

Summary

Section B at the 10th Congress of Czech Historians in Ostrava was entitled *Modern and contemporary history as interpreted by scholars and the media*. It featured 17 historians from a range of research institutions in the Czech Republic. The core topics of the papers and the subsequent discussions were the ways in which research into modern and contemporary history has changed, the possibilities and limitations of future research, and the interpretation of research findings in relation to modern forms of communication.

Out of the many excellent and stimulating papers presented as part of this section, the present volume contains 11 presentations from all the panels, together with a brief presentation of the portal *Moderní dějiny.cz*. These texts exemplify the core purpose of the congress; they not only reflect on modern and contemporary history through the lens of Czech historiography, but also discuss approaches taken by researchers from other countries.

The opening paper, by Michal Kopeček, explores the possibility of alternative approaches to the history of contemporary states formed on national principles. Kopeček compares the national and transnational approaches to historical phenomena, pointing out the advantages offered by the ‘entangled history’ approach when applied to the re-interpretation of national history. He demonstrates the possible application of this approach to Czech history using the example of the terms ‘Czech’, ‘Czechoslovak’ and *böhmisch*.

The two next texts are historiographic studies. Vít Smetana’s paper analyzes the presentation of Czechoslovak history in English-language monographs, tracing current developments and assessing the positive and negative aspects of their approach. Smetana notes the emergence of a group of young historians based outside the Czech Republic who are now beginning to take an in-depth and systematic interest in Czechoslovak history. In his opinion, the main weakness of English-language publications on this topic is their incomplete and vague depiction of Czechoslovak history; this is largely due to the fact that Czech historians have not published widely in the English language.

Radomír Vlček focuses on Czech scholarship of Russian history, presenting an extensive and comprehensive overview of publications from this field. Like Vít Smetana in the previous paper, Vlček points out the limitations faced by Czech scholars of Russian history with regard

to the possibilities for international cooperation; he also identifies a number of topics that still remain under-researched by Czech historiographers.

The next four studies focus on current topics in modern and contemporary history. The studies, by Lenka Vlčková Kryčerová and Dušan Janák, both analyze Czech-Soviet relations. The first of these studies traces the research and publications of four major Czech historians who specialized in the history of the USSR and 18th–20th-century Russia, demonstrating the possibilities and limitations of this field of research in communist Czechoslovakia. The author emphasizes that the Marxist ideology and terminological apparatus formed an integral part of scholarship at the time, but that despite these limitations some of the historians' work nevertheless contains indications of a critical stance towards the USSR; she also traces the impact that the presentation of such views – which were in opposition to the regime's official position—had on the historians' personal lives and professional careers.

Dušan Janák analyzes Czech-Soviet relations with a focus on the persecution of Czechoslovak citizens in the Soviet Union between the world wars. Drawing on extensive archive research in the Czech Republic and abroad—combined with accounts of individual lives – he documents the mechanisms and extent of the repression and persecution of selected groups of the population within the USSR.

Jaroslav Šebek analyzes the issue of the Munich Agreement and its political presentation by the communist press during the second half of the 20th century—with specific reference to articles printed in the official daily *Rudé právo*. He situates these texts in a broader context of the development of Czech-German diplomatic relations, demonstrating convincingly that the trauma of the Munich Agreement lasted long into the 1970s and tended to be one of the cornerstones of diplomatic negotiations.

The study by Eva Boháčová and Emilie Těšínská focuses on the prominent Czechoslovak physicist František Běhounek, characterizing his media image and tracing how he contributed to its formation. The authors also assess Běhounek's active involvement in public life and his science fiction for young readers. They describe how he communicated with publishers, how he presented his scientific knowledge and his travel experiences, and how he attempted to present his work in the contemporary media.

The studies by Nina Pavelčíková and Helena Nosková address the issue of regional history, its importance, research and presentation. Pavelčíková presents the results of research into the regional history of specific areas in North Moravia and Silesia. Using the examples of the Hlučín and Těšín regions, she demonstrates the relationship between regional and 'general'

history, discussing the possibilities and limitations that are inherent in the study of minority groups (e.g. the Roma community).

Helena Nosková analyzes the history of the former border district of Vejprty in the second half of the 20th century, focusing primarily on the expulsion of the German population and the resettlement of the area by the communist regime. She convincingly demonstrates the destructive effects of these events, which severed previous social ties and had a highly negative impact on the economy of the district—and, by extension, also on the formation of its historical memory.

Although each of the two above-mentioned papers on regional history focuses on a specific area of research, it is evident that oral history—and its methodology—plays an irreplaceable role in historical research on contemporary and modern history. There is no doubt that the Institute for Contemporary History at the Czech Academy of Sciences—particularly its Oral History Centre—has played the most important role in promoting this discipline and establishing it as part of Czech historians' portfolio of research methods. The penultimate paper in this volume – by Pavel Mücke – traces the genesis of this institution. Drawing from his long-term contacts with members of the Institute for Contemporary History, Mücke presents an in-depth account of how oral history research was introduced into Czech historiography, plus an overview of important grant projects and publications resulting from this research and the debates which accompanied it.

The final text, by Petr Šimíček, presents the portal *Moderní dějiny.cz*. This reflects the fact that it is not enough to just conduct research into contemporary and modern history; it is also essential to take into account suitable ways of presenting these topics in order to ensure that they remain attractive for future generations.

Because a considerable amount of time has elapsed between the Congress and this publication, it was necessary to consider the possibility of updating the texts. After discussions between the editors and the authors, the studies were left in their original form, or with only minor modifications; the only exception was the study by Dušan Janák, who added information on the findings of his recently completed research. The texts in this volume thus reflect the state of the discipline at the time when the 10th Congress of Czech Historians was held.