

SUMMARY

In the opening article of this volume, Petr Vorel and Aleš Zářický evaluate the tenth Convention of Czech Historians, outlining the programme and the conclusions of the plenary session, which focused on the need for broad-based and active involvement of historical sciences in a wide social context, in order that history may be viewed as an integral and natural part of society.

In his paper on Czech historiography and its status in the world, Jaroslav Pánek focused on the thematic and methodological interaction between historiography from the Czech Republic and from abroad. Examining the possibilities and limits of this mutual relationship, Pánek noted that Czech historiography is largely unknown outside its country of origin. The main reasons for this lack of awareness include the over-production of texts, the fragmentation of results, and a lack of coordination of research. This is accompanied by a decline in the quality of historians' work. A negative role is also played by the editors of periodicals, who are unwilling to publish papers in languages other than Czech. In conclusion, Pánek stated that despite the lack of cohesion within the Czech historical community, historians during the past two decades have managed to build a basic scholarly infrastructure, forge contacts with historians abroad, and – in the case of some Czech historians – to become involved in international research teams. Pánek also added that Czech topics are penetrating into historiography in other countries via the research of non-Czech historians.

Milan Myška considered the issue of discontinuity in historical science. He focused mainly on the disproportion in research, particularly with respect to the lower and middle classes, and the difficulty that the neglect of this topic will bring in future when producing synthetic works on Czech history. A further weakness of Czech historiography in Myška's opinion is the inadequate assessment of the previous decades and their significance for historiography in the Czech Republic. He emphasized that when analyzing this issue it is essential to take into account centres of research outside Prague. The third possible area potentially affected by discontinuity in the Czech context is a lack of awareness of the conclusions of previous thematic research, leading to a re-discovery of that which has already been discovered.

Bohumil Jiroušek evaluated the status of historical sciences within the state system of research assessment. He emphasized the changes which swept through the historical community after 1989 – primarily the arrival of a young, critical generation of historians working in a free society. Jiroušek also pointed out similar problems to those identified by Jaroslav Pánek – the fragmentation of research activity as a result of the points-based research

assessment system and the declining quality of research publications. Jiroušek emphasized that this problem – the modern focus on brief outputs and the inability to focus more deeply on topics – is not merely a Czech issue, but also affects researchers abroad. One consequence is the loss of awareness of history as reality, rather than as a construct.

The paper by Jan Horský focused on the issue of theories, their construction and application in historical disciplines. Horský pointed out that theories provide a means for history to communicate with other disciplines and to constitute itself. Horský's attempt to define theory in historical science draws on Welskopp's concept of theory. Horský then considered whether theories are constructs, means of understanding history, or a result of the historical process. He focused on the question of approaches to history, emphasizing the mentalist paradigm and stating that the constitution of historical science relies on an essential layer of reflected rational theoretical thought, which is currently the most pressing problem of the youngest generation of historians. In Horský's opinion this problem is deep-rooted, stemming from academics' inadequate theoretical thinking about history as an academic discipline.

Václav Bůžek analyzed the current situation of history and related disciplines at universities, discussing the issue of the research-based or spatial specialization of individual historical institutions and academic mobility. He re-asserted the inadequate penetration of the results of Czech historiographic research on the international stage.

Zdeněk Beneš spoke primarily of the situation of history teaching didactics with respect to the ongoing debate about the future direction of secondary education. He emphasized primarily the need to view didactics as an academic discipline and to incorporate it as such into the education system and national legislation.