

TRENDS IN CZECH HISTORY-WRITING TODAY

Kurt Oberdorfer

The report of the investigation is only intended to cover certain areas, those in which German and Czech researchs supplement each other. Those Czech historians born between 1871 and 1887 who had mostly begun their academic careers in working for the Archives and who were still representing Czech historical scholarship on International Historians Day in 1938, are no longer active in the decade after 1945, most of them, even, no longer alive. Thus, after 1950, this resulted in substantial alterations in the personnel of different corporate-bodies and editorial staffs. In 1952 the re-foundation of the Czech Academy of Arts brought about the incorporation and remoulding of the former "State Historical Institute", and at the same time

leading positions were given to mainly younger historians born after 1920. By 1956 the Institute had already expanded so far that in its seven departments it numbered 47 scholarly assistants. As the principal team work of these years, a "Survey of Czech History" was published, composed of theses, together with a "Synopsis", in 1960, which set forth in three volumes the periods of history of the Bohemian provinces and of Slovakia from early times up to the years preceding the First World War. According to the words of the Institute's director, J. Macek, the Institute must help to forge "a sharper weapon" from the science of history.

From 1953 the "Czech Historical Journal" was published by the Historical Institute in a new series, and likewise the "Collected Historical Studies". Whilst the journal is principally intended to cover more recent history, the annual edition is devoted to larger treatises on diverse historical questions. For the treatment of problems on which German research is also engaged, the "Commission of Historians of the DDR and ČSR" has, since 1958, collaborated in preparing and issuing publications. Among the discussions, which take up considerable space in the Journal, the former, dealing with questions of historical method, led to controversies in which representatives of the Communist Party took up a position in favour of the Institute's viewpoint against that of the University professors. In particular new Czech works on colonial history (F. Graus, A. Míka) yield valuable information because of the meticulous study of sources, and they unite their criticism of older researches, among other things, with an examination of the German share in the development of the Bohemian provinces. The works on municipal history (Fr. Kavka, J. Janaček) in Bohemia provide important information on the question of the formation of capital in the 16th Century and of changes in that structure.

From the point of view of economic structure investigation is being made into the history of the conversion of the feudal economic systems for Moravian districts in the period from the 16th to the 17th centuries. (J. Mačůrek). In the historical studies of the Hussite movement more recent research, in contrast to the work of earlier scholars, has emphasized much more strongly the social-political phenomena, and has traced connections to related events outside the Bohemian provinces.

An exceptionally large number of members are engaged on the history of industrialisation and the origin of the working-class movements at the beginning of the 19th Century. Copious material is available here, and helps to clarify in many ways the part played by the Germans. A wide selection of bibliographical data offers points of departure for penetration into these Czech research-projects.