> In Canada, he chose a suitable piece of land that soon became his home, a place he would always come back to after his business trips.

Thomas J. Bata put a lot of effort into building the new community of Batawa out of nothing. His hard work was awarded by naming him an entrepreneur most important for the Quinte Region's development. A commemorative plaque describing T. J. Bata as "strong of mind, great of heart, wise of counsel, in service faithful, in wisdom right, in humanity gentle" was unveiled in 1984 in Pioneer Square in Batawa. He had originally created the Square in August 1939 to honor the people essential for developing the plant and Batawa itself.<sup>43</sup>

### 1.7.2.7 *Sonja Bata*

Sonja Bata was born to the Wettstein family. Her father, a Swiss lawyer, had cooperated with the Bata organization for many years. She graduated from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology and became an architect. At the age of nineteen, she and Tomas J. Bata reunited and fell in love. Afterward, she became his wife and business partner in one person. For some time, she also became the manager of a Bata store in London, where she discovered her passion in shoes. She took courses in orthopedics and shoe design. Furthermore, she started collecting shoes and established a museum of footwear in Toronto. She worked closely with architects working on plant buildings and she designed the standard Bata retail store by herself. Sonja was described as self-disciplined and her architectural designs were sustainable and innovative. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, she became a part of a team planning the redevelopment of Batawa, starting by converting an underused five-story factory building to serve the community of Batawa.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Thomas J. Bata and Sonja Sinclair, *Bata: Shoemaker to the World* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1990), 8–23; Valach, *Fenomén Baťa*, 34–44.

<sup>43</sup> Ashley Barrons and Nancy File, *A History of Batawa* (Belleville: Loyalist College, 2006), 47.

<sup>44</sup> Bata and Sinclair, *Bata*, 125–35; "Bata Shoe Factory, Batawa, Ontario," *Canadian Architect*, September 29, 2020, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://www.canadianarchitect.com/bata-shoe-factory/>; "Footwear collector, philanthropist Sonja Bata remembered for passion, generosity," *Canadian Architect*, February 26, 2018, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://www.canadianarchitect.com/footwear-collector-philanthropist-sonja-bata-remembered-passion-generosity/>; Sonja Bata," *Canadian Architect* 8, no. 5 (2015): 42–3.

## 2 ZLÍN

Zlín is the hometown of the Bata Shoe Company, Limited. The city itself has a more extended history than that connected with the world-renowned footwear business. Originally, Zlín was an inconspicuous town of craftsmen and farmers. Located in south-eastern Moravia, an agricultural part of the current Czech Republic that turned into a trade center, it is known for its unity and brick cladding.<sup>45</sup> The population of Zlín grew with the company. By 1991, it had risen to 84,522 inhabitants, but since then the number has been decreasing.<sup>46</sup> The concept of the city is similar to Howard's plans, but the zoning is different. The plant is located in the center of the town, surrounded by public facilities, parks, and residential areas. The city, as we know it today in terms of design and architecture, was influenced by Tomas Bata and his team of architects, urban planners, engineers, and builders.

### 2.1 Before the Establishment of the A. Bata Company

Zlín was founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by Vilém from Hustopeče. In 1358 Zdeněk and Albert from Šternebrk bought the property and built a fort that later became the castle of Zlín. In 1397, it officially gained the status of a town. The ownership of Zlín frequently changed from one noble to another.<sup>47</sup> In the late 1570s, the Zlín castle underwent its renaissance reconstruction. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Zlín experienced difficult times. For instance, the Thirty Years' War endangered Zlín's very existence and its following restoration lasted for more than one hundred years. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, significant buildings of Zlín were reconstructed and small factories began operating. The first enterprise in Zlín was a linen workshop followed by a match factory that employed 26 workers. Over time, more business people were settling in Zlín, employing residents in brickworks, a brewery, and a distillery. Some inhabitants were engaged in livestock farming or growing fruits and vegetables. More significant growth came with establishing the Bata family business that connected Zlín with its surroundings by a railway to arrange transportation of raw materials, manufactured goods, and its employees.

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<sup>45</sup> Ševeček, *Zrození Baťovy průmyslové metropole*, 48

<sup>46</sup> Jiřina Růžková and Josef Škrabal, *Historický lexikon obcí České republiky 1869-2005*, vol. 2 (Prague: Český statistický úřad, 2006), 54.

<sup>47</sup> Čekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 5; Jaroslav Petrů, *Gottwaldov* (Brno: Krajské středisko státní památkové péče a ochrany přírody, 1970), unpagged; Zdeněk Pokluda, *Zlín* (Prague: Paseka, 2008), 26, 40–6; Úřad města Zlína, *Zlín: město životní aktivity* (Zlín: Úřad města Zlína, 1994), unpagged.

## 2.2 Development of Zlín Between the Years 1900–1948

As mentioned above, Zlín had the status of a town of artisans and farmers. Its inhabitants earned money as cobblers, potters, tailors, bricklayers, carpenters, etc. When the A. Bata Shoe Company entered the market, the number of artisans and farmers declined, and Zlín became an industrial city. Construction firms started their entrepreneurship in Zlín, as well as financial institutions and food processing firms. Yet, the Bata company remained the number one employer and manufacturer of Zlín.<sup>48</sup>

The plant, a focal point of Zlín, consisted of multi-story factory buildings which allowed a lot of natural light inside the open-spaced workshops. Its workers were taught how to use shoe-manufacturing machines and produce millions pairs of shoes annually.<sup>49</sup>



Figure 1. Interior of a factory building in Zlín, “Výroba obuvi,” Statutární město Zlín, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://www.zlin.eu/vyroba-obuvi-cl-145.html>.

At the time when the Bata Shoe Company started to grow, there were no places, such as hotels, dormitories, houses, and flats for rent, to accommodate the workers. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the transportation infrastructure of Zlín was poorly developed, and employees were willing to travel for work from nearby towns and villages connected with Zlín by a railway.

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<sup>48</sup> Ševeček, *Zrození Baťovy průmyslové metropole*, 80–2, 317.

<sup>49</sup> Pokluda, Herman, and Balaban, *Baťa na všech kontinentech*, 27.



In order to attract qualified workers to the company, Tomas Bata decided to build them places to live and offer them the chance to study.

His vision was clear. He wanted his workers to come home after work, relax, and not be disturbed by others, like neighbors. He believed that multi-story or apartment buildings would become epicenters of problems in the company. Simply said, workers living in such flats would have a place where they could plan a rebellion. That is why he decided to build houses surrounded by nature.

The maximum cost of a living unit had to be in the range from 16,000 CZK to 20,000 CZK.<sup>50</sup> The first six houses were constructed in 1913 around the main street without urban planning. In 1915, Kotěra was asked to plan a town district named Letná, located in the western part of Zlín. His project ended up building three types of houses: single-family houses, single-family row houses, and houses for four families. All of them had a garden and plastered exterior. Later, a team of Bata's architects and urban planners decided to construct flat-roofed homes with brick facades because they turned out to be more durable. That is when the typical Zlín architecture was developed. From that time, the majority of houses looked alike.

A typical family house in Zlín consisted of a bedroom, a kitchen with a living room, a toilet, and a bathroom. There was a water pipeline system in every kitchen, which was something new. Before Bata, Zlín had no sewage or water system.

In 1915, Zlín consisted of 499 houses. In twenty years, its number increased to 2,676. The reason why the city grew so quickly was the Bata construction company that made houses efficiently, thanks to the division of labor. After ten years, another two residential parts of Zlín, Nad Ovčírnou and Zálešná, were constructed. The houses' layout was different: a kitchen, a separated living room, two bedrooms, and a bathroom with a toilet.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Novák, *Zlínská architektura 1900–1950*, 26–7.

<sup>51</sup> Novák, *Zlínská architektura 1900–1950*, 27–33; Pokluda, *Ze Zlína do světa*, 8.



Figure 2. Dwellings in Nad Ovčírnou quarter, “Galerie: Architektura,” Informační centrum Baťa, accessed April 30, 2021, <http://tomasbata.org/galerie/>.

The goal of an urbanistic plan developed by Kotěra and adjusted by Gahura was to convert Zlín into a city in gardens. As a part of it, a new center of social life, Náměstí Práce, was constructed. Dormitories, a market hall, department store, community hall, and grand cinema attracted people to spend their free time there. The establishment of a cemetery in a forest on the southern edge of Zlín was a part of this plan, as well as brand new city districts of Díly and Lazy, and the city castle became accessible for ordinary people. This plan was designed for a capacity of 100,000 inhabitants<sup>52</sup>, however, the number was never reached.

In 1927, the typical Zlín house was standardized: a two-story double-family house with a basement. From that time on, almost every house was the same, just with minor adjustments, for example, garages underneath the living area in homes placed on a slope.<sup>53</sup>

Tomas Bata was elected as the mayor of Zlín in September 1923, and after his tragic death in 1932, his post was given to Dominik Čipera, one of the company’s directors. Čipera remained at his seat until 1945.<sup>54</sup>

During the so-called Bata Era, from 1923 to 1938, except for the time of the economic crisis during the 1930s, many sectors connected to the company and its employees’ needs experienced years of prosperity. Zlín became an ideal place to start a business as a builder, tailor, hotelier, or owner of a restaurant, coffee house, or shop. At that time, Zlín had grown

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<sup>52</sup> Novák, *Zlínská architektura 1900-1950*, 217–20; Petrů, *Gottwaldov*, unpagued.

<sup>53</sup> Novák, *Zlínská architektura 1900-1950*, 29–33.

<sup>54</sup> Pokluda, *Ze Zlína do světa*, 22, 55; Ševěček, *Zrození Baťovy průmyslové metropole*, 46.

to approximately 40,000 inhabitants. More than half of them were employees of the Bata business. The majority lived in the dwellings constructed by the company. The city was seen as a modern industrial town that allows its residents to spend their free time in parks, gardens, surrounding forests, shopping, participating in sports activities, and relaxing. This unique concept connected the plant with city life and the surrounding ubiquitous greenery. Furthermore, a place of relaxation and education became a small ZOO established in 1930. And after four years, it was moved to woods further from the city center. However, there was a lack of food for the animals during the Nazi occupation, and the ZOO had to be shut down in the 1940s. In 1944, the city introduced a new type of urban transportation solution: trolleybuses and buses.<sup>55</sup>



Figure 3. Factory complex and residential areas in 1936, “Galerie: Architektura,” Informační centrum Baťa, accessed April 30, 2021, <http://tomasbata.org/galerie/>.

Toward the end of World War II, Zlín was bombed by the U.S. Army, and many manufacturing facilities were destroyed. In October 1945, the Bata businesses located in former Czechoslovakia were nationalized and three years later, communists came to power in Zlín and renamed the Bata plant Svit National Enterprise.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Klingan and Gust, *A Utopia of Modernity*, 65; Pokluda, *Zlín*, 89–91; Ševeček, *Zrození Baťovy průmyslové metropole*, 46–8, 90–5.

<sup>56</sup> Úřad města Zlína, *Zlín*, unpagued.

### 2.3 Gottwaldov

When World War II was over, Czechoslovakia became a communist state under the leadership of Klement Gottwald, the first communist president. Zlín was at that time strongly linked to Bata, and Bata was seen as a leader of Czechoslovak capitalism. Therefore, the politicians decided to eliminate the association and Zlín was renamed Gottwaldov on January 1, 1949.<sup>57</sup>

From 1950 to 1968, the number of residents increased from 56,601 to 71,303, and the number of dwellings rose from 5,863 to 7,800.<sup>58</sup>

During the Gottwaldov era, the conception of the city was changed. When it came to housing, workers' contentedness and privacy were no longer needed, and accommodating as many people as possible was more important. Many of the standardized houses were being demolished and replaced by blocks of flats. Thus, high-rise apartment buildings, the first in Czechoslovakia, were built, starting in 1954. Furthermore, the Tomas Bata memorial was demolished, and many more significant places were redesigned.<sup>59</sup>

### 2.4 The Comeback of Zlín and its Current State

Residents of Zlín never became familiar with calling their hometown Gottwaldov. During demonstrations in November 1989, they demanded renaming the city Zlín. By December 21, 1989, the change was officially granted by the authorities.<sup>60</sup>

The Velvet revolution of 1989 brought not only the city's original name, but the company complex and dwellings were transferred into private ownership. Small entrepreneurs bought factory buildings and since then, Zlín has been known as a city of industry and finance.<sup>61</sup> Nowadays, Zlín is a target destination for many young adults studying at Tomas Bata University founded in 2001. As of April 30, 2021, Tomas Bata University's home page listed that it currently educates 9,616 students on six faculties, five of them are located in Zlín.

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<sup>57</sup> "Před 70 lety se ze Zlína stal Gottwaldov. Cílem bylo vymazat Baťu z paměti lidí," *Český rozhlas Zlín*, December 31, 2018, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://zlin.rozhlas.cz/pred-70-lety-se-ze-zlina-stal-gottwaldov-cilem-bylo-vymazat-batu-z-pameti-lidi-7684647>.

<sup>58</sup> Petrů, *Gottwaldov*, unpagued.

<sup>59</sup> Pavel Novák, *Zlínská architektura 1950–2000* (Zlín: POZIMOS, 2008), 287–96; Petrů, *Gottwaldov*, unpagued.

<sup>60</sup> "My chceme Zlín, burácelo gottwaldovské náměstí. Změna názvu města byla blesková," *Česká televize*, January 2, 2020, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/regiony/3018611-my-chceme-zlin-buracelo-gottwaldovske-namesti-zmena-nazvu-mesta-byla-bleskova>.

<sup>61</sup> Úřad města Zlína, *Zlín*, unpagued.

70% of Zlín is protected as a conservation area for its history and uniqueness. Thus, when remodeling Bata houses or factory buildings, the original visual aspect must be kept in mind. The skyscraper is currently used as an administration building consisting of offices that belong to the regional authorities and tax department. This building is a well-liked destination for both tourists and locals for its lookout on the top floor. Across the street, there is a multi-purpose building that offers lofts, office space, post office, bakery, fitness center, etc. Buildings number 14 and 15 were converted into the regional library, museum of shoes, and an art gallery.<sup>62</sup>



Figure 4. Former factory building remodeled into a multi-purpose building, “O budově,” max 32, accessed April 30, 2021, <http://www.max32.cz/cs/o-budove>.

Zlín is a lively city in which many events take place. The Zlín Film Festival for Children and Youth is one of the most prominent events that take usually place during May and June. In August, there is an automotive event, Barum Czech Rally Zlín, and in December people can shop and mingle with others at the Christmas market on the Zlín square. Furthermore, going to a cinema, theatre, philharmonic orchestra, sports matches, the ZOO, galleries, and museums, are activities that can be done all year long.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Klingan, *A Utopia of Modernity*, 36–51

<sup>63</sup> “Zlín–Baťovo město,” Turistický informační portál města Zlína, accessed April 30, 2021, <http://www.ic-zlin.cz/>.

### 3 BATAWA

Before World War II, most European countries suffered. Due to the Nazi occupation in Europe, the situation was not good for entrepreneurs. One of the suffering factories was the Bata company, based in Zlín, that owned factories and retail stores in many places in Europe at that time. The management of the Bata company decided to establish an industrial town in North America to escape the problems in Europe.<sup>64</sup>

Compared to other Canadian company towns, Batawa was established more than twenty years after Canada was industrialized. The Bata Shoe Company brought something new and innovative to the Canadian shoemaking industry. It owned modern machinery, unprecedented in Canada at that time. Plant buildings were situated on the periphery but still close to the residential area that was constructed along linear roads, all in connection with nature.<sup>65</sup>



Figure 5. Aerial photo of Batawa, Keith Evans, “Batawa,” accessed April 30, 2021, <http://evansjames.com/cimsImages.html>.

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<sup>64</sup> Valach, *Fenomén Baťa*, 43–4.

<sup>65</sup> Klingan and Gust, *A Utopia of Modernity*, 134–5; Ševeček and Jemelka, *Company Towns of the Bata Concern*, 195–7.

### 3.1 The Background of Establishing a New Industrial Community in Canada

Since the former Czechoslovakian shoe manufacturing concern had its subsidiaries in Germany before World War II, the management in Zlín was well informed about what Nazi Germany was intending to do. The planning had to be done by the company's management as soon as possible to save the company. The first step was to launch a recruitment campaign that ended in January 1939. The chosen workers would get a job in a safe place overseas. Two hundred fifty people – managers, technicians, tradesmen, other workers, their wives, and children – were chosen and prepared to leave to establish a new community abroad. Bringing their families to Canada with them was taken for granted.<sup>66</sup>

The most crucial decision was sending Tomas J. Bata to set the company's headquarters out of Europe. They considered sending him to South Africa, mainly because of the similar climate to former Czechoslovakia. Tomas J. Bata believed that freedom, order, justice, and peace are more important than money, and Canada turned out to be the perfect place for the family business.<sup>67</sup>

He wanted its citizens to be well informed about everything connected to their lives, to feel like they are an essential part of the community. His goal was not to build a large factory. Instead, he wanted to establish a smaller plant filled with happy people.<sup>68</sup> As a kid, he would sometimes read his mom's books that described Canada as a land of opportunity and exciting place to go. He had never been to Canada before, so that was an image he had in his head. He also liked the idea of the mixture of British traditions with the progressiveness of the United States of America. Motivated by his vision of Canada, he decided that one of the first things he needed to do was to obtain Visas for his employees. Since December 1938, he had known there might be a problem with getting so many people into the country. At that time, only farmers were being admitted. Eventually, it was determined that only 100 Czechoslovaks could legally come to Canada due to immigration restrictions.

Not only people were needed to establish an industrial community, but also equipment, machinery, and material. For this reason, Bata had to make a trade agreement with the Canadian government. To make a profit, the company that would be established shortly had

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<sup>66</sup> Bata and Sinclair, *Bata*, 50–63; Valach, *Fenomén Baťa*, 34–44.

<sup>67</sup> Anthony Cekota, *The Battle of Home: Some Problems of Industrial Community* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1944), 19.

<sup>68</sup> Cekota, *The Battle of Home*, 31–5.

to manufacture 100,000 pairs of shoes.<sup>69</sup> After solving the immigration problem and gaining the trade agreement, looking for the best area for locating another Bata Shoe Company plant began. Tomas J. Bata's location requirements were primarily targeted on its location, surroundings, and land price. His company should be located in the eastern part of Canada in order to reach it easily when sailing from Europe. The chosen place had to feel like home to prevent homesickness of his employees. The town's surroundings had to look similar to Zlín's, situated between hills and forests. The last but not least necessary requirement was buying plenty of cheap lands. Secondary conditions involved mainly freight and passenger transportation, the accessibility of an airport, railways, waterways, or highways, and the availability of electrical energy. Tomas's vision was building a miniature of Zlín, projecting its components in a new place. The same strategy was used in other areas, such as Batanagar, India, and Hellocourt, France.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.2 Location

Batawa is located near the Quebec border, Lake Ontario, and St. Lawrence Valley, between Toronto and Kingstone. The location fits perfectly into Tomas J. Bata's vision. There was plenty of hospitable lands very similar to the surroundings of Zlín; enough power supply needed for running the Czechoslovak shoe machinery; the Trent River, perfect for its waterway; a railroad; and a nearby military airport. A disused pulp and paper mill that became the first company building was situated on properties belonging to the village of Frankford founded by United Empire Loyalists, with about 850 inhabitants. It was surrounded by 1,500 acres of land owned by 25 farmers. Acquiring the property was not a problem since it had been useless for agriculture.<sup>71</sup>

### 3.3 The Establishment of a New Community and its Existence

Building a brand-new community was a choice made by Tomas J. Bata, who wanted to save as many friends and co-workers as possible from the threats of World War II. He was aware of every component needed to establish a community and a new plant that would be controlled by him and by people he trusted. He wanted to shape it into something new, marvelous, and to be remembered.<sup>72</sup> The town was built according to the blueprints

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<sup>69</sup> Bata and Sinclair, *Bata*, 49–63.

<sup>70</sup> Shannon Ricketts, "Batawa: An Experiment of International Standardization," *SSAC Bulletin* 18, no. 3 (December 1993): 80–7; Valach, *Fenomén Baťa*, 42.

<sup>71</sup> Bata and Sinclair, *Bata*, 58–60; Cekota, *The Battle of Home*, 42–51.

<sup>72</sup> Cekota, *The Battle of Home*, 19–25.



developed by architects Kotěra and Gahura. Mechanization and standardization made the construction process faster, and the plant could start its operation sooner than other newly built works.<sup>73</sup> Novotny and Sicha had designed blueprints for developing the town. Novotny's vision was to build stores, offices, and more public buildings on both sides of the main streets. Sicha was a concrete buildings expert. Initially, they planned to build a town, but instead, they made a small village around the factory buildings. The ultimately job took too much effort, and after constructing the first street and factory building, they decided not to participate in the completion of the project, and instead they settled on farms producing food and also started making blueprints for gun components.<sup>74</sup>

The first year in Batawa was crucial and probably the most difficult one. The immediate plan was to earn a profit and start constructing family houses, community buildings, schools, and churches. Every person who came to develop the community in Batawa, was hard-working, strong-minded, and under 30 years old. They were aware of the fact that hard work brought better living standards and various opportunities.<sup>75</sup>

Shoemaking machinery and tools that were needed to earn a profit arrived in September 1939. The ship bringing eighty crates of tools from Hamburg, Germany to Monteval, Canada unloaded the cargo and was then sunk by a German submarine. The equipment brought from Europe was high-quality and suitable for manufacturing not only leather, rubber, and plastic shoes but also gun mounts and other goods for the Canadian army. Thus, the plant's production could be easily switched to manufacturing goods for the military during war years. Besides shoes, the Batawa factory was producing machinery and instruments, such as lathes, weighing, and measuring tools. At the time when Batawa was set up, its shoe-manufacturing plant was considered to be the most modern in Canada. Being the only employer near Batawa was what Tomas J. Bata was worried about. He thought that Canadians would not be able to work on a daily basis. His worries disappeared shortly after they appeared. Czechoslovaks were grateful to have a job, but the indigenous inhabitants of the village were thankful that someone has brought to life the place that had been their earlier source of income.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Sanjeev Kumar, "The Bata Shoe Company: 1876 to 1970: Appraisal of Strategic Global Choices," vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2018), 12.

<sup>74</sup> Cekota, *The Battle of Home*, 56–9.

<sup>75</sup> Barrons and File, *A History of Batawa*, 13; Cekota, *The Stormy Years of an Extraordinary Enterprise*, 160–1.

<sup>76</sup> Cekota, *The Battle of Home*, 52–5; Josef Čermák, *It All Started with Prince Rupert: The Story of Czechs and Slovaks in Canada* (Luhačovice: Atelier IM, 2003), 171, 269.

Canadians agreed to work for the new company and accommodate the immigrants before new dwellings were constructed for them. At that point, every fifth person in Frankford was a foreigner, and its population increased by 20%. Czechoslovaks shared households with native inhabitants for approximately five months. Relationships between them were full of harmony. The Canadians provided the Czechoslovaks with a roof over their heads and taught them English. In return, the Czechoslovaks showed them how to use the shoemaking machinery and tools and informed them of everything a new worker at the company needed to know. Furthermore, they taught each other different food preparation techniques, ways of learning, and told each other how different their customs and traditions were.<sup>77</sup>

Emphasis was given to education, too. Frankford teachers taught English to the Czechoslovak children. They learned the new language so quickly that they were able to speak fluently by Christmas 1939. This ability was not the same in the adults. Even though they were in contact with Canadians every day, they could not speak fluently sooner than two or three years.<sup>78</sup>

Because of the fact that the Czechoslovaks and their families were accommodated not only near the plant but also in the surrounding villages within a radius of 20 miles of the company, every workday two company busses would drive them to Batawa in the morning and back home in the afternoon. This service was given to employees for free.<sup>79</sup>

When the company's net profit grew, its employees received higher salaries. The more money they got, the more money they were willing to spend. Outcomes of this were, for example, purchasing cars and moving out of the employee's housing to live further from the plant.<sup>80</sup>

The community of Czechs and Slovaks became strong and interest grew in catching up with people from their homeland. Thus, they became responsible for planning picnics to which Czechs and Slovaks living in Canada were invited. Such events took place during June and July. Immigrants living in different Canadian cities, for example, in Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa were in charge of planning art exhibitions, concerts, performances,

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<sup>77</sup> Cekota, *The Battle of Home*, 46–51.

<sup>78</sup> Barrons, and File, *A History of Batawa*, 25.

<sup>79</sup> Barrons and File, *A History of Batawa*, 13.

<sup>80</sup> Víctor Muñoz Sanz, "In the Image of Likeness. Batawa: Notes on an Exported Blueprint in Southern Ontario," *On Site Review* 27, (Spring 2012): 32–3.

movies, banquets, lectures, dances, dinners, and annual meetings in order to remain together.<sup>81</sup>

### 3.4 Important Places for the Community

Since Batawa grew in an almost unpopulated area, it was necessary to build most things from scratch. Bata wanted to give the inhabitants of Batawa similar opportunities as in already established cities. Thus, he made sure there was availability of shops, schools, churches, places for relaxation, entertainment, sports, and work opportunities.

#### 3.4.1 The Plant

Setting up the new factory was a challenge. The condition of the old mill was terrible, and even the ceilings were falling down. In order to convert it into the first Batawa factory, activities, such as fixing roofs, floors, walls, windows, were necessary. The process took over a month. A new five-story factory building was constructed according to Gahura's universal plans. The building's focal point was the usage of huge windows, not likely to appear anywhere else in Canada at that time. The windows were big, letting direct sunlight into the factory. That seemed to be an issue when the hostile winter of 1939 came, and the workers felt cold. Thus, Gahura's plans had to be modified to suit the climate. The best way of thermally insulating the building was by downsizing the windows using an aluminum panel system. This modification caused the building to go from an orange-brick color to white.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Čermák, *It All Started with Prince Rupert*, 364.

<sup>82</sup> Cekota, *The Battle of Home*, 52–5; Muñoz Sanz, "In the Image of Likeness," 32–3.



Figure 6. Interior of the Batawa factory, “Batawa Photo Gallery: History,” Batawa Development Corporation, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://batawa.ca/photo-gallery-s16.php?limit=36&cap=18&photoAlbumID=2#&gid=1&pid=15>.

The big windows were not the only feature brought from Europe. There was also the innovation of the concrete slab.<sup>83</sup> The concrete waffle structure was used while constructing large spaces to achieve rigidity and solidity of the buildings.<sup>84</sup>

In 2019, the five-story factory building was remodeled, and its open-spaced interior was divided into residential, commercial, and retail spaces. Thanks to modern technology, architects had a chance to pick big thermal windows that let a lot of natural light into the building while still insulating it. High-quality materials and solutions were chosen, and its heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system is powered by geothermal energy.<sup>85</sup>

### 3.4.2 Housing

The price of real estate was much higher than in Czechoslovakia at that time. The cost of a family house consisting of a kitchen, a dining room, two bedrooms, a bathroom, and a cellar, constructed in former Czechoslovakia was 750 USD. The same type of house in Canada costed 2,500 USD.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Canadian Architect, “Bata Shoe Factory, Batawa, Ontario.”

<sup>84</sup> Simeon Olawale, et al., “Design Optimization of Reinforced Concrete Waffle Slab Using Genetic Algorithm,” *Journal of Soft Computing in Civil Engineering* 4, no. 2 (2020): 47.

<sup>85</sup> Canadian Architect, “Bata Shoe Factory, Batawa, Ontario.”

<sup>86</sup> Cekota, *The Battle of Home*, 60.

The first dwellings of Batawa were wooden single-family bungalows and double-family two-story homes. Construction began in autumn of 1939. Both types of utilities included a kitchen, a bathroom, a living room, and two bedrooms.<sup>87</sup>



Figure 7. Single-family and double-family dwellings of Batawa, “Batawa Photo Gallery: History,” Batawa Development Corporation, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://batawa.ca/photo-gallery-s16.php?limit=18&cap=18&photoAlbumID=2#&gid=1&pid=3>.

In 1940, the Wartime Housing Act was published by the Canadian government. This act aimed to build dwellings around Canadian factories that were manufacturing goods for the army. As an outcome of this, one hundred family houses were constructed in Batawa as well as one apartment building that accommodated eighty single employees. The Bata Shoe Company in Batawa depreciated those buildings and withheld rents from its workers’ salaries.<sup>88</sup> The rent for a single-family bungalow was 11 USD per month.

That type of housing soon became unsatisfactory for many inhabitants, because the dwellings were densely constructed and by 1952, Batawa consisted of 185 family homes. When they earned enough money, they started moving further from the town center. This was the point when the company began to sell pieces of its property to workers. They could buy a piece of land cheaply and build a house on it according to their preferences. Batawians have lived in such dwellings ever since.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> “Antonín Novotný – Z paměti stavitele kanadské Batawy II,” Bata Story, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://batastory.net/cs/abs/antonin-novotny-z-pameti-stavitele-kanadske-batawy-ii>.

<sup>88</sup> Barrons and File, *A History of Batawa*, 37.

<sup>89</sup> Muñoz Sanz, “In the Image of Likeness,” 32–3; Pokluda, Herman, and Balaban, *Bata na všech kontinentech*, 48

The people responsible for establishing the new community wanted to keep the place nice. For this reason, there has been a town beautification contest every year. Its judges consider which house has been improved somehow and then they announce the winner.<sup>90</sup>

### 3.4.3 Civic Amenities

A well-liked place in Batawa was its public library that consisted of books that were given to it by locals and some of them were brought from former Czechoslovakia. Canadian books were meant to help Czechoslovaks learn English. Texts in Czech and Slovak helped them relax, amuse themselves, and mainly to not forget their native language. When speaking of reading, not only books were popular. The one-page long Batawa Bulletin was published daily and was written in Czech and English. It consisted of significant announcements and news from their homeland.

Czechoslovaks would go to a pub on Friday and Saturday evenings, but they couldn't do the same in Canada at the beginning of their stay. There were no pubs since many inhabitants were against drinking and partying. Later, clubs were established for teenagers, ladies, men, and scout troops for children. A significant event for Batawa's social life was the opening of the Batawa Recreation Hall in 1942, and it immediately became a place of amusement. Batawians would go there to play cards, dance, watch movies, concerts, fashion shows, banquets, etc. The Recreation Hall was replaced in 1963 for the 11,000 square foot Batawa Community Centre and was transferred from Bata Industries Limited's ownership to township property in 1989. Special events, such as conferences, trainings, or meetings of certain groups and organizations, have taken place there ever since.<sup>91</sup>

The Bata Company led its workers to live active lives because they believed that physical activity positively influenced their work performance. Thus the Batawa community focused on sports such as skiing, tennis, soccer, baseball, skating, hiking, and boating. The Sokol association in Batawa helped people stay fit. Every age category would find there an activity they liked, including athletics, gymnastics, fitness, and dance classes for adults. Children could participate in group plays and games.<sup>92</sup> The Bata Spartans Hockey Club was sponsored by the company and participated in multiple cups, for example, the Thomas Bata Memorial Cup, The Senator Fraser Cup, and others.

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<sup>90</sup> Barrons and File, *A History of Batawa*, 33.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 27–41.

<sup>92</sup> Barrons and File, *A History of Batawa*, 27–9; RFA Planning Consultant, *A Model for Sustainable Development in the Community of Batawa* (Belleville: RFA Planning Consultant, 2007), 9–10.

During winter, skiing was a popular activity too. In 1959, the Batawa Ski Club was established, its members had excellent results in many Ontario competitions. In 1979, a chalet at the Batawa Ski Hill, named in honor of Sonja Bata, was opened. The Ski Club took care of 17 miles of natural cross-country ski trails. During the summer, Batawians would play tennis, volleyball, softball, soccer, go hunting, swimming, and fishing. One year before the war was over, the construction of sports facilities, including a multi-purpose sports field, began.

Religion was considered to be very important for the residents even in the beginning of Batawa. The first worships were held in the Recreational Hall by a minister from Toronto's Church of All Nations, Reverend Henry Vaclavik. When Vaclavik left, Batawians would travel to worship in Frankford, the village nearby. In 1943, the Roman Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart was constructed. The Batawa United Church was built five years later, and its first reception ceremony was held in April 1950. The newer church was slightly bigger than the first one and contained a big hall for Sunday school. In 1974, this church was closed, and inhabitants had to travel to Frankford or other places on Sundays.

It was already mentioned that many important buildings were absent in the first years of Batawa's existence, and school was no exception. During the first eleven years, children would travel to Frankford Public School by bus. In 1950, the Sacred Heart Catholic School was finished. The second school was called the Batawa Public School, a four-room school that had been constructed in 1953 and closed thirty years later. This building was transformed into a house for seniors.

A place where workers and their families could spend their money was a shopping center built in 1943. This place consisted of a grocery store that offered some Czech foods, including mushrooms, unknown to Canadians. Of course, there was a Bata retail store and a post office. After the war, when almost every family owned a car, they had no problem driving to Trenton and shop there. More choices of goods, lower prices, and sales attracted Batawians. Thus, the Batawa shops gradually closed, starting with the grocery store.<sup>93</sup>

### **3.5 The Downfall of the Plant**

In the early 1990s, both divisions of Batawa, Bata Footwear and Bata Engineering, reached the number of 1,300 employees. However, the number was decreasing and by 1997, only 300 people were working for Bata and all of them already knew the end of the company was

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<sup>93</sup> Barrons and File, *A History of Batawa*, 31–43.

coming. Liba Cholastová, the accountant, told Dadák, the factory was struggling since 80% of shoes on the Canadian market had been imported from China. At that time, their only hope was a newly obtained license for the manufacture of Kodiak farming boots.<sup>94</sup>

The shoe and machinery company closed in 1999 because of a costly workforce in Canada and the increase of imported shoes from Asia. After the shoe company failed, the plant buildings were used as a place for military and fire exercise. Some short-term businesses took their place there, too.<sup>95</sup>

### 3.6 Batawa in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

After the closure of the Bata company in 1999, a new employer appeared in Batawa. It was an automotive firm that engaged more than 450 people in its manufacturing process. In 2005, Sonja Bata decided to buy the 1,500-acre properties of Batawa owned by the Bata Shoe Organization with a plan of redeveloping the hamlet.<sup>96</sup>

In 2007, a secondary plan for the sustainable development of Batawa was introduced by the Batawa Development Centre, which Sonja Bata founded. This plan's goal was to let Batawa become a place of safety, balance, and a community that cares about each other and the nature that surrounds them. They planned to rebuild the factory buildings into multi-purpose buildings that would be used as residential, recreational and educational facilities, hotels, clubs, banquet halls, and restaurants. None of them should be higher than the five-story factory building to maintain the local atmosphere. In 2019, the first part of this plan was realized. The modernist-style five-story edifice contains 47 flats with balconies facing two directions, with views of the river and the center of the town. The lower floors, serve as a commercial and community space.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Břetislav Dadák, *Kanadský deník: Pět tisíc kilometrů podzimním Ontariem* (Vizovice: Lípa, 1997), 90; Pokluda, *Baťa na všech kontinentech*, 156.

<sup>95</sup> Klingan and Gust, *An Utopia of Modernity*, 135; Steve McLean, "Bata Shoes Factory reborn as Batawa Lofts in tiny Ontario Town," *Real Estate News Exchange*, May 2, 2019, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://renx.ca/batawa-lofts-opens-bata-shoes-factory-ontario-company-town/>.

<sup>96</sup> Luke Hendry, "Bata shoe factory transformed," *The Intelligencer*, April 16, 2019, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://www.intelligencer.ca/news/local-news/bata-shoe-factory-transformed>; McLean, "Bata Shoes Factory reborn as Batawa Lofts in tiny Ontario Town."

<sup>97</sup> Canadian Architect, "Bata Shoe Factory, Batawa, Ontario;" RFA Planning Consultant, *A Model for Sustainable Development in the Community of Batawa*, 3, 22.





Figure 8. Remodeled factory building, Scott Notsworthy, “Bata Shoe Factory, Batawa, Ontario,” *Canadian Architect*, September 29, 2020, <https://www.canadianarchitect.com/bata-shoe-factory/>.

In 2007, the community consisted of 110 houses with more than 300 inhabitants. The housing part consisted of bungalows in private ownership and a retirement home with 11 accommodation units. The residents could take advantage of a Catholic Church, a Catholic elementary school, a community center, a fire hall, and the Inwar Manufacturing plant. As the primary employer in the area, it employed 400 people.<sup>98</sup> In 2019, the number of residents remained similar as in 2007, but approximately 20 new dwellings were constructed. The increase in the number of residents is expected as a result of the Plan of Sustainable Development of Batawa.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> RFA Planning Consultant, *A Model for Sustainable Development in the Community of Batawa*, 9–11.

<sup>99</sup> McLean, “Bata Shoes Factory reborn as Batawa Lofts in tiny Ontario Town.”

## CONCLUSION

Zlín was an existing town even before Batas established their business. Under the company's influence, Zlín grew exponentially and became an industrial city that attracted not only new workers but also smaller entrepreneurs. In contrast, the lands of Batawa originally served mainly as cow pastures. Bata had no competitors in Batawa, and no retailers and business people succeeded there. Bata was behind the construction of the plant as well as every other facility in Batawa. Its dwellers had almost no opportunity to choose from other options unless they traveled to nearby municipalities.

Batawa was built to become a small Zlín. For Tomas Bata Jr. and his family, it became a home. In the same way, Zlín was a hometown of his father and ancestors. Both places experienced their growth as the outcome of the Bata company's efforts. A construction standard was developed in Zlín and applied to Batawa, and part of that standardization was the layout of workplaces in the company buildings as well as the design of houses. Applying that knowledge made the construction process easier. However, the plant and accommodation units had to be modified. The majority of houses in Batawa were wooden and constructed for one family. During the 1950s Zlín experienced the construction of the first high-rise apartment buildings. In Batawa, such a lifestyle was not wanted. Except for the newly reconstructed factory unit and the retirement home, every family is living in their own home.

The plant attracted workers from different parts of the world, so people with different social backgrounds formed both Zlín and Batawa. Therefore, the Batas tried to make the assimilation process smooth by connecting them, involving them in the same activities, and publishing educative articles in bulletins.

After the end of the company's operation, the lives of residents changed. They had to adapt to the changes and find new jobs. Zlín and Batawa both had the same strategy to use outlived factory facilities as multi-purpose spaces that consist of lofts, offices, services, and shops. When looking at Figures 4 and 8, there is an apparent similarity between the buildings. Both were designed in order to follow their original features, such as their shape and the combination of glass panels, bricks, concrete, and metal.

Nowadays, Batawa is just a quiet village that did not succeed in becoming an industrial town. The intention of Sonja Bata and the team of people with whom she planned the sustainable development of the town was to keep at least some elements that would link

it with the Bata Shoe Organization. Otherwise, the site is not protected by any construction regulation. The majority of its dwellers travel to nearby towns for work, healthcare, shopping, etc. In contrast, Zlín has remained a significant city with a strong sense of history and is on the list of national heritage. The majority of real estate developed by the Bata Company are now in personal ownership. Many entrepreneurs are based in Zlín and employ residents of Zlín as well as people from various parts of the Czech Republic.

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