

Bohdan Chudoba: the Tragic Story of a Talented Man

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KEY WORDS

Radical Christianity — Anti-academic History — Criticism of the Progress — Religious Pamphlets — Historiography

The Czech intellectual Bohdan Chudoba (1909–1982) is difficult to categorize as belonging to one school or group, particular way of thinking or specific type of personality. This is due to one significant factor — this historian, journalist, translator, editor and novelist was continually engaged in a struggle and never allowed himself to stagnate in a specialist or general pattern of thought. His search was full of paradoxes and a fierce determination to go against the prevailing mainstream, be it historiographical, political or religious. His alternative views and “marginality” were evident in three areas.

In the historiographical community he promoted a dislike of history which ignored the present and did not take it as a starting point. His vision was an understanding of history through value judgments, which would make it possible to bring the study of history up to date so that it became an attractive subject of (primarily national) interest. This meant a rejection of the existing scientific paradigms, which in Czechoslovakia were represented by the so-called Goll school, which was the conception of history as a science, albeit of a specific kind. The term “positivist science” often appears and is, of course, imprecise when referring to the legacy of Auguste Comte. Essentially, however, Chudoba, tried to resist this conception of history, which favoured an “objectifying” approach and the logic of causality. He tended to take an ironic approach to such an understanding of history and would even ridicule it. His efforts to adapt to prevailing trends (a postwar attempt to obtain a senior lectureship at the Faculty of Arts at Masaryk University) failed, and this was to further radicalize Chudoba in this respect.

In political life he advocated Christian politics in the sense of Catholic social doctrine, but he also brought many of his own original insights to it. In addition, as a politician of the People’s Party he often found himself in minority opposition against the majority party wing led by the political old hand Jan Šrámek (even though he did support him in some specific cases), which was evident mainly during the democratically hampered era of the National Front from 1945–1948. However, his political ideas were fundamentally different to those of Šrámek in terms of party politics, domestic politics or international politics. His radical position was manifested in a rejection of both liberalism and communism and in the search for a “third way” based on Christian principles, which in his view favoured organization along professional rather than party lines and smaller political and administrative units

rather than larger ones, i.e. the principle of subsidiarity. Unlike Šrámek's wing, he preferred a more vigorous approach: in politics he gave priority to ideas rather than political considerations.

In terms of religion he was a very active Roman Catholic, which due to his experiences in Spain and his psychological disposition led him to an increasingly conservative stance. His Christianity became further removed from Catholic orthodoxy, which in the 1960s manifested itself in his rejection of the legitimate Vatican Council and its conclusions and a leaning towards the Orthodox Christian tradition, albeit conceived in his own selective and very idiosyncratic manner. This, however, was preceded by his involvement in Catholic journals (*Rozmach, Akord*), in the Catholic political party and other institutions, and in Catholic intellectual centres. His understanding of Catholicism became increasingly reductionist and critical — both in the sense of evaluating religious history and its personalities, and in his evaluation of the contemporary position of the Roman Catholic Church. His radical ways became even more apparent in exile and ended with his rejection of entire religious eras, conventional ideas and public figures.

In this brief text I will attempt to describe Chudoba's intellectual style by elaborating on these three observations, while I will emphasise Bohdan Chudoba's role as a historian who attempted to reinvigorate history with an emphasis on current national thought and the Catholic intellectual heritage. I will substantiate these three preliminary observations by referring to the work *O dějinách a pokroku* [History and Progress]. It is in this text that we can find the basic building blocks of Chudoba's ideas, which he was later to develop and expand upon. Prior to that, there will be some observational remarks on the period in which he lived, which was to significantly influence his intellectual development. There will be no detailed analysis of the many questions connected to the issue of Chudoba's works written in exile and their overall evaluation.¹ This paper does not harbour these ambitions — it will only attempt to outline some features of Chudoba's intellectual horizon, which is particularly interesting due to its paradoxes and its value judgments.

The background and a certain foundation to Chudoba's world was provided by his family, his religious mother and in particular his father, the English scholar František Chudoba, who played a part in the development of English studies at the Faculty of Arts in Brno and was a respected expert on English romanticism, particularly through his magnificent synthesis on William Shakespeare. As he was growing up, his young son Bohdan obviously had to define himself in relation to his intelligent,

1 Cf. Martin C. Putna's cogent work "Summy" and the polemics in the manuscript works of Bohdan Chudoba, in: *Souvislosti* 3/2005, electronic format <http://www.souvislosti.cz/clanek.php?id=338> (18.2. 2014). Here alongside the characteristics of the individual works are given the reasons why these works of B. C. remain in manuscript form: they are extensive, often in foreign languages (English, Spanish), but principally they are written in a particularly polemical manner. In this text Putna also makes an interesting comparison between Chudoba and Alexander Solzhenitsyn (anti-communism, Christian conservatism leading towards utopianism and visionarism, writing a "summa" in an almost superhuman way, the sense of a threat to one's nation from Judaism...).

hard-working father — this meant a departure from First Republican Masarykism, from a liberal worldview, from a reductive understanding of science, towards a self-assured Catholicism, the ideal of the “Christian warrior”, not practising sport for the sake of enjoyment itself, but as a dramatic hardening of the warrior’s will and spirit when fighting for Catholic orthodoxy. He was, therefore, sympathetic towards the new Catholicism represented by Durych’s “Rozmach” and “Akord”, he contributed to the development of activities around the group of Moravian Catholic intellectuals, and he became a political activist in the Czechoslovak People’s Party. Although it would be wrong to over-emphasize the psychological aspect of Chudoba’s youthful defiance, it would also be naïve to overlook it. Another fundamental contribution to his distinctive attitudes were his studies abroad — in Oxford, Vienna, Valladolid and Madrid. In 1933, at the age of 24, he gained his doctorate in history in Spain, a country which he had come to admire, and his growing self-confidence was boosted by the publication of his work on the relationship between the Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs during the Tridentine period. Spain became a second home to Chudoba and it was due to his stay there as a student that he was able to return to this “second home” while in exile.

His talent, bolstered by his academic successes, manifested itself soon after his return home — in publication and editorial work, in translations and in political action.² At the same time he travelled constantly between Brno and Prague, both in order to make a living (at the various secondary schools where he taught) and in order to be at the centre of academic and political life. By the end of the 1930s Chudoba had matured both professionally and personally — he had completed his military service and written one of his key works *Španělé na Bílé hoře* [The Spanish at White Mountain], and he had published a work on progress in history and liberalism in Czech education. Chudoba went on to develop all of these activities after the end of the war, which he had spent working at the registry of the Ministry of the Interior in Prague. The three years following the war would appear to have been decisive in Chudoba’s development, in a number of respects. On the one hand there was an explosion in his publishing, teaching and organisational activities. On the other, he also experienced setbacks, which led him to form very trenchant views: in politics this meant a strident anti-communism, in religion a defence of the Christian worldview, and in history a rejection of the “positivist” approach that he believed was being applied at Bohemian and Moravian universities (it was the rejection of his *veniae docendi* at Brno’s Faculty of Arts that caused the further radicalization of Chudoba’s views of Czech historiography and science in general). It is also worth mentioning here the conflicts caused by his active involvement in the Czechoslovak Youth movement (in November 1945 he was expelled from the Czechoslovak delegation at the World Youth

2 At the same time he used his contacts and knowledge of the foreign professional and contemporary Christian scenes. One of his philosophical role models was the well-known convert Christopher Dawson, who also looked at the issues of progress, religion and the history of culture. His book *Progress and Religion*, published in London in 1936, which Chudoba undoubtedly knew well, was also published in Czech after the war, cf. Christopher Dawson, *Pokrok a náboženství*, Prague 1947.

Congress in London for advocating the opinion that fascist dictatorships were comparable to Marxist ones) and his connection to the activities of the Croatian priest Tomislav Poglajen-Kolakovič, as well as his polemics in journals, particularly in the People's Party's *Obzory* [Horizons]. He was one of the few Czech intellectuals before February 1948 to label the Czech Communist Party as totalitarian and criticize the Czech Communist leaders as well as the Soviet Union. It is, therefore, unsurprising that another area which contributed to Chudoba's intellectual profile and which further radicalized him was his period in exile, which began shortly after the Communists' seizure of power. For Chudoba this meant a difficult journey abroad, made more complicated by having a young wife, followed by the search for employment and a new home, as well as new contacts, intellectual arguments and political battles. An important aspect of Chudoba's life in exile is that even as a controversial character he still became involved in several institutions, though later he would either leave them or remain a very critical member. This applied to the foreign representatives of the People's Party (Ivo Ducháček, Adolf Procházka, Adolf Klimek), the Council for a Free Czechoslovakia, which he criticized for its unitarian Czechoslovak approach, as well as the Christian-Democratic movement of Simeon S. Ghelfand and Josef Kalvoda, and finally his own Czech Christian-Democratic movement, which was moving closer to the Czech National Committee of General Lev Prchala. It was also of great significance for Chudoba that he acquired a post at Iona College in New York State, USA. Although Bohdan Chudoba worked and wrote intensively there, his opinions gradually diverged from the journals of his local compatriots, for example, the Chicago Czechoslovak weekly *Katolík*. This time the source of contention was Chudoba's growing conviction of the injustice of so-called Czechoslovakism and the injustice of the postwar settlement for Czech Germans and his conviction about the Christian foundations of a future free Czech state. Chudoba managed to satisfy his journalistic ambitions through radio, specifically the Czech broadcast from the Radio Nacional de España in Madrid. Not only did this lead to him working with Ota Habsburský and the Sudeten German politicians Wenzel Jaksch and Rudolf Hilf, but later also to returning permanently to Europe, to his second home of Spain. At that time he also began to voice strong criticisms of the development of the Catholic Church and the Council process, which Chudoba rejected for being modernistic — which naturally isolated him from other exiled Catholic fellow travellers, in particular the Roman Christian Academy. His anti-Semitism, which had, by contrast, been sharply suppressed by the Council, also contributed to his isolation.³ As far as the portrait of Chudoba as a writer is concerned, there was also the awakening of a new interest in literature, which culminated in him writing fiction — novels and short stories,

3 Bohdan Chudoba's antisemitism is very interesting, as is noted by Martin Putna in „Summary“ and in the polemics (c.d., note. 1). Deserving of a more detailed description is the expression „kahzar“, used copiously by B. C. in his works in exile. Putna's interpretation is worth considering (according to him Chudoba tried to avoid the word „Jew“ so that he would not be accused of anti-Semitism /anti-Judaism/); however, another interpretation is also possible, as the notion of „khazar“ for Chudoba was sometimes synonymous with the word „heretic“, which significantly changes the meaning.

and this was to lead him even further away from “objectivizing” history, which he abandoned once and for all. His professional work, which basically consisted of monumental frescoes filled with subjective and unsubstantiated judgments, remained of interest only to certain American and Spanish specialists, and played a marginal role for the Czech exile. It would appear that even for Catholic exiles — who, in spite of all their disagreements, should have had the most sympathy for this isolated, lonely warrior — Chudoba was to become an unacceptable figure because of his continuing struggle for the purification of the Christian tradition as well as his political views, which had, for example, become unacceptable to the management of the Czech broadcast of Radio Free Europe.⁴

For the reasons outlined, the historian is tempted to evaluate the development of Chudoba’s ideas as the result of psychological circumstances, or the establishment of character influenced by his environment. Defined in relation to his father, a controversial nature, the search for conflicts, the history community’s refusal to recognise his talent, contention over exile, relating not only to him but to exile as a whole: together all of these paint the picture of a man who ended up in a certain isolation with his truth, a truth which he was completely convinced was not only academic but was needed for the construction of a fairer and more humanitarian world. In this sense, Chudoba’s fate was particularly tragic — which, unfortunately, is also reflected in the interest in his works in the new democratic Czechoslovakia after 1989. On the other hand, I would not like to over-estimate the psychological aspects of Chudoba’s life. Rather it would seem to me to be necessary to turn to the central features of Chudoba’s ideas, to those already apparent in his early works which later — intensified by the situation in exile — developed into a paradoxical logic, collapsing in on itself.

Having given this necessary introduction, let us turn to an analysis of some of his basic concepts from the selected work. The collection of essays *History and Progress* was published in 1939⁵ and contains Chudoba’s reflections on both the ideas contained in the title as well as on personalities, logic and mystery.⁶ From the contents it is apparent that the author’s themes are extremely broad and he has a more philosophical

4 For a very thorough paper on the life and work of Bohdan Chudoba cf. Zdeněk Beneš — Milan Drápala, *Na křížové výpravě dvacátým stoletím*. In: Drápala, Milan: *Na ztracené vartě Západu*. Antologie české nesocialistické publicistiky z let 1945–1948, Prague 2000, pp. 415–436.

5 Bohdan Chudoba, *O dějinách a pokroku*. Pět náčrtů. Brno 1939.

6 It is worth mentioning a basic evaluation of the work by Zdeněk Beneš: “Historical science stands and falls on causality in historical events; however, according to Chudoba, causality does not exist in history. It is only possible to identify the temporal consequentiality of individual events. But it is this consequentiality which is often substituted for causality. But if there is no causality in history then it is impossible to assert that “the past caused the present and that knowledge of the past simplifies the understanding of it. The rejection of causality thus necessarily leads to a refutation of notions of progress in history. What advances in it is only our knowledge. Therefore, history is not development, but a constant reinterpretation of the knowledge of it.” Zdeněk Beneš, *Bohdan Chudoba: nepochopený a osamělý*, *Dějiny a současnost* 21, 1999, no. 6, p. 43.

than historical outlook. Chudoba is grounded by what he himself would call “common sense”, which is the basic principle on which he bases his criticisms of various (false, internally empty) positions. The content is mainly based on a certain understanding of man, namely the differentiation of man’s actions from those of “nature”. In the chapter *The Personality as a Source of Action* we find two basic premises: “Only man as a personality can have history”⁷ — unlike natural events; “Man is the originator of the house which he builds: but he is also something more than that, he is its cause. He does not want it solely as a consequence of his instincts and material circumstances, but primarily as the object of his cognition.”⁸ Therefore, at the forefront for Chudoba is the conception of man as a personality — from this emerges the distinction between the human world and the natural world and the difference between the subjects of traditional science (which guarantee regularity in the world) and non-scientific subjects, among which he includes not only art and religion but also history. These disciplines have their own “rules”. Put simply: where man is a personality then there are no regularities, only transgressions of them, a certain disconnection from space and time, provided by human reason, will and volition. The second of Chudoba’s themes is his interpretation of causality, as well as more generally what we might describe as his theory of knowledge. What is important to him here is the truest possible clarification of concepts, the “security of words”,⁹ where what stands in the way is not only the difficulty and complexity of reality, but also erroneous views on the judgment and truthfulness of knowledge. Chudoba admits that our knowledge is partial, but it is not untrue — in addition there is the possibility of knowing the whole truth. History as a branch of human thought is at a crossroads, an idea which is also expressed in the title of Chudoba’s penultimate, key essay *Klio na rozcestí* [Clio at the Crossroads]. Here he characterizes history as a discipline which deals with “moral actions”¹⁰ — actions which originate from the knowledge of and desire for morality — unlike science, which examines regular actions. After criticizing various (erroneous) ideas (Spengler, Hegel, Diltthey, Hartmann, Breysig etc.) Chudoba arrives at a clear expression of his position, which is also the substance of his own historical work, which is moving increasingly closer to this ideal: “That is why the historian has to choose, he must select only that which he needs; everything else is unnecessary ballast, a warehouse of dust. Nowhere is the perversion of so-called scientific history more apparent than in the way it has turned its back on this basic facet of knowledge. It is this choice which is the historian’s glory: to mine something from the past without which we would be the poorer. Clio does not serve the past, but the present. [...] Our own progress is not the sum of the past, but only our own knowledge.”¹¹ In this sense history is not a worthless endeavour, but the opposite. If a person faces the present and the future, he is also able to navigate through the past, choose from it correctly, judge the correctness of the direction in which he is

7 O dějinách a pokroku, p. 24.

8 Ibid, pp. 41–42.

9 Ibid, p. 65.

10 Ibid, p. 77.

11 Ibid, p. 94.

moving — as an individual, as a member of a particular nation and as a citizen. It is no wonder that these considerations led to the establishment of a basic worldview, which was revealed in his last essay, entitled *Otázka a tajemství* [The Question and the Secret]. Here he looks at the position of man in history and in the world: “But in order for us to evaluate history correctly, one thing must be borne in mind: man does not become lost in history, rather history does in man. Scientific knowledge is there to serve us, so we do not live in order to become slaves to scientific achievements. A picture satisfies our artistic efforts, not just an empty name like “art”. The state is there for the citizen, not the citizen for the state. And thus history is there for man, not man for history.”¹² However, Chudoba the Christian thinker does not stop there. He wants to at least partially uncover the secrets of human history and Christianity is vital to him in this final endeavour, as it opens and facilitates such knowledge. In the closing passages of *History and Progress*, Chudoba attempted to describe the tragedy of history and the features of real progress. This is not only the result of knowledge, but is a product of the adoption of the pain of human history as a constitutive element which is explicable only through love, in which the roots of all human beings can be found and which also completes them. Life is a battle for love as a creative principle. It is necessary to constantly fight for progress, because progress is subject to hardships and struggles for justice, freedom and love. Therefore, the final paragraphs of Chudoba’s theoretical works are at the same time a profession of faith.

However, the combative historian-essayist could not complain that the gauntlet that he had thrown down was not taken up. This occurred when he attempted to gain his “habilitation” (higher doctorate) at Masaryk University’s Faculty of Arts. The proceedings dragged on for a very long time — from June 1945 until January 31 1947 — and resulted in his rejection. The subject of the habilitation in modern political history was not his work *History and Progress*, which was de facto historiographical, but his earlier historical work *Španělé na Bílé Hoře — tři kapitoly z evropských dějin* [The Spanish at White Mountain — Three Chapters from European History] (published in Vyšehrad in Prague in 1945; however, MU FA also has Chudoba’s submitted work in its book collection) and in the second round of the proceedings the work *Český diplomat v jednání o rovnováhu mocností. Studie z korespondence Václava Ferdinanda z Lobkovic* [A Czech Diplomat on Negotiations on the Balance of Power. A Study of the Correspondence of Václav Ferdinand of Lobkovice], also taking into consideration a published book on Czech history called *Jindy a nyní* [Another Time and Now]. The committee members included J. Glücklich, J. Borovička, R. Urbánek, J. Macůrek and J. Šebánek, and assessments were written by R. Holinka and K. Stloukal, taking into consideration a review by V. Chaloupecký. Therefore, Chudoba’s performance was to be assessed by the elite of Brno and Prague’s historical sciences to see whether this talented, though idiosyncratic, historian would be awarded the *veniae docendi*. However, the assessments from both the committees were unfavourable. In the case of the second attempt this is understandable, as Chudoba submitted a new work which had evidently been written in a hurry. However, the deliberations from the first committee (on the Spanish at White Mountain) had been very close (11 votes for, 10 against),

¹² Ibid, p. 119.

and after the end of the proceedings a dissenting opinion was presented, signed by A. Beer, F. Novotný, J. Ludvíkovský and V. Machek, all excellent scientists and faculty professors, although of course not historians. They were all decidedly negative: “..in his higher doctoral work the author’s interpretation of history, which naturally relies on personal convictions and beliefs, in this case a strictly Catholic faith, does not maintain the level of relative objectivity which is achievable through scientific methods and which will always be required if an applicant at our university is to be awarded the *venia docendi*.”¹³ In other words, the work had serious methodological shortcomings. Borovička, Macůrek, Urbánek and Glücklich agreed on the basic characterization of the work, which it is worth quoting here in full since it fairly accurately describes the commotion which Chudoba caused with his theoretical ideas on history and historical work itself, which of course conformed to his theories: “But it would not be wrong to conclude that for the author ‘The Spanish at White Mountain’ is not a historical monograph which would content itself with the acquisition of new facts and arguments about a historical issue in the normal sense of historical science. He has a dislike of such positivist science, which also reverberates through this book and is expressed very strongly in other works. He is continually attracted by a lively, combative form of science and he demands that it evaluates, praises and condemns (Liberalism in Czech Education, 1940, pp. 28–9). Chudoba makes abundant use of all of this in his book: he uncompromisingly evaluates, praises and reproves in equal measure, he reflects on historical events and connections and reaches out towards constructions and generalizations. [...] Moreover, the theme of the habilitation thesis he has submitted, embracing one of the most eventful centuries in our nation’s history, cannot be approached in an equally monographic manner in all areas, and so alongside the monographic sections of the book we find synthetic views which are not confined to a few introductory pages. The work, therefore, has two aspects to it — monographic and synthetic — but neither of them is executed in such a way as to fully exploit their advantages for historical methodology: it lacks the rigorous clarity and systematic thoroughness of a monograph as well as the clear features of a true synthesis.”¹⁴

At this crucial point in time this was the view of almost all of the relevant historians concerning the theoretical ideas presented by Chudoba in the work *History and Progress* and the results of his historical work from the turn of the 1930s and 1940s — and how this affair actually affected him is a matter for speculation. It can be stated with certainty, however, that Bohdan Chudoba did not go back on his ideas; rather he honed them even further. “Positivist science” as employed by Brno and Prague historians was later rejected in sweeping terms and condemned several times in Chudoba’s exile work “Summy”. The restraint which the author had still showed in *The Spanish at White Mountain*, a work which is basically monographic in its form, disappeared and Bohdan Chudoba never again attempted to write a similar work, although an extended version of *The Spanish* was published in English (1952) and in Spanish (1963), which brought him a certain satisfaction. His views on the nature of histori-

13 MU Archive, collection A2 FF — habilitation, chairs; box no. 3, part 4 (Bohdan Chudoba).

14 Ibid, app. 2.

cal “science”, which Chudoba would never again consider to be a science, gradually developed in the chapter *Dvojí pohled na dějiny* [A Double View of History] from the book *Vím, komu jsem uvěřil* [I Know Who I Believed]. Here Chudoba wrote that: “The view which sees history as a ‘current of connections’ is prevalent in schools, journalism and in other areas. There is no doubt that our contemporaries have heard of it. Even at primary school they are forced by teachers to assign “important public figures” their individual “position of development” on an imaginary historical timeline. The importance of a public figure often depends on how many people they killed or the rumpus that they created around them. In an average history textbook Napoleon will be given twenty pages, whilst Beethoven has to be content with three lines. [...] Attention also has to be given to the fact that among the supporters of the “progressive” view of history, two changes have occurred during recent decades: enthusiasm for national history has fallen away, while there has been a boom in so-called social-historical statistics.”¹⁵ For Chudoba anything which represents “progressive history”, ignoring the current interests of people and setting out a “faith in progress”, is only a subject for contempt or ironic rebuttals.

However, let us return once more to *History and Progress*. It presents the viewpoint which Bohdan Chudoba was to turn to in his works before and after the war, and which he further strengthened and developed in the period after 1948. It seems to represent a decisive, precisely formulated standpoint, which makes its author truly original and distinctive, but at the same time it also contains the problems of his later works.

At first glance it seems that the historians who judged Chudoba’s texts as part of his habilitation proceedings were rather harsh. Essentially, however, they described the problematic nature of Chudoba’s ideas and conclusions quite accurately. These days it is difficult for us to judge whether a significant role might not have been played by the polemical, idiosyncratic nature of the applicant, including a marked Catholic “worldview” (using the terminology of the period, which Chudoba also advocated). However, this seems improbable as the assessments were agreed upon by experts who held differing worldviews (Rudolf Holinka, for example, was also a practising Catholic). In short, Chudoba’s viewpoint overstepped the norms of the day (and perhaps even of today) and the normal requirements for dissertation and habilitation works. It can perhaps be stated that historians of that time were more “mindful of form”, and considered Chudoba to be a stimulating, yet very undisciplined novice of their “pure” science.

However, that was not the most important issue. At the heart of Chudoba’s difficulties, germinating since the 1930s, was his consistent belief that it was necessary to assess (and judge) individual opinions of individual fields and distil a kind of “kernel of truth” — where that kernel of truth is ultimately determined by the author himself, who selects from tradition what he considers to be alive and essential. Admittedly for Chudoba in the 1930s and 1940s this reduction was still relatively restrained, was full of excellent insights and was remarkable for its breadth and scope. At the same time it already contained the seed of the problem that was to germinate. It seems

15 Bohdan Chudoba, *Vím, v koho jsem uvěřil a jiné eseje*, Brno 2009, p. 20.

that Chudoba carried his will to select and categorise his own judgments through to the point of absurdity. He even abandoned his secure footing when he later rejected “positivist history” as the cardinal mistake of his life, rejected comprehensive criticism of sources and in particular refused to allow criticism of his own judgments. He set himself up as the arbiter of European and world history — his work is proof that although the will is capable of almost superhuman efforts, the result is a work which is controversial in every respect. In his old homeland at the turn of the 1930s and 1940s his work had come across as a kind of antidote to excessive historical pedantry, a proficient and thorough critique of “faith in progress”,¹⁶ a widely based cultural, metaphysical and logical philosophy of history, and at the same time a necessary critique of contemporary historiography. After 1948, however, it began to appear more as a confused Tower of Babel, at first sight monumental, but inwardly collapsing.

It is for this reason that I used the expression “the tragic story of a talented man” in the title of this text, as Bohdan Chudoba was indeed genuinely talented and also very active and hard-working. It is impossible to dispute his gifts and industriousness, as well as his ability to navigate through various fields of human thought and his narrative skills, which were also displayed in his novelistic works.¹⁷ However, some of his theoretical views led him to dead ends in historical science, which, paradoxically, is what he criticized in others.

16 A reminder that a thorough analysis of “faith in progress” in Czech history was carried out more than half a century after Chudoba by the historian B. Loewenstein, cf. Bedřich Loewenstein, *Víra v pokrok. Dějiny jedné evropské ideje*, Prague 2009.

17 A list of Chudoba’s fictional works in Šebestík, Jan: *Bohdan Chudoba a jeho kniha o Rusku a východní Evropě*, online: www.flu.cas.cz/sebestik/ukazky.doc (19. 2. 2014).