

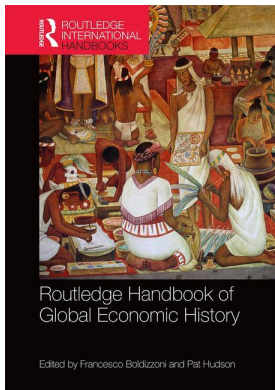
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CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY IN THE CZECH AND SLOVAK HISTORIOGRAPHIES

Antonie Doležalová and Roman Holec

This chapter highlights the main steps that have marked the development of Czech and Slovak economic history over the course of the twentieth century. Although there are quite a few works concerning the subject, this study is the first to look into the continuity of methodologies, topics and schools and also into the discontinuities produced by the totalitarian ideologies repeatedly interfering in the life of the field.

While it is not the aim of this chapter to provide an exhaustive overview, it is necessary to clarify several interpretive difficulties in advance. First, the prevailing view of Czechoslovak economic history in the twentieth century has tended to identify the field with history itself. Economic history was understood as an interpretive key to historical phenomena. At the same time, there was little institutional continuity. Thus, if we focused on just a limited number of academic institutions, we would exclude many individuals and research topics.

Second, economic history has traditionally been defined in thematic rather than methodological terms. Moreover, with respect to methodology, there is no consensus as to what belongs to the realm of history, what to economics and what is essential to economic history. This problem is further complicated by the fact that economic history, during the communist period, represented an example of a historiography that was quite isolated and minimally exposed to external methodological influences.

Third, due to the dramatic transformation of the conditions in science and education after 1948, some of the ways we ask and answer questions nowadays exceed the horizons of what was possible in the context of previous research. Teachers and scholars were only able to work at universities and academic institutions if they accepted state-approved curricula, followed the decisions made by the Communist Party and adhered to the Plan for Scientific Research. Twentieth-century scholars experienced, on multiple occasions, situations where not just their professional careers but even their very ability to retain a teaching or research job depended not on skills or knowledge but upon subservience and clientelism. Universities went from being places of education and science to being nurseries for raising the cadres that would serve the state-socialist economy and the bureaucratic apparatus of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Connelly 2000). When assessing the relevance, and even the lasting value, of historical work, it is therefore necessary to distinguish between a scholar's own ideas

and the way in which the work was received and developed (which, to a lesser or greater degree, may be dependent on the prevailing ideology at the given time).

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first observes the key stages of institutional development in the field. The second focuses on particular figures and topics that determined the direction of research in Czech and Slovak economic history and the methodological challenges that were faced.

Institutional foundations of economic history

Like other social sciences, economic history was established later in the Czech lands and Slovakia than in West European countries and also later than in Poland, for example. However, its remote origins can be traced back to the late eighteenth century, prompted by the socio-economic changes taking place at the time, by the Enlightenment and the development of statistics. By responding to the needs of state administration, research became dominated by statistics and topography and tended to focus on the current state of affairs alone. Since economic history failed to find support within universities, it became the domain of regional archivists, teachers and lawyers, who regarded it as a form of 'cultural' history broadly conceived. When the state engaged in the area of research, it aimed to support agricultural research in accordance with the agricultural character of the country. *The Peasants' Archive* was the first periodical to focus on economic history; it was first published in 1902 and renamed *The Agrarian Archive* in 1914. German historians in the Czech lands who were interested in economic history grouped themselves around *Verein für die Geschichte der Deutschen in Böhmen*, which was founded in 1862.

In the Czech lands, economic history began to change in the wake of the rise of the German Historical School and the spread of Marx's historical materialism. The University of Prague introduced German-style economics courses and young scholars were sent to pursue their own research in Germany. When they returned home, they usually taught the method to their students. Jan Peisker (1851–1933), a historian of Czech origin, was the first person to be awarded the *venia legendi* in social and economic history at the University of Graz (Austria) in 1901. He focused on agrarian history, especially the social conditions of peasants, being influenced by Karl Lamprecht and his approach. After the creation of Czechoslovakia, he lectured in economic history at the Charles University in Prague. However, when the German University in Prague established its first post in economic history in 1911, it was given to the economist and associate professor at the University of Berlin, Paul Sander. A pupil of Gustav von Schmoller, Sander focused on the history of cities from the perspective of their economic conditions.

Slovak researchers found some institutional support in the Hungarian Historical Society, though a much more important role was played by specialized Hungarian historical journals. The founding and existence of the national organization *Slovak Matica* (1863–75) made it possible, for the first time, to give direction to historical papers and set their priorities within the amateur settings of the journal *Letopis Matice slovenskej*. After the institution and its journal were abolished, the Slovak Museology Society became the next forum where *fin de siècle* Slovak intellectual elites could cultivate historiography. Until 1918, Slovak history writing was built upon unscientific foundations. It still overlapped with myth and was instrumental in the creation of a national narrative; as such it fulfilled an important function. Historical research was neither professionalized nor institutionalized. These were logical consequences of the problem of nationalities within the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the backwardness of the Slovak educational system, which lacked not only universities but also secondary schools.

In 1918 the Empire disintegrated and the state of Czechoslovakia was created, which brought about entirely new conditions for scientific research and history writing, especially at a national level. From the point of view of the institutional development of economic history, in the period that followed, the subject was pursued in two different contexts, that is, within and outside the university setting, with the latter initially taking the lead. In 1930, the Committee for Agricultural History was founded within the Czech Agricultural Academy, which not only researched the most recent historical periods (from the eighteenth century onwards) but also conducted archival investigations and promoted publications in the area of agrarian historiography. A separate sub-committee dealt with the history of prices and wages. Research in agrarian history was subsidized mostly by the Agrarian Party, the strongest political party in the First Republic, and by the Ministry of Agriculture. In addition, The Archive for the History of Industry, Trade and Technical Work was committed to research on Czech entrepreneurship. It had been established in 1913 thanks to the benefaction of Jaroslav Preiss, director of the Živnostenská bank, the main financial institution in the interwar years. Research in economic history was also carried out by the newly founded Historical Committee for the History of Nineteenth-Century Social Movements at the Institute for Social Research. While left-wing historians formed the so-called *Historical Group*, the Society for the History of the Jews in the Czechoslovak Republic was established in 1928 and their research interests included economic topics. The Czechoslovak Agricultural State Archive (founded in Prague in 1919) specialized in archival collections related to forestry and agriculture, and until 1938 Slovakia fell within its administrative purview. In 1928 the Regional Archive opened in Bratislava, whose role was to facilitate access to different archival collections relating to Slovak territory. Šafárik's Scholarly Society (1926–39) and, to a lesser extent, also the Slovak Museology Society (1893–1960) and the revived *Slovak Matica* played an important role in the development of the social sciences in Slovakia. *The Scientific Synthesis*, a circle of left-wing scholars, gained prominence especially in the study of post-1848 developments. After the creation of Czechoslovakia, a new centre of German historiography formed around the association *Gesellschaft zur Förderung deutscher Wissenschaft, Kunst und Literatur in Böhmen*, within which a historical committee was set up in 1918.

The importance of agrarian history was also reflected in its new role as a university subject. In 1922 Josef Kazimour (1881–1933) started lecturing as an associate professor at the University of Agriculture. A few years later, Bedřich Mendl (1892–1940) was awarded *venia legendi* by the Faculty of Arts at Charles University (1927) where he established a Department of Medieval and Early Modern Economic and Social History (1934). Comenius University, founded in Bratislava in 1919 with the contribution of Czech university professors relocated to Slovakia, played a key role in shaping Slovak historiography. Although economic history was among the subjects taught, it continued to be overshadowed by political history.

The interwar period also witnessed the establishment of publishing platforms for economic history. *Časopis pro dějiny venkova* (*Journal for the History of the Countryside*) published widely in agrarian history. *Český časopis historický* (*The Czech Historical Journal*) provided historians with information about new trends in European social history in the form of review articles. The growing interest in economic history is evident from the fact that, while in the 1920s research on the subject was indexed under the label of legal history, by the 1930s it had its own category, which was further subdivided into 'general economic and social history', 'agricultural history' and the histories of 'estates', 'handicrafts and industry', 'commerce', 'communications', 'social issues', 'finances and taxes'. Most of the papers were, admittedly, contributed by foreign authors and written in German, French or English. However, a number of Czech historians had the opportunity to publish their work in the French *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*,

and this raised international awareness of Czechoslovak historiography. In 1937–38 Marxist historians created their own journal, *Dějiny a přítomnost* ('History and Present'). Economists interested in the various aspects of past economic life took part in debate through the 'Papers of the Czechoslovak Economic Society'. In Slovakia, occasional articles on economic history could also be found in regional periodicals. They were authored by historians as well as by economists, sociologists and legal scholars.

The Second World War affected Czech and Slovak historiographies in different ways. The Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia and the formation of an independent Slovak state brought about fundamental changes in both Czech and Slovak history writing. The Slovak Republic created conditions in which historical sciences could develop further, though it came at the price of the Czech scholars being forced to leave the country. The foundation of the Slovak Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1943 contributed greatly to the institutionalization of the historical profession. A small historical unit was set up within the Academy, which did not intensify its scientific activities until 1945 but which was to become the backbone of the future Historical Institute. Despite this, economic history continued to be of marginal interest. The Czech historical community gradually fell silent under the threat of repression and many were silenced because of their Jewish origin or political background. The survival of Czech historical sciences was endangered when universities and other academic institutions were suppressed on 17 November 1939, although the German University in Prague kept functioning and German historians thus ensured the scholarly and institutional continuity of economic history.

Overall, the Second World War had a devastating effect on the slowly progressing discipline of economic history. Mendl was driven to suicide by racial persecution and his department at the Faculty of Arts in Prague was never reopened. The communist takeover in 1948 brought with it the first wave of purges, which also meant that new professors were selected among those who enjoyed the full support of the Communist Party. For an academic career, being a member of the party often proved to be a more important qualification than expertise.

The year 1951 witnessed the creation of the Institute of Economic Geography and Economic History at the re-established University of Economics in Bratislava. In 1958 a Department of Economic History was opened at the University of Economics in Prague. The research team was led by Václav Průcha (b. 1931), who served as an investigator in various state projects conducted as part of the State Plan for Scientific Research. Projects other than those addressing the history of the workers' movements and the history of communist parties only received minimal subsidy (Myška 2010: 33–4). These two subjects became compulsory at all universities, and research institutes entirely devoted to the history of the Czechoslovak Communist Parties were also set up. The Slovak Academy of Arts and Sciences adapted to the new situation and founded its own Historical Institute in 1950. In 1953 a new Silesian Institute was created in Opava, which moved away from the history of Silesia and refocused on industrial history more generally. A small group of economic historians was based at the Institute of Czechoslovak and World History at the Academy of Sciences in Prague. In the 1960s, such professional associations as the Committee for Historical Demography and the Committee for Economic History came into existence, and the latter was affiliated with the International Economic History Association.

The Soviet occupation in 1968 was followed by a further wave of purges and some institutions being closed down. In the Czech lands, the continuity of research activities was ensured by the Silesian Institute, by the Committee for the History of Prices and Wages, and by researchers at the Museum of Agriculture. Consequently, a variety of research centres outside the academic context once again came to the fore. In keeping with its earlier tradition, post-war economic history had continued to entertain a privileged relationship with regional

and company archives, often under the umbrella of labour history or the ‘history of class struggles’. In 1972 an Institute of Social Sciences was established at the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Košice; its main focus was on the socio-economic development of Eastern Slovakia and its minorities after 1945. A dedicated economic history department was also established at the *Economic Institute* of the Slovak Academy of Arts and Sciences.

It was difficult for economic history to find a publishing platform during this period. *Ročenka hospodářských a sociálních dějin* (*Yearbook of Economic and Social History*) followed in the tradition of the interwar *History and Present* and made room for the emergence of Marxist historiography, but lasted for only a short period (1946–47). Papers on economic history continued to be published by the above-mentioned *Československý časopis historický* and by *Politická ekonomie* (*Political Economy*), both based in Prague, and by the *Historický časopis* (*Historical Journal*) in Bratislava. Paradoxically, the foundation of the stand-alone journal *Hospodářské dějiny* (*Economic History*) in 1978 led to the isolation of economic historians and made it more difficult for the results of their work to reach the wider community of historians.

The year 1989 ushered in fundamental political and economic changes which also affected the social sciences. In Slovakia, the Department of Economic History at the University of Economics in Bratislava ceased to exist and the subject was in evident decline. Conversely, interest in economic history seemed to grow in the Czech lands and the discipline consolidated its position within the historical sciences. In 1992 the founding of the Institute of Economic and Social History at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague was regarded as a positive sign. Unfortunately, the post-1989 privatization euphoria led to the disappearance of almost all the company archives that had been part of former state enterprises. On the other hand, the increased interest in the study of the humanities, which had been brushed aside under communism to make way for technical subjects, resulted in a rush to set up regional universities, each with a history department. That said, not many historians embraced economic history as the main focus of their research, with the exception of those working at the University of Economics and the Faculties of Arts in Prague and in Ostrava.

The tasks of the Committee for Economic History were passed on to the Society for Economic History, founded in 1990 and later renamed as the Society for Economic and Social History. The journal *Hospodářské dějiny* remained the key publication platform, joined in 1994 by the *Prager wirtschafts- und sozialhistorische Mitteilungen* (*Prague Economic and Social History Papers*). To an extent, economic history was also covered by other historical journals in both the Czech and Slovak lands, while the coverage of the field in economics journals was very limited. After 1989, the arts and sciences in Czechoslovakia began to be financed by grant agencies. Unfortunately, economic historians found themselves outside the mainstream of grant recipients, and economic history turned out to be the most underfunded historical subfield with the only exception being historiography.¹ A number of private foundations emerged that sought to support science and research, but only the Hlávka Foundation covers economic history. While Czechs and Slovaks went their separate ways on 1 January 1993, the same cannot be said of their economic histories. Multilateral committees of historians provided a platform for cooperation, notably the Czecho–Slovak and Czecho–Slovak–German committees, occasionally addressing economic history topics.

A concise account of the Czech and Slovak traditions

Like other Central European traditions, both Czech and Slovak historiographies were in their early stages shaped mostly by the influence of the German Historical School. While other schools of economics were either deductively oriented or used statistical trends to formulate

economic laws, the German Historical School was founded on the idea that approaching historical sources by means of empirical and inductive methods helps explain the origins of phenomena. History not only allows one to understand contemporary economic practices but also to formulate solutions to economic problems.

In late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Slovakia, economic history was still mainly researched by archivists, teachers and priests. By contrast, in the Czech lands, alongside these amateur approaches, from the mid-nineteenth century some professional historians developed an interest in incorporating stylized economic facts into their interpretations of political history. However, until at least the First World War, economic history was taught as part of the economics curriculum and hence teaching was in the hands of professional economists. This is well documented by the fact that the term *Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (economic history), which emerged in the context of the German Historical School, was introduced into the Czech lands by Albin Bráf (1851–1912) who is regarded as the forefather of Czech economics. Bráf taught economic history at the Faculty of Law of Charles University in Prague.

As an economist, Bráf was a follower of the German historical approach. He was thoroughly familiar with, and appreciative of, the work of Adam Smith, but British liberalism struck him as one-sided. He was convinced of the need to contextualize economic activity within ‘the specific features of a given time and place, the character of each nation and its prevailing customs’ (Bráf 1904: 137). This formed the basis for his call to situate economic behaviour historically and develop an organic understanding of reality by means of a combination of statistical description and interpretation. While in later years he became influenced by the Austrian subjectivist school, he remained firm in his belief that economic activity had a greater purpose than just satisfying material needs, and that it was impossible to disentangle the latter from the ‘spiritual’ needs also underlying human development. As Bráf understood it, economic history was a source of knowledge, lessons and even inspiration; the stage of economic analysis was always preceded by some historical interpretation. These two steps were for him preliminary to the search for policy solutions.

Bráf’s research in economic history encompassed several thematic areas. He dealt with a broad range of agrarian issues, including agricultural production and agricultural credit, and worked extensively on social welfare – particularly on the relation between social security and self-help, which was very topical in his day. In any in-depth analysis of a particular phenomenon, however, he never lost sight of the larger whole. Bráf thought historically; he situated economic phenomena in their relevant temporal contexts and never blankly transposed the ideas of an earlier tradition or engaged in naive ahistorical criticism.

Bedřich Mendl (1892–1940) was the first Czechoslovak historian trained in economic history. In addition to statistics, he relied upon historical methods such as classification, typology–construction, comparison and hierarchization. Compared to Bráf, Mendl’s work exhibits a more cautious and critical approach to sources. A close study of source materials was necessary, in his view, to test and complement the theoretical formulations of economists. By means of his typologies and comparisons, he was able to construct *longue durée* syntheses. His pioneering economic history of Europe (Mendl 1931) attempted to situate Czech economic development within a European and international context. Mendl spoke at several international historical conferences (e.g. Warsaw 1934, Zurich 1938) and published papers in foreign journals. He also welcomed methodological innovations from abroad, introducing them to the professional community in Czechoslovakia through his book reviews and by incorporating them creatively into his own research. Like his Belgian friend Henri Pirenne, whose work he translated into Czech, he was a medievalist by vocation but one who fully

grasped the significance of modern history – the late-nineteenth century for him contained the seeds of the Czech transition to capitalism.

Mendl studied early modern social stratification and the effects of price trends on social conditions from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, drawing on Werner Sombart and the German Historical School more generally. His research on the early stages of industrial production in the Czech lands and the development of medieval towns owed much to Max Weber. Drawing on his work, he distinguished between the economic and the political-administrative definitions of a town (Kutnar and Marek 1997: 758). He identified economic and social contradictions in the structure of medieval society, but stressed that economic factors represented only a part of the picture and that the rest had to be filled in with knowledge about the conditions of particular population groups and by studying the economic perceptions of different social groups. In this respect, his research had something in common with the early history of mentalities that was being developed by the French *Annales* School.

Mendl's approach, however, stemmed from his conviction that multi-causal interpretations of historical phenomena were needed without giving up the quest for general features. In his opinion, and in agreement with Henri Berr, history should seek to understand and identify the causes of phenomena. Although he rejected the Marxist idea of general stages of (historical) development, he looked for evidence of causality and tried to capture whatever period he was focusing on in its totality. His work would consequently trace a historical phenomenon over the long term and comparatively within a European context, which reminds one of the Weberian structural approach. The emphasis on structures and comparisons is especially apparent in his research on towns, where he would begin by enquiring into the causes of discontent in a particular city (Prague) and would then proceed to wonder about the triggers of social conflict in general. He would simultaneously examine what the effects of economic changes were on other aspects of urban life and how they were perceived by the population.

Like Weber, Mendl regarded terminology as the key to sorting and classifying facts and creating typologies of economic facts. Under the same influence, he altered his original distrust of sociology and emphasized the psychological aspects of development and structural change. This was in fact a response to Marxism and its emphasis on the economic base and, in such an endeavour, Johan Huizinga and José Ortega y Gasset were also sources of inspiration. However, his rejection of Marxism did not prevent Mendl from acknowledging the merits of historical materialism in identifying inequality in the distribution of property and income as a source of social conflicts.

Ahead of his time, at the newly established Archive for the History of Industry, Trade and Technical Work he initiated the debate on the transition from feudalism to capitalism. He did not subscribe to the anachronistic concept of 'mediaeval capitalism' and maintained that 'proto-capitalist' elements were instead responsible for weakening feudal structures. In the post-war period, Marxist historiography drew heavily on these ideas. Mendl's work on the whole underscored the key significance of economic changes for the life of societies and thus introduced Czechoslovak historiography to the question of how economic conditions influenced particular periods – from revolutionary movements to the mentalities of rural and urban populations. When historiography came to be dominated by Marxist-Leninist ideology and was used to legitimize communist rule, this question re-emerged in the form of an enquiry into the sources of social conflicts, particularly in connection with the history of labour movements and of the revolutionary traditions of the Czech and Slovak nations.

After 1948, the Marxist postulate of the primacy of the economic base over the superstructure necessitated that every research question be conceived from the angle of socio-economic conditions and effects. Every researcher – even if he or she was studying the reform

movements of the Church in the Middle Ages – was confronted with economic history. However, economic history was now supposed to provide evidence of the revolutionary tradition of the Czechoslovak people, the existence of class conflict deep in the Middle Ages, and the inevitable transition from capitalism to socialism. That, however, was not a free intellectual exercise but rather the fulfilment of a task assigned by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Post-war historiography thus only devoted attention to economic history on a level that can be described as a ‘search’ for materialism in its reductionist Marxist–Leninist form. The scope of critically scrutinized sources expanded to include financial ledgers, polyptychs, tax and customs records, cadastres and statistics. In this pursuit, the prevalence of medieval and early modern studies was largely a consequence of the impossibility of approaching late modern, interwar and contemporary sources. These were under the control of the Party apparatus and only accessible to a selected circle of Party historians, in whose hands the history of the twentieth century was put to serve the ideological and propagandistic needs of the regime.

The works that sought theoretical, and therefore Marxist–Leninist, explanations of historical phenomena, and those that were based on description and quantification, both concentrated on economic aspects. Beyond declarations of principles, the ambition to analyse society gradually faded. It was nevertheless possible to maintain a surprisingly strong level of continuity with respect to the subject matters previously investigated, albeit at the price of incorporating into the new scholarship the essential Marxist–Leninist clichés. The most productive research areas remained feudalism (its crisis, the transition to capitalism, the economic development of towns and rural areas, serfdom and manorialism) and the early stage of the development of capitalism (urbanization, industrial branches and sectors, and issues relating to class struggle). Debates on these topics continued until 1989.

Two related issues deserve a more detailed discussion here – namely the study of prices, as indicators of the living standards of a particular epoch, and research on the industrial revolution which was seen as a key factor in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Price history can be said to have begun with the work of Bráf and his contemporaries at the turn of the twentieth century and with their attempts to describe the material conditions of workers in different areas of Bohemia and Moravia. Mendl breathed new life into these efforts, and in this context mention is most often made of a pioneering study he published in the *Bulletin of the International Committee of Historical Sciences* (vol. 7, 1935) devoted to the impact of overseas discoveries on the economy of the Czech lands and in particular on the price of silver. In this study, Mendl examined the effects of the flow of the ‘American treasure’ to Europe on prices and the economy of the Czech lands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although he certainly overestimated its impact, in common with many of his contemporaries, and overlooked the Euro–Asian trade in spices and luxury goods, the significance of this work is demonstrated by the fact that as late as 1960 Arnošt Klíma (1916–2000) mentioned it at the World Economic History Congress in Stockholm.

In the post-war period, an inspiring discussion about prices emerged within the Committee for the History of Prices and Wages (established in 1958). It focused on tracing long-term price trends for various commodities, their contextualization and the extent to which markets operated. A number of historians took part in the debate (among them, Miroslav Hroch, Jaroslav Petráň, Eduard Maur, Anton Špiesz and Štefan Kazimír) and the ‘transition’ theme was always in the background (see Petráň, 1977) but, in conformity with Marxist assumptions, the transition was twofold, as the ultimate goal was to understand the prerequisites for the advent of socialism. The market was seen not just as a space for the exchange of goods but also as a multi-causal environment that influences, and is influenced by, the laws of economic

development – a dynamic and, above all, structured phenomenon. While scholars involved in this debate professed inspiration from Soviet, Hungarian and Polish historiography, individual studies showed clear signs of being influenced by the *Annales* School and its research on consumption and the standard of living. Following the model of the *Annales* School, Czechoslovak historians also created long-run time series of prices for different commodities and periods. Reference to Soviet and socialist historiography and frequent citation of classic Marxist–Leninist authors was sometimes a mere coping strategy and in most cases did not substantially alter the content of the works.

A sign of continuity in Czechoslovak historiography was that research on prices, wages, consumption habits and the living standards of different social classes in the past was regarded as a field in which it seemed to make sense to try to create a comprehensive picture of society, and to do so by combining synthetic and structural perspectives. Thus when studying a specific indicator the wider economic, social and political context around it was also examined, taking into account such factors as prevailing attitudes and worldviews, traditional and scientific knowledge, social psychology and all parts of the history of mentalities. Even in the more open period of the 1960s, however, this tendency never managed to culminate in a historical synthesis that really encompassed political, social, cultural and economic history. A direction took root, however, in which one particular historical–economic phenomenon was indeed studied comprehensively, within the totality of its developments, the factors that influenced it and the effects it itself gave rise to – and that phenomenon was the industrial revolution.

Industrialization became the subject of a dispute in the middle of the 1950s, when the Slovak economic historian Anton Špiesz (1930–93) disagreed with his Czech colleague Jaroslav Purš (1922–97) about the beginnings of the local industrial revolution, its timing and stages. According to Špiesz, Purš failed to fully draw on the ideas expounded in the classic Marxist writings on the industrial revolution in England and to apply those ideas to conditions in the Czech lands. Špiesz set the start of the industrial revolution in Slovakia as far back as the late eighteenth century, when the first spinning machines made their appearance, the workshop system went into decline, and most workers were already beginning to engage in wage labour, which was drawing them away from agriculture. Purš, by contrast, dated the beginning of the industrial revolution in the Czech lands to the early 1890s. Most of the participants in this debate were inclined to support his view. While initially this debate had unfolded under the influence of the latest research conducted in Soviet and Hungarian historiographies, Purš began to turn more and more towards non-Marxist historiography in his research; as a prominent Party historian, he enjoyed the opportunity to study abroad and take part in international conferences. Thanks to him the historical community was able to obtain information about international developments, though of course such information was couched in Marxist commentary (Myška 2010: 38). He was also, however, in the position to write that historical development cannot be confined to simplified schemes, and that the analysis by Soviet historians was incorrect. This discussion then continued primarily at an international level, with Jürgen Kuczynski, Eric Hobsbawm, Witold Kula and others joining in. Purš's debate with East German historian Jürgen Kuczynski went on for years and in time even became personal. Kuczynski emphasized the role of light industry and even theorized a 'Prussian way' to capitalism.

In 1973 Purš published his key, monumental work, *The Industrial Revolution: The Evolution of a Term and a Concept*, in which he devised and applied a complex approach to studying the industrial revolution. He placed it within the context of a more comprehensive revolution and revolutionary changes simultaneously occurring in other areas of society

and the economy, primarily science and technology. While criticizing W. W. Rostow's stage theory of economic growth, he proposed alternative stages of development. Purš, however, overestimated the significance of the steam engine as a source of energy and his search for a connection between the industrial revolution and the social and revolutionary development of the working-class movement was a dead end, pursued in the service of the Marxist interpretation of historical development. After Purš, this line of research was mainly taken over by Slovak historiography – for instance, by Pavel Hapák and Ladislav Tajták. Conversely, Czech historians increasingly devoted themselves to the study of proto-industrialization, which Purš regarded as an inherently non-Marxist concept, though he did not entirely dismiss it, as his interventions at the 1982 World Economic History Congress in Budapest confirm.

The well-known work by Kriedte et al. (1981) on proto-industrialization caused heated discussions among Czech historians that lasted until the 1990s. The main contributors to this discussion were Arnošt Klíma, who had approached the issue independently since the 1950s (Klíma 1957, 1974), and Milan Myška (b. 1933), who extended Klíma's analysis of the 'manufactory period' to the early modern iron-making sector (Myška 1979). Klíma (1985) reached international prominence through his interventions in the Brenner Debate. Myška's (1991) concept of proto-industrialization was however left 'hanging in the air'. Only 'indigenous' scholars paid attention to it, despite its importance, for example, Ákoš Pauliny (b. 1929), a German historian of Slovakian descent. He had emigrated in 1969 so his contribution was itself marginal to the Slovakian and Czech discourse. Ostracized by the regime, Klíma and Myška were nonetheless assisted in their research by intermittent access to foreign literature, conference participation and visits abroad (in Göttingen, Vienna and elsewhere), which in the case of Myška only became possible in the early 1990s, though he managed to keep his contacts with the more open and independent Polish historiography.²

On the other hand, the contribution of Alice Teichová (1920–2015) was of fundamental importance for both Czechoslovakian and worldwide economic history. Along with her husband Mikuláš Teich (b. 1918), a renowned historian of science, she permanently left the country in August 1968, straight after the Soviet invasion. After spending a year in the USA, she was offered fellowships and later academic positions at Cambridge and the University of East Anglia in the UK. Thanks to correspondence with former colleagues, the Teichs were constantly informed about developments in Czechoslovak historiography such as debates and new publications and, in turn, they sent specialized literature back home. They also facilitated English language publications by Klíma and Myška in prestigious journals such as *Past and Present*, the *Economic History Review* and the *Journal of European Economic History*. They invited Czechoslovak colleagues to attend conferences abroad and to join international projects.

In 1970, the Academia publishing house removed Teichová's habilitation thesis on international investments in interwar Czechoslovakia from their editorial plans. Her book *An Economic Background to Munich* was however published by Cambridge University Press in 1974. This key book about Czechoslovak economic history was reviewed only abroad and it was from these reviews that some of her Czech colleagues learned about its existence. However, there are no citations from this or other books by Teichová to be found in the national historiography prior to 1989 and her domestic influence in this period was minimal. This was the effect of both censorship and autocensorship, as her works were available in academic libraries. After 1989, Teichová played a fundamental role in opening up Czech and Slovak historiographies to influences from the rest of the world. The fact that historiography became open to international influences did not immediately result in a methodological shift. More substantial changes have affected the hot areas of political history but economic historians

began to engage again with a whole range of problems that had previously been abandoned. In comparison with earlier times, the scope of economic history has expanded considerably and productivity has increased. Numerous works, whose publication had been previously banned, were published in the first years after 1989, including some by historians based abroad.

In this new context, the traditional focus on medieval and early modern times (until 1848) has progressively weakened, while the history of the second half of the 'long' nineteenth century has received increasing attention. Many efforts have been dedicated to the period of the First Republic (1918–38). Economic conditions (Lacina 1990; Hallon 1995), policies (Doležalová 2007), banking (Novotný and Šouša 1996; Vencovský et al. 1999) and transport (Jakubec 1997) have all been investigated. On the other hand, industrial history (Holec 2011) and the histories of labour relations and foreign trade have been somewhat neglected. The Protectorate (1939–45) and the wartime Slovak State have grown in popularity (Jančík and Kubů 2005; Mičko 2010) and, in recent years, researchers have also turned to the post-war period. New syntheses intended to serve primarily as textbooks have been compiled (Průcha at al. 2004, 2009). However, they generally use political events as watersheds even when crucial economic issues such as monetary or agrarian reforms are at stake.

Conclusion

Individually and even combined, the Czech and Slovak contributions represent only a small fraction of the historiographical production of Europe as a whole. These traditions have been affected by geopolitical shocks, intellectual repression and ideological imperatives as well as by changes in the economic environment. During these troubled times, economic historians were kept under surveillance, ostracized, prevented from active research and sometimes even eliminated. The development of the discipline was also hindered by wartime occupation and numerous waves of emigration.

The field, initially an integral part of economics, later repositioned itself as a branch of history. Throughout the twentieth century, university departments, academies, museums and regional institutions coexisted as centres of intellectual enquiry. Company archives played a crucial role during the communist period because they provided historians expelled from academic institutions with the means to continue their work. Despite the imperatives of historical materialism, economic history never occupied a central place within the socialist organization of knowledge, and it is presently not regarded as a major historical field; its academic status remains rather weak. In the wake of 1989, economic history and social history merged for pragmatic reasons but did so without offering any deeper theoretical justification for this union. Social historians have increasingly focused on cultural history and disregarded their connection with economic history. On both sides, methodological debates have been kept at a minimum.

Even though some 150 historians in the Czech Republic today describe themselves as specializing in economic history, the discipline still lacks institutionalization as well as experts. Both Czech and Slovak practitioners are gradually integrating into the international community, but it must be said that at home they remain mostly marginalized individuals.

Notes

- 1 Most grants were allocated to projects about political history, followed by those addressing social and religious issues.
- 2 On intellectual exchanges in the Cold War era, see Berg (2015).

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