

## Editorial

Dear readers,

It is my great honour to present to you the latest issue of *History – Theory – Criticism* [*Dějiny – teorie – kritika*], which primarily features a selection of four studies examining the complex and frequently traumatic memories and representations of Czechoslovakia’s totalitarian and authoritarian 20th-century past within the context of Central Europe. The issue opens with an eloquent and excellently researched study by Jan Vondráček: a “focal microhistory” of a provincial Czechoslovak official who was prosecuted for importing and promoting Nazi propaganda in 1934–36. Vondráček uses the micro-perspective to deepen our understanding of pre-war Czechoslovakia as a militant democracy, which defended itself vigorously without compromising its character. Next, we are proud to present a unique comparative article by Vanda Bessenyei. This article provides a convincing interpretation of the starkly different current perceptions of two former top communist officials and representatives of Stalinism in Czechoslovakia and Hungary: László Rajk and Rudolf Slánský. Both Rajk and Slánský eventually became victims of the machinery of terror that they had helped to create. Bessenyei offers a compelling explanation as to why, despite their dramatic victimhood bearing many similarities, Slánský was never viewed in a sympathetic light, unlike Rajk.

In the third study, Rose Smith adopts a comparative Central European perspective within the context of its communist past, examining the phenomenon of *kitschified* museums that display various representations of the post-communist exotic. Smith is the first scholar to offer this perspective. She interprets these museums as a specific way of coping with collective traumatic memories of living under communist dictatorships. In her view, the *kitschified* Central European museums do not primarily represent a Western invention and projection that attracts mainly tourists from the old EU countries, but can be also understood as a sort of autoethnographic text that significantly modifies the dominant Western discourses on Central Europe’s communist past. The final piece in our Studies and Essays section is an article by Jan Šíma and Kristina

Broučková which remains within the context of the Czechoslovak communist past. It offers an interpretation of the uneasy challenge faced by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1968 when large numbers of people began to highlight their often-unsatisfactory living conditions. The Communist Party had to devise new forms of hegemonic rhetoric and introduced specific combinations of two rhetorical figures – “unity” and “trust” – which enabled the ruling party to maintain its triumphant narrative that socialism had won in Czechoslovakia.

We are truly proud that our Discussions and Disputes section features an interview with Professor Lynn Abrams, one of the world’s most influential oral historians. Professor Abrams is active at the University of Glasgow and is the author of many foundational texts, including *Oral History Theory* (2nd edition, 2016), arguably the most cited and respected compendium shaping oral history practice in Euro-Atlantic academia and beyond. Marie Jiříčková spoke with Prof. Abrams in Glasgow in June 2025. Professor Abrams, one of the foremost proponents of feminography within oral history, not only explained why feminist oral historians remain crucial to the discipline and contribute significantly to its ongoing development, but also provided a rich contextualisation of her notable academic career in oral history.

As usual, the final section of our journal presents several reviews of recently published literature. These include a notable review essay by Tomáš Pánek on Jiří Němec’s recent substantial volume concerning the politics of memory and the cultural construction of the imperial idea during the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia in WWII.

Dear readers, I would like to wish you all the best for 2026 and hope that you find this DTK issue satisfying in terms of critical and innovative historical texts.

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