ABSTRACTS

SUCCESSES AND FAILURES IN AMBIGUOUS CONSTELLATIONS

Václav Havel as a Foil for Current Czech Interpretations of the Present

Miloš Havelka

Five monographs devoted to Václav Havel have appeared in Prague recently, in addition to a multitude of journal articles and individual contributions to larger works. Taken together, they once more convincingly prove that Havel’s image in the Czech Republic is still ambiguous and even unfinished, although the dramatist, dissident, and first President after November 1989 belongs to the most important figures of contemporary Czech history. The present review article deals in a critical and in some respects even polemical way with the monographs on Havel by Eda Kriseová, Martin C. Putna, Jiří Suk, Daniel Kaiser and Michael Žantovský. Its aim is first to compare the respective strengths and weaknesses of the different tacks, starting points, and views. The author’s second objective is to work out a few general lines of Havel’s world view. In doing so, he points out continuities of Havel’s thinking, successes and failures of Havel’s politics, and last but not least the fact that there were many, sometimes conflicting, aspects to Havel’s personality, something that has been often overlooked so far or even covered up.

LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN MODIFICATIONS OF REGULAR OPEN-FIELD SYSTEMS IN BOHEMIA

Martin Dobnal

In this study, an extraordinary piece of archive material is analyzed: a description of rural land ownership in the 1670s and 1680s which makes it possible to reconstruct the layout of plots in selected communities belonging to the Jesuit domain of Bernatice near Tábor. On the basis of these findings, the author discusses alterations to the field system in the late middle ages and the early modern age, conducting comparisons with other parts of Europe. It seems that some plots were redefined and reassigned in the late middle ages. One can also deduce that the share of dominical lands increased in the period before the battle of the White Mountain in connection with more grounds being cultivated by the lords themselves, with an enlargement of the percentage of arable land in general, and with the construction of a large number of fish ponds. For the period after the Thirty Years’ War, the study proves that the
size of the arable area as a whole decreased, while dominical lands grew once more and rustic land tenure experienced considerable changes in connection with the postwar reassignment of deserted plots. The author further analyzes the 18th-century reforms of the field system and the resulting changes on the examined plots.

RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF A RULER’S LEGITIMACY IN BOHEMIA IN THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES

Robert Antonín

The contribution deals with the religious legitimation of the power of a sovereign in medieval Bohemia before the Hussite epoch. On the basis of narrative sources – legends, chronicles, and texts seeking to instill moral behavior – the author demonstrates that political thought in Bohemia was in touch with contemporary West European ideas about the religious nature of the office of a ruler. In this context, he proves that the concept of rex imago Christi (as in the legend of Christian) gradually became rex imago Dei (as in the Kosmas chronicle), and analyzes how this notion further developed at the courts of the last Přemyslids and those of the Luxembourg dynasty in the high and late middle ages. The author demonstrates that the religious aspect of a medieval ruler’s power was more than a mere legitimating element. It also restricted attempts on the part of a sovereign to use his power in a despotic way. This restricting function was based on the notions of a just society and of the role its sovereign ought to play, rooted in Christian morals and ethics.

RELIGIOUS TOLERATION AND ECONOMIC BOOM: THE BRNO PROTESTANTS AND SOCIETAL CHANGE, 1781-1815

Sixtus Bolom-Kotari

The years following the legalization of Protestant denominations granted by Emperor Joseph II. in his toleration patent were a period of economic boom in Moravia. The capital, Brno, became a center of the production of high-quality woollen fabrics. Tens of thousands of people moved to the “Moravian Manchester”, which also blossomed in the cultural and intellectual fields. Apart from factories, large trade enterprises, and banks, institutions such as learned and reading societies, theaters and museums, Masonic and Illuminate lodges emerged. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Brno symbolized the amalgamation of West European economic know-how with Protestant ideas and reform Catholicism. Important for this productive mixture was the support extended by some Moravian noblemen as well as the fact that professional experts and clergymen moved there, such as pastor Victor Heinrich Riecke (1759-1830), who had roots in Stuttgart. They made Brno a place where several languages and denominations came in touch with each other. Brno lost this extraordinary significance in the wake of the economic downturn following the Napoleonic wars, when monitoring and repression of the Protestant population were also reintroduced.