

Celebrating Thirty Years of the Institute of International Studies, Charles University

On the occasion of its thirty-year retrospective (1994–2024), the Institute of International Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University presents itself as an accomplished, long since matured “child” of the institutional changes of the Prague university and its different faculties, ones which followed the year 1989 in connection to the period’s comprehensive reforms across the entire academic and higher education landscape. These changes led to, among other things, the shuttering of the propaganda-driven and ideologically marred Faculty of Journalism in 1990, and to the (re)installation of the Faculty of Social Sciences, thus reinstating a continuity with the Faculty of Social Sciences and Journalism remembered from the days of the Prague Spring of 1968.

The Institute of International Studies (*Institut mezinárodních studií*, IMS) was founded in 1994 as the last of the newly inaugurated or otherwise transformed faculty-related institutes. The Institute of Economic Studies, the Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism, the Institute of Political Studies, and the Institute of Sociological Studies had already arrived on the scene, all vying for their spots in competition with various university departments (the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, the Institute of the Fundamentals of Education, which would later become the Faculty of Humanities), as well as other Prague higher education institutions. How they were shaped and staffed was also influenced by academic life outside of the university, most notably by the transformation, with its reductionist spirit, of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences into the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic after the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993. A number of the Academy’s leading employees of these dissolved or since diminished social science institutes migrated to the university’s institutes newly taking shape.

Institute of International Studies as a Pioneering Academic Institution in the Field of Area Studies in the Czech Republic

International Area Studies as a discipline began being developed in the 1990s at the Institute of International Studies in basic conformity with the general principles on which analogous institutions in the world (especially in the Anglo-Saxon sphere) had been being built since around the 1960s, naturally bound to the specific staffing and financial conditions found at the time in the Czech Republic. Turbulent and often unpredictable global changes (like the acceleration of the processes of integration and globalization) had already, especially in the free world, given rise to Area Studies (as multiple “Territorial” or Area Studies, e.g. German Studies, European Studies, and so on in the Anglo-Saxon world) as multidisciplinary, in some cases even interdisciplinary, fields of study, which encompassed the regions of study in question as comprehensively as possible, thus broadening the reach of existing philological disciplines (Germanic Philology, Slavonic Studies, Oriental Studies, etc.) with their research emphasis being the political, social, and economic spheres situated in the necessary historical contexts. The profile of graduates

of these study programs was always conceived in such a way as to ensure their future versatility and that they would effectively strengthen the base of expertise of the individual countries.

The structure of these fields was and remains varied in different countries due to their own varying traditions, their academic and research norms, and their given priorities of focus. This perspective was also applied in the Czech Republic: considering the Czech reality and the local capacities, only the traditional and topical power curves of the Czech national existence were taken into account. This was carried out, especially early on, by drawing up a kind of basic square of gravitational centers on the basis of which Czech priorities and interests in the field of foreign policy and external economic relations would be formulated, the four points of which were 1) Western Europe, 2) Germany (or the German-speaking countries), 3) the United States of America, and 4) Russia and the countries of the former USSR (i.e. countries to the east of the Czech Republic). This rudimentary quadrilateral was eventually supplemented, albeit with respect to the parallel existence of related study fields of the Charles University's Faculty of Arts dedicated to the study of the Far East and Middle East regions as well as Africa.

The preponderant problematic of European integration was naturally and swiftly added to the field of relations and ties between these world territories. A special role was also played in the Czech context by the issue of the concept of the neighborhood, however neglected it would become later on, which was present in contributions belonging to the traditional Czech historical concept of "encounters and confrontations" (*stýkání a potýkání*), formulated in the nineteenth century by the prominent historian František Palacký, in the belated study of mentalities, historical auto- and hetero-stereotypes, "images of the other," minorities, and the like. The closest to International Area Studies the 1990s Czech Republic got were the fields of Modern (general) History and International Relations (or rather International Affairs). A relationship of complementarity was formed between the two, especially in the latter case, but which slightly bordered on blurring into, or substituting, one another. This led to some disputes with related faculty departments, for example during accreditation procedures.¹

¹ For the beginnings of International Area Studies at the Prague university (with an emphasis on German and Austrian Studies), see especially: "Introduction" to *Německá a rakouská studia v České republice a ve světě* [German and Austrian Studies in Czechia and in the World], ed. Jan Křen (Praha: Centrum německých a rakouských studií FSV UK, 1994), 5–7. Jan Křen also authored the introductory methodological and programmatic chapter, which was the result of much debate among the institute's staff, in the institute's information brochure *Institut mezinárodních studií (Fakulta sociálních věd Univerzity Karlovy). Základní informace* [The Institute of International Studies (Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University). Basic Information] (Praha: IMS FSV UK, 1995), 4–11; *Institut für Internationale Studien (Area Studies). Grundinformation* (Praha: IMS FSV UK, 1996), 4–14.

The Institutional Genesis

Already in the first decade of its existence, the Institute of International Studies was comprised of three, and finally four parts: from the very start the Department of German and Austrian Studies, the Department of Russian and East European Studies, and the Department of American Studies,² and in 1997 the Department of Western European Studies, followed up by the related, but soon to be completely independent EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy. At first, these were spread out over different locations: the German Department (founded as the original, autonomous Center of German and Austrian Studies under the Institute of Political Studies) was initially located in the Tuscany Palace on Hradčany Square, and moved in 1995 – together with the foundation of the Institute of International Studies as an independent institution – to the second floor of the historical building at 31 Rytířská Street, the former Saint Gall (Havel) Carmelite monastery, later the House of Soviet Science and Culture in the 1970s and 1980s. This building belonging to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic would remain the main location of the Institute until the year 2000.

Both the Departments of American and Russian and East European Studies, which in the early years had utilized spaces of the Czech Academy of Sciences located at 18 Národní Street, were moved to this address in 1997. A systematically assembled library focused primarily on modern German Studies and American Studies, materials largely not to be found in Czech libraries, was from the beginning a part of the Institute of International Studies. In 2000, this library became incorporated into the Masaryk Social Sciences Library located in the new Charles University building in Prague 5, Jinonice,³ originally proposed as a training facility of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports. Virtually all of the Institute of International Studies was relocated to this building in October 2000 (together with the Institutes of Political Studies and Sociological Studies, as well as several institutes of the university's Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Humanities). Following the extensive reconstruction of the entire premises 20 years later (which concluded in 2023), its buildings are now solely dedicated to the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The institutional genesis of the Institute of International Studies can be clearly demonstrated by the example of the Department of German and Austrian Studies, which is closely linked to the origins of the future Institute. Immediately following 1989, and then even more so after Germany's reunification, certain deficits within the organization

² From the onset, the Department of Russian and East European Studies and the Department of American Studies maintained a provisional status as *sections* of the Institute of International Studies until they were fully staffed in 1996.

³ A centerpiece of this library were the once "locked down" treasures, then virtually inaccessible to the general public, of the former Institute of the History of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (later the Institute for the History of Socialism), the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and still other institutions, which were able to, to a greater extent, get access to ideologically "defective" social sciences titles coming from the capitalist West.

of research and teaching connected to the German speaking countries came clearly into view, most of all the incomplete and neglected field in the space between traditional literary-philological Germanic studies and the historical studies, more specifically and especially concerning the study of the political, legal, and economic developments of the German speaking countries. The need to fill these gaps was correctly pointed out by Czech and Slovak members of the joint Czechoslovak-German Commission of Historians which was inaugurated in the beginning of 1990.

Significant representatives of Czechoslovak and Czech diplomacy as well as other state officials repeatedly emphasized the necessity of expanding the German speaking countries related research activity, also in light of the topicality and combustibility of certain topics related to Czech-German relations. At the beginning of 1993, Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Josef Zieleniec expressed his support to Charles University rector Radim Palouš for the notion of founding a specialized Center for German and Austrian Studies within the university. It would be arranged in that same year by the initiative of the historian Prof. Jan Křen.

Owing to the efforts of the then Ministers of Education, Petr Pitha and Ivan Pilip, a sum of money was allocated from the budget of the Czech Ministry of Education in 1994 for the Center, which was from then on known as the Department of German and Austrian Studies. This made possible the purchase of basic equipment for the new workplace facilities as well as covering the salary costs of the professional and academic staff until it was possible to switch to regular funding on the basis of complete study programs for both levels of higher education. The Czech Foreign Ministry facilitated the use of the adapted spaces in the historical building of the St. Gall (Havel) Monastery in Prague's Old Town. However, early on, securing funds from other sources worked out, especially as they concerned building a library, arranging for lectures and the accommodation of visiting professors, and internships and stipends in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland for the department's specialists and students. Here one should mention the especially supportive German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, DAAD), the regular support from Aktion Österreich, as well as from the Swiss Pro Helvetia foundation in the early years.

Already by the 1994/1995 academic year a master's program in German and Austrian Studies had been launched,⁴ one focused on a wide spectrum of aspects of the German speaking countries, in alignment with the study profile attained by the bachelor's program graduates, who at that time were still coming from other faculties or universities. Perfect command of the German language and its national *realia* were a non-negotiable condition for entry into the study program. The reservoir of its future students, then,

⁴ Meanwhile, the official terminology for naming both levels of pre-postgraduate higher education (bachelor's, master's) had changed. Initially, there was talk of a bachelor's/master's *cycle* within the *field* of International Area Studies, and in the master's cycle of individual specializations, e.g. German and Austrian Studies, Russian and East European Studies, etc. Later, bachelor's/master's *study programs* were introduced, with the master's program being divided into individual *specializations*.

would be represented in the future by the institute-wide undergraduate cycle in International Area Studies, which surfaced in the 1995/1996 academic year. This reservoir would be further widened in 2007 by a new binational, undergraduate dual-degree Czech-German Studies study program, organized by the Institute of International Studies on the Czech side and the center Bohemicum led by Prof. Marek Nekula on the German one in Regensburg, Bavaria.

The first director of the Institute of International Studies, the historian Prof. Jan Křen (1930–2020), was of a crucial, indeed “foundational” importance for the history of the field of German and Austrian Studies in the Czech Republic. Not long after the institute was founded, Jiří Pešek attained his habilitation in the field of modern history and subsequently achieved professorship. This was followed by the habilitation of Alena Mišková, and in 2009 by the habilitation and professorship of Jaroslav Kučera, also in the field of modern history. In the third decade of the department’s existence its ranks were expanded by Associate Professors Tomáš Nigrin and Ota Konrád (both graduates of the department) as well as Vladimír Handl; Ota Konrád later attained professorship in 2023. During his long tenure in Prague, Assoc. Prof. Christoph Cornelissen (later a professor in Düsseldorf and Frankfurt am Main) also achieved a professorship at the University of Kiel. Other academic research and pedagogical staff working on a long-term basis and thus responsible for shaping the department include the historians Lucie Filipová, Jiří Rak, Miroslav Kunštát, and David Emler, the lawyer Petr Mlsna, and the art historian Anita Pelánová. Dr. Zuzana Lizcová, a graduate and the current head of the department is focused on German politics and media, and Dr. Alena Zelená on contemporary German literature (in the broadest of contexts). Among the department’s numerous visiting professors and associate professors stand out the historians Detlef Brandes (Düsseldorf), Volker Zimmermann (Düsseldorf/Munich), Gernot Heiss (Vienna), Oliver Rathkolb (Vienna) and Gerhard Jagschitz (Vienna), the sociologist Peter Hartmann (Cologne/Düsseldorf), or the political scientist Dieter Segert (Vienna/Berlin), many of whom spent multiple tenures in the department.

The Department of North American Studies (known until 2015 as American Studies) continued the pre-1994 activities of the short-lived Institute for International Politics of the Faculty of Social Sciences. Teaching and research in the field of American Studies had been undergoing rapid development in the preceding decades in an effort to absorb the experience of similar departments abroad and to establish a field that had been virtually ignored in the former Czechoslovakia before 1989, although even then it had been possible to build on the older traditions of the field of Czech American Studies from before 1948, namely on the activities the former Center for American Studies at Charles University in Prague, founded in 1947, and in light of the sort of revival of the field observed in the 1960s.

The cultivation of American Studies during the period of so-called Normalization after 1969 ended up being only a marginal part of the activities of research institutions such as the Institute of Czechoslovak and World History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, the Oriental Institute, and the Institute of International Relations, and even

then, mostly within ideologically predetermined limits. Today, the Department of North American Studies is one that seeks to cultivate standardized American Studies as a complex which integrates the findings of the historical, political, sociological, economic, and other relevant disciplines, in addition to developing research on current issues in the contemporary United States, Canada, and Mexico. Nor are historical topics left out, especially those pertaining to Czech-American relations.

In addition to the permanent staff of the section, the field of study has been developed by the presence of visiting professors from American universities, as well as experienced specialists of Czech origin who have worked, or currently work, in the United States. In the field of American Studies, the academic activities of the department's staff focus on issues of US relations with Central Europe after World War I, the international role of the US after World War II, and the role of the United States in the creation of a new international political and security order after the collapse of the communist bloc. Among the former lecturers at this department, its first head, historian and in 2002–2004 Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Government Petr Mareš comes to mind, as well as Prof. Svatava Raková, former Director of the Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, as well as Associate Professors Petr Luňák (later serving in various posts on the NATO International Secretariat, including as Head of the Public Diplomacy Section), the historian Prof. Vladimír Nálevka, or the long serving department head Dr. Miloš Calda. Following him, the department was headed up by Dr. Kryštof Kozák, the generational lynch pin represented here by the long-standing Czech-American historian Dr. Francis D. Raška. The younger generation is significantly represented by the current head of the department, Dr. Jan Hornát, the political economist and Canadian Studies scholar Dr. Magdalena Fiřtová, the historian Dr. Pavel Szobi, and the international security expert Dr. Michal Smetana, who is also head of the Peace Research Center Prague (PRCP), among others.

The Department of Russian and East European Studies was to at least somewhat fill the hole in the research activities in the second half of the 1990s concerning the former USSR, as well as the other former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which had been created in the logic of the often hastily formulated academic policy post-1989, which had seen, for example, the elimination of the Institute of Central European History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science, and the marked, albeit only temporary lack of interest in the public about the field of study. The department's staff were initially focused mainly on historical topics, as made possible for the first time in many years by the sudden availability of archival holdings from the region. For obvious reasons, research on Soviet policy towards Central Europe, especially Czechoslovakia, overtook the Baltic States and the Balkans in terms of preferred topics of interest. Later, their projects would focus more on topical issues, especially on the political, economic, and cultural transformations in the post-Soviet space and in the countries of Eastern and Central-Eastern Europe. In time, the breadth of the department would encompass the Balkan countries and Greece.

Then as now, the department's staff include top experts in their respective fields of study. After the department's establishment, the renowned specialist in the history of the

USSR and the former communist bloc, Prof. Michal Reiman (Berlin/Prague), worked there for many years; the department was then headed for many years by Dr. Jiří Vykoukal, a historian specializing mainly in the modern history of Poland and Central Europe, who in 2003 succeeded Jiří Pešek as the Institute's director. Concerning other lecturers, it is appropriate here to mention the political scientist Prof. Michal Kubát, author of a number of titles on the political transformation of former communist countries; other notable members include the historian Prof. Kateřina Králová, specialized on the Holocaust, postwar restoration, and conflict-related migration, as well as the Balkans expert Prof. Miroslav Tejchman, or Dr. Luboš Švec, a representative of Czech historical Baltic Studies. Other respected specialists in the different sub-regions (although this designation does not capture the full breadth of their research interests) are, for example, the current department head Dr. Daniela Kolenovská, Dr. Karel Svoboda, Dr. Bohuslav Litera, and Dr. Dmitry Dubrovsky (Russia), Dr. Bohdan Zilynskyj, Dr. Jan Šír, and Dr. Valeriya Korablyova (Ukraine), Prof. Emil Aslan Souleimanov and Dr. Slavomír Horák (Caucasus and Central Asia), Dr. Maria A. Asavei, Dr. Adrian Brisku, and Dr. Ondřej Žíla (Balkans), Dr. Ondřej Klípa, Dr. Jiří Kocián, and Dr. Tereza Juhászová (Central Europe). The department collaborates closely with the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences and systematically cultivates partnerships with key academic-research institutions in the region. Furthermore, its historical focus is balanced out by its having fostered successful, long-term cooperation with active top diplomats and state officials regularly offering their lectures to students (e.g. Jan Marian, Luboš Veselý, and Václav Lidl).

The Department of Western European Studies (from 2015 known as the Department of European Studies) became a part of the Institute of International Studies in 1997, first tasked with the multidisciplinary-minded observation of the individual states of the region (as regards their histories, socio-political and legal systems, economies, and cultures), and with a special focus on Great Britain, France, and the Benelux countries. Of course, attention was paid to the region as a whole unit, with study options spanning the Iberian Peninsula, Italy, and the Scandinavian countries. A specific emphasis was placed from the very start on these states as regards the integration of Europe as well as the better understanding of the European integration process from the perspectives of the "old" EU member states – an emphasis that eventually led to the department's narrowing of the profile of European Studies to European Integration Studies. It was focused on development, reform, and perspectives of the EU and the Czech Republic's Approximation Process in relation to the former. In 2002, a master's study program in European Studies successfully acquired accreditation, to be then organized and run by the Department of Western European together with other faculty-related institutions.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of the founder of the department, Prof. Lenka Rovná, the department quickly and successfully established itself as a leading academic center in the field of European Studies: already in 1999 it was prestigiously deemed a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in European Studies, the first academic institution in Central and Eastern Europe to have been so. Prof. Rovná was also awarded the Jean Monnet Chair Ad Personam, awarded by the European Commission to academics who have contributed

to the development of European Studies. At the same time, the EUROPEUM postgraduate program for civil servants was ongoing, which was of especially great interest during the accession negotiations of the Czech Republic with the European Union. Since 2000, the younger members of the department and its doctoral students, in cooperation with other institutional staff, have been involved in the publication of the magazine *Integrate* [Integration], which was already being published in a widely visited electronic version in the early days of the Internet. EUROPEUM soon established itself as a civic association of the same name, which in time transformed into a separate, still existing, independent think-tank, the EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy.

From the department's foundation in 2013, it has been led by the historian and political scientist Prof. Lenka Rovná, the long-standing Prorector for European Issues of Charles University. Due to the shift of the department's focus in research and teaching towards European Integration Studies, the department has undergone major personnel changes. A number of lecturers were to eventually focus more on political science or international relations in the narrower sense, and would switch workplaces (e.g. Dr. Michel Perrotino and Prof. Petr Drulák), while others preferred the diplomatic route or positions within European institutions (David Král, Lukáš Pacht, and Eduard Hulicius). A prominent member of the founding generation is European law expert Prof. Ivo Šlosarčík. The first doctoral students of the department included Prof. Tomáš Weiss, who headed the department from 2013 to 2019, when he was succeeded by Dr. Eliška Tomalová, a specialist on France and international cultural diplomacy. Other prominent personalities of the department today include Dr. Jan Váška and Dr. Zuzana Kasáková, the long-time vice-dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences. Adored by students, the outstanding historian Jiří Rak joined the department's ranks for the final years of his busy career. Courses led by distinguished visiting professionals from the political and diplomatic spheres also contributed to the department's appeal, for example the former Czech Foreign Minister Dr. Josef Zieleniec, or the Czech Republic's chief negotiator in the EU accession negotiations Pavel Telička, as well as Prof. Jacques Rupnik, Prof. Pierre Allan, and professors from British universities, most notably Iain McLean, Scott Peterson, and Alan Butt Philip.

Internationalization, Doctoral Programs and Research Activities

Since 1997, the Institute of International Studies has also organized doctoral studies in Modern History and International Area Studies (in both traditional and distance forms and in both Czech and English). Since the initial phase, when the topics of doctoral studies were very broadly defined and the ratio between students and successful graduates was less than optimistic, dissertation projects have been gradually more closely linked to research conducted by various departments and research centers. The same can be said for the targeted support of scientific activities of PhD students at the Institute, despite the slowly decreasing number of admitted PhD students, of which there are currently around forty.

Of course, there is no space here for a more detailed account of the academic and professional activities of the institute's staff and PhD students. That said, their continuously appearing bibliographies point to their significant and ever-growing share in domestic research projects (funded by the Czech Science Foundation, the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, the Charles University Grant Agency, and the Czech-German Future Fund) as well as international projects. Accession of the Czech Republic to the EU and thus its ability to participate in European grants (e.g. HORIZON, Erasmus+) or inter-university cooperation platforms (e.g. the 4EU+ European University Alliance) has been a particularly powerful impulse, despite its often being administratively demanding and complex. The prestigious European Research Council project and the extremely beneficial Johannes Amos Comenius Program (OP JAK) project in the framework of excellent research in the Social Sciences and Humanities, both led by Dr. Michal Smetana, were a substantial impulse for the Institute in the period that followed.

Publications

Scientometric criteria have changed considerably over time, especially due to the growing emphasis on the publication of scientific results in international peer-reviewed journals with high impact factors. This has forced through a sort of rethinking of the original concept of the in-house periodicals, which were to become – following in the footsteps of other faculties of Charles University – primarily a separate series within the traditional *Acta Universitatis Carolinae*.⁵ This series, characteristically called *Studia Territorialia* (Area Studies), would be transformed in 2009 into a peer-reviewed and open-access journal for contemporary history and area studies with a focus on North America, Europe and the post-Soviet space, and open to the broader domestic and international academic community. Thanks to the systematic efforts of the editorial team comprised of Dr. Jan Šír and Dr. Lucie Filipová, the journal began to be published in English and has successfully turned into an international publishing platform, indexed in the Scopus database. The monograph series *Prager Schriften zur Zeitgeschichte und zum Zeitgeschehen*, published since 2009 by the Berlin-based publishing house Peter Lang with the aim of delivering high quality foreign-language monographs by the institute's staff, in addition to several outstanding dissertations defended at the institute, was intended from the beginning especially for the international academic public.⁶ The Institute of International Studies has always tried to publish high quality theses or rigorous dissertation works in

⁵ The *Studia Territorialia* series was initially divided into sub-series of individual departments: I – *Works of the Department of American Studies*, II – *Contributions of Members of the Department of Russian and East European Studies*, III – *Studia germanica et austriaca. Works of the Department of German and Austrian Studies*, IV – *Works of the Department of Western European Studies*. The first volumes in this arrangement were published by Charles University Karolinum Press during the years 2001–2002.

⁶ Between 2009–2016, a total of 10 volumes were published in this series, after which it was discontinued.

the Czech language, for which purpose the *Bod* (Point) series was introduced by the Dokořán publishing house.

A number of teaching staff have published their books in a range of domestic publishing houses (often in the *Bod* [Point] series of Dokořán publishing house) or in the Charles University Karolinum Press. With the progressive internationalization of the academic community and the refinement of executed projects, ever more individual and collective monographs of the institute's faculty have been published by prestigious international publishing houses, and the same can be said for the production of journals. In recent years, their research has increasingly appeared in leading international journals focused on modern history, international relations, and development of key focuses for the Institute of International Studies, such as *Central Asian Survey*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *Journal of European Integration*, *Memory Studies*, *Nationalities Papers*, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, and *Security Studies*.

The wider public interested in such matters will know academic production mainly in the form of monographs of the Institute's staff, extended textbooks, or different encyclopedic works. The founder of the field himself, Prof. Jan Křen and his development of the domestic and foreign methodological debate on Area Studies were reflected in the broader conception of modern Czech history in the international context, which went unfinished in his lifetime. In the spirit of said concept and in continuity with the long-running course at the institute, the author prepared an extensive synthesis, *Dvě století střední Evropy* [Two Centuries of Central Europe] (2005), translated also into German, which meaningfully complements or revises overviews of Central European history that had been in previous use (e.g. by Piotr S. Wandycz, François Fejtö, and others).⁷ The work *Čtvrt století střední Evropy. Visegrádské země v globálním příběhu let 1992–2017* [A Quarter Century of Central Europe: The Visegrád Countries in the Global Story of the Years 1992–2017] (2019) further supplemented it.⁸ Published at the end of the author's life, it was a bitterly critical counterblast to the transi-tological works of foreign authors, particularly the two crucial books by Philipp Ther.⁹

Within the first decade of the institute's existence, its staff offered a number of award-winning and well received compendiums to the wider public. These include, for example, *Západ. Spojené státy a Západní Evropa ve studené válce* [The West: The United States and Western Europe During the Cold War] from the pen of Petr Luňák (1997), or the natural follow up *Východ. Vznik, vývoj a rozpad sovětského bloku 1944–1989* [The East: The Emergence, Development, and Disintegration of the Soviet Bloc 1944–1989] by Jiří Vykoukal, Bohuslav Litera, and Miroslav Tejchman (2000), an updated edition of *Dějiny*

⁷ Jan Křen, *Dvě století střední Evropy* [Two Centuries of Central Europe] (Praha: Argo, 2005).

⁸ Jan Křen, *Čtvrt století střední Evropy. Visegrádské země v globálním příběhu let 1992–2017* [A Quarter Century of Central Europe: The Visegrád Countries in the Global Story of the Years 1992–2017] (Praha: Karolinum, 2019).

⁹ Philipp Ther, *Die neue Ordnung auf dem alten Kontinent. Eine Geschichte des neoliberalen Europa* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2014); Philipp Ther, *Das andere Ende der Geschichte. Über die Große Transformation* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2019).

Kanady [History of Canada] by Lenka Rovná and Miloslav Jindra with contributions by Magdalena Fírtová (2024), *Dějiny pobaltských zemí* [History of the Baltic Countries] by Luboš Švec (1996), and others.¹⁰

Ivo Šlosarčík was responsible for a textbook, constantly updated and widely used in Czech universities, on the legal and political framework of European integration; it was last published in 2020 under the title *Právní a politický rámec Evropské unie* [The Legal and Political Framework of the European Union].¹¹ An interesting publication resulting from jointly organized block lectures at the Institute of International Studies and the Historical Institute of the University of Vienna is the bilingual book *Na rozhraní světů* [On the Border of Worlds] (1998), which traces the basic trends of the political, economic, and cultural development of Austria and Czechoslovakia after 1945, as well as the chronologically connected *Česko a Rakousko po konci studené války. Různými cestami do nové Evropy* [The Czech Republic and Austria after the End of the Cold War: Various Paths to New Europe] (2008).¹²

Special monographs or grant-based projects spanning the most various of topics found their interested readers, such as Jiří Pešek's comparative study *Od aglomerace k velkoměstu. Praha a středoevropské metropole 1850–1920* [From the Agglomeration to the City: Prague and the Central European Metropolis 1850–1920] (1999), fundamental works on Czech-German relations in Czechoslovakia by Jaroslav Kučera, for example *Minderheit im Nationalstaat. Die Sprachenfrage in den tschechisch-deutschen Beziehungen 1918–1938* (1999, unfortunately still awaiting its translation into Czech) or his “Žralok nikdy nebude tak silný.” *Československá zahraniční politika vůči Německu 1945–1948* [“The Shark Will Never Be So Strong”: Czechoslovak Foreign Policy Towards Germany 1945–1948] (first German edition in 2001, Czech translation in 2005). Kučera's final extensive work *Mírové uspořádání s Německem. Od protihitlerovské koalice k Česko-německé deklaraci* [The Peace Settlement with Germany: From the Anti-Hitler Coalition to the Czech-German Declaration] (2018) had much more of a reach as a study analyzing the

¹⁰ Petr Luňák, *Západ. Spojené státy a západní Evropa ve studené válce* [The West: The United States and Western Europe During the Cold War] (Praha: Libri, 1997); Jiří Vykoukal, Bohuslav Litera, and Miroslav Tejchman, *Východ. Vznik, vývoj a rozpad sovětského bloku 1944–1989* [The East: The Emergence, Development, and Disintegration of the Soviet Bloc 1944–1989] (Praha: Libri, 2000, 2nd edition 2017); Lenka Rovná and Miloslav Jindra, *Dějiny Kanady* [History of Canada] (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2001), third extended edition, 2024; Luboš Švec, Vladimír Macura, and Luboš Štol, *Dějiny pobaltských zemí* [History of the Baltic Countries] (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 1996).

¹¹ Ivo Šlosarčík, *Právní rámec evropské integrace* [The Legal Framework of the European Integration] (Praha: Europeum, 2003); Ivo Šlosarčík, *Právní a politický rámec Evropské unie* [The Legal and Political Framework of the European Union] (Praha: Wolters Kluwer, 2020).

¹² Gernot Heiss, Alena Míšková, Jiří Pešek, and Oliver Rathkolb, eds., *An der Bruchlinie. Österreich und Tschechoslowakei nach 1945 / Na rozhraní světů. Rakousko a Československo po 1945* (Wien – Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 1998); Gernot Heiss, Kateřina Králová, Jiří Pešek, and Oliver Rathkolb, eds., *Česko a Rakousko po konci studené války. Různými cestami do nové Evropy* [The Czech Republic and Austria After the End of the Cold War: Various Paths to New Europe] (Ústí nad Labem: Albis International, 2008).

process of the peace settlement with Germany after World War II in the sixty years that followed, including its complex legal aspects which had been more often than not oversimplified in political debates.¹³ The first ever exhaustive analysis of the official cooperation between the Visegrád countries (the V4) also materialized via Institute of International Studies, under the leadership of Jiří Vykoukal entitled *Visegrád. Možnosti a meze středoevropské spolupráce* [Visegrád: The Possibilities and Limits of Central European Cooperation] (2003), which was in large part dedicated – in contrast to works from the field of international relations to come – to the historical assumptions and limits of this political arrangement.¹⁴

At first glance, the numerous works of members of the institute concerned with the history of academic education are also surprising. For example, Jiří Pešek, Alena Mišková, and Miroslav Kunštát contributed to the four-volume celebratory (jubilee) History of Charles University (1995–1998), and Alena Mišková published a special monograph *Německá (Karlova) univerzita od Mnichova k 9. květnu 1945* [German (Charles) University from Munich to May 9, 1945] in 2002.¹⁵ Alena Mišková and Miroslav Kunštát were responsible also for book chapters about the international academic cooperation after 1945 (1952–1962) for the first volume of the *Dějiny Československé akademie věd* [History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science].¹⁶

Ota Konrád also found himself initially significantly involved in the study area of university history, first in his dissertation work, and later in a series of separate studies, and finally in the German publication of his book *Geisteswissenschaften im Umbruch:*

¹³ Jiří Pešek, *Od aglomerace k velkoměstu. Praha a středoevropské metropole 1850–1920* [From the Agglomeration to the City: Prague and the Central European Metropolis 1850–1920] (Praha: Scriptorium, 1999); Jaroslav Kučera, *Minderheit im Nationalstaat. Die Sprachenfrage in den tschechisch-deutschen Beziehungen 1918–1938* (München: Oldenbourg, 1999); Jaroslav Kučera, “Der Hai wird nie wieder so stark sein.” *Tschechoslowakische Deutschlandpolitik 1945–1948* (Dresden: Hannah-Arendt-Institut für Totalitarismusforschung, 2001); Jaroslav Kučera, “Žralok nikdy nebude tak silný.” *Československá zahraniční politika vůči Německu 1945–1948* [“The Shark Will Never Be So Strong”: Czechoslovak Foreign Policy Towards Germany 1945–1948] (Praha: Argo, 2005); Jaroslav Kučera, *Mírové uspořádání s Německem. Od protihitlerovské koalice k Česko-německé deklaraci* [The Peace Settlement with Germany: From the Anti-Hitler Coalition to the Czech-German Declaration] (Praha: Dokořán, 2018).

¹⁴ Jiří Vykoukal et al., *Visegrád. Možnosti a meze středoevropské spolupráce* [Visegrád: The Possibilities and Limits of Central European Cooperation] (Praha: Dokořán, 2003).

¹⁵ František Kavka and Josef Petráň, eds., *Dějiny Univerzity Karlovy 1349–1990* [The History of Charles University 1349–1990], 4 vol. (Praha: Karolinum, 1995–1998); Alena Mišková, *Německá (Karlova) univerzita od Mnichova k 9. květnu 1945* [German (Charles) University from Munich to May 9, 1945] (Praha: Karolinum, 2002); Alena Mišková, *Die Deutsche (Karls-)Universität vom Münchener Abkommen bis zum Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (Praha: Karolinum, 2007).

¹⁶ Martin Franc et al., *Dějiny Československé akademie věd I. (1952–1962)* [The History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science I. (1952–1962)] (Praha: Academia, 2019).

Die Fächer Geschichte, Germanistik und Slawistik an der Deutschen Universität in Prag 1918–1945 (2020).¹⁷

The just mentioned author is a representative of the younger, now middle generation of teachers whose books – often based on their dissertations or habilitation theses – make up a strikingly unmissable corpus of successful titles that have received not only positive reviews but also other professional distinctions. Only a few can be listed here as *partes pro toto*, especially the most recent ones.¹⁸ For instance, published by the prestigious Oxford University Press, Ota Konrád and Rudolf Kučera's *Paths Out of the Apocalypse: Physical Violence in the Fall and Renewal of Central Europe, 1914–1922* (2022), is a work concerned with the history of physical violence during the First World War and the subsequent postwar renewal in the Czech and Austrian lands and South Tyrol, for which its original Czech publication was nominated the Magnesia Litera Award for educational literature in 2019.¹⁹ Tomáš Nigrin's pen delivered the important work *The Rise and Decline of Communist Czechoslovakia's Railway Sector* (2022), thematizing the successive decline and stagnation of a key economic aspect of communist Czechoslovakia – rail travel.²⁰

Ondřej Klípa delves into an overlooked politico-economic phenomenon of postwar Czechoslovak history, the issue of organized migrant labor between Poland and Czechoslovakia in his book *Majstr a Małgorzata: Polky v továrnách ČSSR* [The Master and Małgorzata: Polish Women in the Factories of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic] (2021).²¹ The missing Czech-language synthesis about the evolution of German society in the thirty years following the fall of the Berlin Wall was brought about in the collective monograph by Zuzana Lizcová, Vladimír Handl, Miroslav Kunštát, Tomáš Nigrin et al., *Německo 1989–2021. Úspěchy, problémy a výzvy sjednocené země* [Germany 1989–2021: Achievements, Problems and Challenges of a Reunited Country].²²

The political use and instrumentalization of the past in France in the 1990s and the first ten years of the new millennium has been explored – using the most salient French conceptions of memory – by David Emler in his book *La politique, l'histoire, la mémoire*:

¹⁷ Ota Konrád, *Geisteswissenschaften im Umbruch: Die Fächer Geschichte, Germanistik und Slawistik an der Deutschen Universität in Prag 1918–1945* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2020).

¹⁸ A representative selection can be accessed on the Institute of International Studies website, see “Selected IMS publications,” IMS FSV UK, <https://ims.fsv.cuni.cz/en/research/selected-ims-publications>, accessed April 14, 2025.

¹⁹ Ota Konrád and Rudolf Kučera, *Paths Out of the Apocalypse: Physical Violence in the Fall and Renewal of Central Europe, 1914–1922* (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

²⁰ Tomáš Nigrin, *The Rise and Decline of Communist Czechoslovakia's Railway Sector* (Budapest – Vienna – New York: Central European University Press, 2022).

²¹ Ondřej Klípa, *Majstr a Małgorzata: Polky v továrnách ČSSR* [The Master and Małgorzata: Polish Women in the Factories of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic] (Praha: Karolinum, 2021).

²² Zuzana Lizcová et al., *Německo 1989–2021. Úspěchy, problémy a výzvy sjednocené země* [Germany 1989–2021: Achievements, Problems and Challenges of a Reunited Country] (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2022).

Les usages politiques du passé en France dans les années 1990 et 2000 (2021).²³ Moreover, the institute's members do not shy away from current issues, which they approach with a deep knowledge of their historical background, as evidenced, for example, by Jan Šír et al.'s book *Ruská agrese proti Ukrajině* [Russia's Aggression against Ukraine] (2017), which to a large extent anticipated the developments that unfortunately followed its publication.²⁴ A comprehensive analysis of the causes that led to Donald Trump's electoral victory in the 2016 US Presidential Election is offered in Jan Hornát and Lucie Kýrová's *America First: Příčiny a kontext volebního vítězství Donalda Trumpa* [America First: Causes and Context of Donald Trump's Electoral Victory] (2020).²⁵ A view of the trans-Atlantic relationship with the United States was contributed by Kryštof Kozák, György Tóth, and Paul Bauer in the publication *Memory in Transatlantic Relations: From the Cold War to the Global War on Terror* (2019).²⁶ *Political Reform in the Ottoman and Russian Empires: A Comparative Approach* (2017), a historical work of Adrian Brisku, deserves special attention here, most of all for its comparison of the nineteenth century reforms carried out in the Ottoman Empire and Russian Empire, as well as his edited *Sto let česko(slovensko)-albánských vztahů* [One Hundred Years of Czech(oslovak)-Albanian Relations] (2022), which provides an overview of the topic.²⁷ In an effort to expand the horizons of the interested Czech reading public, Luboš Švec produced, continuing from the already mentioned *Dějiny pobaltských zemí* [History of the Baltic Countries] (1996), additional works on the region, mostly notably *Perestrojka, pobaltské republiky a Československo 1988–1991* [Perestroika, the Baltic Republics, and Czechoslovakia 1988–1991] (2013).²⁸ Bohdan Zilynskij has contributed to a broad synthesis titled *Dějiny Ukrajiny* [The History of Ukraine] (2015), which was reedited during the first year of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine.²⁹ Daniela Kolenovská has focused

²³ David Emler, *La politique, l'histoire, la mémoire. Les usages politiques du passé en France dans les années 1990 et 2000* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2021).

²⁴ Jan Šír et al., *Ruská agrese proti Ukrajině* [Russia's Aggression against Ukraine] (Praha: Karolinum, 2017).

²⁵ Jan Hornát and Lucie Kýrová, eds., *America First: Příčiny a kontext volebního vítězství Donalda Trumpa* [America First: Causes and Context of Donald Trump's Electoral Victory] (Praha: Karolinum, 2020).

²⁶ Kryštof Kozák et al., *Memory in Transatlantic Relations: From the Cold War to the Global War on Terror* (London – New York: Routledge, 2019).

²⁷ Adrian Brisku, *Political Reform in the Ottoman and Russian Empires: A Comparative Approach* (London – New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017); Adrian Brisku, ed., *Sto let česko(slovensko)-albánských vztahů* [One Hundred Years of Czech(oslovak)-Albanian Relations] (Praha: Karolinum, 2022).

²⁸ Luboš Švec, *Perestrojka, pobaltské republiky a Československo 1988–1991* [Perestroika, the Baltic Republics, and Czechoslovakia 1988–1991] (Praha: Dokořán, 2013). See also note 11.

²⁹ Jan Rychlík, Bohdan Zilynskij, and Paul Robert Magocsi, *Dějiny Ukrajiny* [The History of Ukraine] (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2015/2022).

on the topic of Belarusian emigration in inter-war Czechoslovakia in her book by the same name (2017).³⁰

The topic of European integration, and specifically the role of the Czech Republic therein, has understandably been also gaining a great deal of attention among the general public and professionals alike, and is represented in the Czech context mainly by books and textbooks by Ivo Šlosarčík, such as *Institute Evropské unie a Lisabonská smlouva* [The Institutions of the European Union and the Lisbon Treaty] (2013, written alongside other members of the Department of European Studies), *Transformace kondicionality v Evropské unii* [The Transformation of Conditionality in the European Union] (2013) and, most recently, *Ústavní text v unijním kontextu: Europeizace ústavního režimu České republiky* [The Constitutional Text in the EU Context: The Europeanization of the Constitutional Regime of the Czech Republic] (2024).³¹ Worth mentioning here is also the work of Eliška Tomalová *Ambasadoři bohémy* [Bohemian Ambassadors] (2023), which analyzes the contemporary Czech cultural diplomatic scene.³² The wider international public can rely on books by Tomáš Weiss, which delve into the Czech Republic's position as a small state within the EU, especially *Promoting National Priorities in EU Foreign Policy* (2017) and the edited volume *Small States and Security in Europe* (2022).³³

Institute of International Studies in the Search of a New Identity

This incomplete and admittedly selective overview of the Institute of International Studies publications indicates not only the breadth of topics that the institute's staff deal with in their research projects, but also a number of organizational and methodological question marks, which then show up in dialogue with the curricula of individual courses offered by the Institute of International Studies. The institute has since the 1990s been involved in a broader debate led by similar institutes in Europe and America, which have

³⁰ Daniela Kolenovská and Michal Plavec, *Běloruská emigrace v meziválečném Československu. Studie a dokumenty. Sociopolitický aspekt* [Belorussian Emigration in Interwar Czechoslovakia: Studies and Documents: The Socio-Political Aspect] (Praha: Karolinum, 2017).

³¹ Ivo Šlosarčík et al., *Institute Evropské unie a Lisabonská smlouva* [The Institutions of the European Union and the Lisbon Treaty] (Praha: Grada, 2013); See also: Ivo Šlosarčík, *Transformace kondicionality v Evropské unii. Politické versus právní vymáhání unijních pravidel* [The Transformation of Conditionality in the European Union: Political Versus Legal Enforcement of Union Laws] (Praha: Karolinum, 2013); Ivo Šlosarčík, *Ústavní text v unijním kontextu. Europeizace ústavního režimu České republiky* [The Constitutional Text in the EU Context: The Europeanization of the Constitutional Regime of the Czech Republic] (Praha: Karolinum, 2024).

³² Eliška Tomalová and Jitka Pánek Jurková, *Ambasadoři bohémy. Současná česká kulturní diplomacie a její dilemata* [Bohemian Ambassadors: Contemporary Czech Cultural Diplomacy and Its Dilemmas] (Praha: Dokořán, 2023).

³³ Tomáš Weiss, *Promoting National Priorities in EU Foreign Policy: The Czech Republic's Foreign Policy in the EU* (London – New York: Routledge, 2017); Tomáš Weiss and Geoffrey Edwards, eds., *Small States and Security in Europe: Between National and International Policymaking* (London – New York: Routledge, 2022).

faced and continue to face – especially in the Anglo-Saxon environment – a petering out of interest of students and experts studying the European territories, or even in their sub-area studies, and an almost natural shift of study and grant applications to the Asian, Latin American, and African regions, and after September 11, 2001, also to the Middle East.

In a large number of foreign institutes, there was a growing conviction that the multidisciplinary of area studies in the 1980s and early 1990s should evolve into a new methodological level, i.e. into a higher degree of interdisciplinarity, expressed simply (albeit defined negatively) in a classic quotation from Roland Barthes: “In order to disciplinary work, it is not enough to take a ‘subject’ (a theme) and to arrange two or three social sciences around it. Interdisciplinary study consists in creating a new object, which belongs to no one.”³⁴ This much coveted quality is, however, difficult to pull off; the exceptions rather confirm the rule.³⁵

Although the Prague Institute of International Studies was actively involved in debates on the methodology and perspective of Area (in this case German) Studies at the beginning of the millennium (Bremen 2001, San Diego 2002), their reflections rather spilled over into broader discussions on the institute’s future within the framework of a process of reflection that reached its peak at the end of second decade of the institute’s existence in 2011–2014. Nevertheless, there were more reasons for taking stock, analyzing its current state, and considering its future form. Although the unique position of the Institute of International Studies in the Czech environment has in some way been sustained, the intensification of international cooperation (especially the ongoing or planned double-degree programs), changes in the international academic environment, and shifts in the understanding of area studies in the world have necessarily led to a reflection on the extent to which the basic organizational, personnel, academic, and teaching parameters of the institute set in the 1990s correspond to today’s needs.

For this reason, the Institute’s management in June 2012 moved to set up the Editorial and Working Group for the Conception and Reform of the Institute of International Studies. This group, in which all institute’s departments were represented, prepared a detailed catalogue of topics both conceptual and technical in nature (with different time frames for their possible resolution), which was similarly discussed at the all-institutional retreat in Nečtiny (October 2012).

³⁴ Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, translated by Richard Howard (Berkeley – Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 72.

³⁵ Scott Spector’s *Prague Territories*, a Bohemian Studies work on the “post-liberal intellectual generation” of the Prague Circle, has received positive critical acclaim in this context. In his book, the central concept is *teritorium* (territory), a concept that encompasses different areas (territory of language, territory of culture, territory of nationality and ethnicity, territory of religion). Spector, in a very original way, “visited” and multidisciplinary mapped all of these territories above during his studies in Prague and Berlin in the early 1990s. See: Scott Spector, *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka’s Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 2000).

In the evolutionary years that followed, certain fundamental changes were observed, while maintaining the spirit of Group's proposals, which positively made their marks on the profile of the institute in the third decade of its existence. Concerning the study program, the most significant change in full-time studies was the introduction of the overarching master's program in Area Studies, whereby the previously separate master's programs in individual Area Studies became specializations, and the number of compulsory subjects in the common foundation was increased. These are (as of 2024) Balkan and Central European Studies, European Studies, German and Austrian Studies, Russian and Eurasian Studies, North American Studies and Western European Studies. These changes did not affect the Czech-Polish double-degree program in partnership with the Pedagogical University in Cracow, Německá a středoevropská studia [German and Central European Studies]. English-language instruction has been developed considerably, standing particularly on the foundations of the double-degree program coordinated by University College London International Master's in Economy, State, and Society, and the first joint master's degree at Charles University, European Politics and Society: Vaclav Havel Joint Master's Program, which the Institute of International Studies coordinates. In addition to these international programs, the institute now offers English-language programs at all levels of study – bachelor's, master's and doctoral.

Given the growing study agenda and its bureaucratization (despite all the significant progress made in digitalization), the position of the Institute's Deputy Director for Studies was also introduced. In the field of research, functional supra-departmental structures have been devised, which support the emergence of thematically consistent multidisciplinary projects across the entire institute. First of all, the position of Deputy Director for Research was created, which, together with the newly systematized posts in the Institute's Secretariat, has improved the coordination of academic work at the institute. On the threshold of the fourth decade of the Institute of International Studies (2024), there are eight research centers at the institute, which thematically and professionally connect the staff of the institute's departments, or cooperate with other partner institutions. Simply spelling them out indicates the breadth and current relevance of the topics dealt with: Small (Nation-)States Within/Without Empires and Unions (led by Dr. Adrian Brisku); Post(Wars) – Political and Social Changes During and After Wars (Prof. Ota Konrád); the Research Center for Memory Studies (Prof. Kateřina Králová); Democracy – Forms, Transformations, and Challenges (Prof. Michal Kubát); the Research Center for Digital Humanities Integration (C4DHI) (Dr. Jiří Kocian); Peace Research Center Prague PRCP (Dr. Michal Smetana); Ukraine in a Changing Europe (Dr. Valeriya Korablyova); and Diplomacy and International Politics (Dr. Eliška Tomalová).

A separate and important chapter in the history of the Institute of International Studies is the expert activities of its staff at the level of a number of NGOs, on the panels of government ministries or both chambers of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, or as frequently requested general expertise for the needs of the media. This quickly garnered prestige is best illustrated by the fact that in the academic year of 1999/2000 regular meetings of then President Václav Havel with doctoral students in the seat of the faculty in the

Hollar Palace were ongoing, connected to the institute's seminar *Aktéři české zahraniční politiky* [Actors of Czech Foreign Policy].³⁶

* * *

Let us wish the Institute of International Studies a simple *Ad multos annos!*, the Latin formula reserved for those in their adult years or even much older still. The Institute's position as a social sciences work site is not and will not be a simple one: the field of area studies itself must be newly rethought and not allowed to become stuck spinning its wheels. The biggest challenge is not only here in the so-called new democracies, as skepticism of the current results and function of social sciences, one sometimes veering into aversion, is growing in the entire sphere of "western" civilization. In the Czech context it is as if – as sociologist Daniel Prokop puts it – a rash of "blind spots" has been gradually appearing, ones which the photoreceptors of the social sciences somehow fail to register, as if it did not see a whole score of compounding problems and crises, or have elucidated them incompletely, dogmatically, or ideologically.³⁷ The social sciences, too, are now becoming the domain of culture wars, which in effect divert attention from the key issues of the world – problems these sciences have only paid attention to so timidly as to have become themselves their very victims.

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Miroslav Kunštát

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³⁶ Eight seminars thematically concerned with the main routes of Czechoslovak and Czech foreign policy after 1989 with Václav Havel were held at the faculty's headquarters on the Smetana Embankment (the Hollar building) between 7 October 1999 and 30 March 2000. Wide-reaching and listener-friendly, his exposés were carefully recorded and were repeatedly considered for publication in book form. However, Václav Havel, did not have time to edit these texts during his lifetime, so the idea never panned out.

³⁷ Daniel Prokop, *Slepé skvrny. O chudobě, vzdělávání, populismu a dalších výzvách české společnosti* [Blind Spots: On Poverty, Education, Populism, and Other Challenges Facing Czech Society], 2nd ed. (Brno: Host, 2020), 15–21.