

TWO APPROACHES TO COMMUNIST HISTORIOGRAPHY
AND THE BLIND SPOT OF “NATIONAL COMMUNISM“*Michal Kopeček*

This contribution discusses two publications on the fate of historiography in communist Czechoslovakia: the book “Angažované dějepisectví” (Historiography committed to a cause), which deals with Czech communist party historiography 1960 to 1970, and Adam Hudek’s monograph “Najpolitickéjšia veda” (A most political science), devoted to Slovak historiography. Hudek relates the setting-up and subsequent development, up to 1968, of Marxist-Leninist historiography in Slovakia and its intertwinement with traditional national narratives. A genealogical approach is used, and the book presents an intellectual history of Slovak historical research in the context of nationalism and Czechoslovak communism. Sommer, on the other hand, chose a structural approach for his analysis of the development of Czech party historiography and the way it worked. The result may be termed a social history of communist historiography. Both works merit great praise. The author of the present contribution, however, discovers in Hudek’s book a certain weakness when it comes to normative precision, and Sommer’s work lacks in contextualization. With the help of both analyses, the author explains the problem of origins, character, and importance of Czech, respectively Slovak “National Communism”, which has hitherto been largely neglected in research. National communism was of considerable influence for historical thought in general, and it assisted in creating an identity for Czechoslovak society of the time.