

Stanislav Kokoška – Jaroslav Pažout – Kateřina Portmann

A Topic That Keeps Returning

An interview with Professor Robert Kvaček about his research into the context and historical impact of the Munich Agreement (and much more)

The events of 1938 are one of your major areas of research. What was it that led to your interest in it? Was it because the institution in which you worked was devoted to the topic, or was there a personal motivation?

It was purely personal. It was the experience of a boy who'd started going to school and who met a friend whose father had disappeared that year. Of course I was filled with curiosity and asked him why, because I'd seen his father on perhaps two occasions in their village near Jičín. And now all of a sudden he'd gone, and I didn't know what had happened. I was told he'd died in the borderlands, in the Frýdlant area, where he was a teacher. I couldn't stop thinking about it; I was very intrigued. As the war went on, from time to time I thought back to what had happened to him. My interest never waned. Later on I learnt that my friend's dad – a teacher called Kodeš – was killed by a members of the Sudetendeutsche Freikorps (Sudeten German paramilitary organisation) unit which'd attacked him along with a German Social Democrat. He was seriously injured; my friend's dad was killed and buried in a pile of manure.

But there's another unusual connotation to the story. I was deeply affected by the film version of the book *Babička* (Grandmother) by Božena Němcová, which was made by the director František Čáp in 1940 with Terezie Brzková playing the lead and Nataša Tanská as her granddaughter Barunka. The film features the mountains. The people in the cinema were saying that these were once our mountains but they're not anymore. I never forgot that. In 1967, to mark the forthcoming 50th anniversary of the foundation of Czechoslovakia, they made a feature film called *V srdci Evropy* (In the Heart of Europe), which opened in the cinemas in 1968. It made a big impression, even abroad – the Soviets even protested against it. I suggested to the film's director, Holub, that he start the film with that shot from *Babička*. I'd been so deeply affected by it. That was the way I felt but it seems I was in a minority, and Holub already had something else in mind. However, it was another reason why I started becoming interested in the events of 1938. Straight after the war I went to see the borderlands for myself. That was also my first trip to Liberec, which struck me as a very chaotic place.

So would you say that it was this wartime experience, or more accurately your experience of the events that unfolded after 1938, that led you to choose the profession of historian?

I don't think so. For a long time, I actually had no idea what I was going to study. I was interested in medicine, but I was put off by the autopsies – I was scared of those. I had a certain advantage in that I'd received such good grades in my school-leaver's certificate that I could choose any university I wanted. The school leaver's exam was pretty tough in those days. If you got the sort of marks I did, the doors were open to any university. So I had the luxury of being able to choose, and at the last moment I changed my mind. The teachers at Jičín Gymnasium gave me various different options. I was also considering whether I should go to the same university as a girl I was fond of at the time. She was going off to do chemistry. I wouldn't have minded – I wasn't bad at physics or chemistry actually. But in the end I chose the Faculty of Arts, that's what won the day. Actually even in sixth form of Gymnasium I thought I'd end up at the Arts Faculty. But when I first saw the Faculty of Arts building – this was when I was still in sixth form – I was a bit intimidated. I'd gone to Prague for a football match – Sparta vs Slavia – with an older friend who was a Slavia fan and who was studying law. On our way to the stadium we stopped off at the Law Faculty as he had to run an errand there. He then showed me the Arts Faculty as it was nearby, so I could see where I wanted to go and study. I saw this huge building, and was pretty terrified at the sight. I have to say it almost put me off. If someone would have told me back then that not only was I to study at this faculty but also teach there, and even serve in the university's administration, I would have dismissed them as an incurable lunatic. So the decision came at the last moment. In 1951, I went for an interview. They offered me a different choice of course. Alongside history for future professors they were opening up a new experimental course in specialist history and in my confusion I agreed to take it. There were only around twelve of us in total. It was sort of put together as they went along. The Arts Faculty was completely different back then. It was a quiet place, very hard-working. I succeeded in angering Professor Chalupecký by scraping my steel-tipped shoes as I was walking along the corridor. I remember him flying out of his office and shouting at me: *Where do you think you are? In a pigsty perhaps, or a stable? People are trying to study here! We must have quiet!* And all I could do was cower under his fury. He was an extremely irritable chap. He died a fortnight later – he had a stroke. Nothing to do with the incident in the corridor, I hasten to add.

During your studies you began working on your first major academic work, mapping the mission of Lord Runciman to Czechoslovakia. The circumstances surrounding the publication of your book *Osudná mise* (Fateful Mission) were rather dramatic, weren't they?

I came to the theme of Munich right at the end of my studies, because we had to attend seminars where we worked on both older and newer material. My first work concerned the preacher of Italian origin John of Capistrano, who was active in Hus-

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site Bohemia and Moravia in the early 1450s. I then worked on medieval statistics, which was fiddly work I can tell you. But on the other hand it taught you to look at the primary sources and understand them. By the way – professors didn't really communicate with us very much. They presumed we'd be able to understand the sources – even when they were written in different languages. Then I started attending seminars on more modern history. First of all seminars run by Associate Professor Polišíenský, with whom I agreed that I would work on 1938. He chose as a topic the Runciman mission, requesting that I look at it from a wider perspective. I enthusiastically agreed. Only then what happened was that Professor Říha brought me into his diploma seminar. When he discovered I was working on the Runciman mission, he said it was an excellent idea and that I should concentrate on American imperialism as the architect of the Munich Agreement. I informed him that American imperialism was not the architect of the Munich Agreement and that it was instead all to do with the English and French. This was a time when *British Foreign Policy* documents had been released, at least in part. The French *Yellow Book* and the memoirs of many Frenchmen were also available. Munich was, after all, a subject of intimate relevance to France. I told Říha that I wanted to explore the diplomatic background to the Munich Agreement. He was, to put it mildly, rather put out. He said since I clearly knew more about it than he did, I could suit myself. I attended his seminars for a year and a half and he didn't look at me once. The diploma work that followed ran to about six hundred pages; only part of it was about the Runciman mission. Before defending it I visited Professor Říha in his apartment. He'd read every page and admitted that I had been right and he had been wrong. I appreciated that.

The research in book form, which was published in 1958, was thanks to Jaromír Hořec and the Naše vojsko (Our Army) publishing house, which he headed as editor-in-chief. We knew each other because I used to contribute to a magazine called *Hlas revoluce* (Voice of the Revolution). He was interested in the subject of my diploma work. He suggested we take out the bit about Runciman and publish what was left as a book. So this we did, and this is when the great merry-go-round started. After being typeset, the book had to be passed by a censor. She decided that it was a subversive text aimed at rehabilitating president Beneš, that the author was working for British intelligence and he was being run as an agent by Professor Bets, a specialist on Hussitism who had travelled to Prague. So what now, seeing as the book had been typeset and was waiting to be published? My editor Hořec tried to save the book; he took out the third that had been rejected by the censors and confiscated by Státní bezpečnost – StB (the secret police) and filled in the missing pages. He inserted quotations from period newspapers; they looked completely wrong and created a very inorganic impression. By the way, I later found out that confiscated parts were used in an exhibition for secret police officers as an example of ideological diversion. I also had to go in for questioning at secret police headquarters in Prague in Bartolomějská street. This was a first for me; I was a complete wide-eyed innocent in this regard. None of my friends at the time could tell me what I should do, so I went in with no expectations of what to expect. The interrogations were the same as later on. There were two investigators, good cop, bad cop. The bad cop was a woman. She put me

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through my paces all right. She asked me how I could have written what president Beneš had told the British Ambassador. There was no way he could have said this, she said, it was out of the question. I replied: *How do you know he didn't say it? Were you hiding under the table when he was talking to the ambassador?* That's how stupid I was. She was furious and stormed out of the room. And the other one – the good cop – turned to me and said: *Look, why don't you give it a rest, eh? Four years ago what you've written would have got you a life sentence.*

There was another peculiarity about the book *Osudná mise*. The cover was designed by the banned graphic artist Jan Kotík, a close friend of Hořec's. Hořec asked me whether I would mind if he designed it. I said not at all, quite the opposite, it would be an honour. Kotík created a beautiful cover which really stood out amongst all the grey and uninspiring books of the time.

Then the Communist Party's Historical Institute decided to explore revisionism in historiography and came to the conclusion that *Osudná mise* was a perfect example. They planned to have me recant my heresy in public. I had no idea of this of course. All of a sudden I received a visit from a historian colleague, František Červinka, and he warned me I was in danger. At the same time, he said we must stop this inquisition from happening, which he did in fact succeed in doing via his wife Milada, who was professor (historian, politician and musicologist) Zdeněk Nejedlý's secretary. Nejedlý read *Osudná mise* at a sanatorium in Poděbrady and Červinka told me that he'd praised it. *At last, a real historian*, he's supposed to have said. Milada and František managed to spread Nejedlý's words in the right circles and I was saved.

Did you find out who started the whole thing? Who wrote the first expert analysis?

During one of the interrogations in Bartolomějská street one of the investigators showed me a letter signed by a František Novotný. Then he told me it was probably a made up name and asked if I knew anyone called Novotný. I told him the only Novotný I knew was a historian who had died in 1932. Then he asked me if I recognised the handwriting. I answered yes. I remembered it and later took measures to prevent this person from damaging me again.

You met a number of former senior politicians for your research. Did any of them refuse to speak to you?

That never happened to me. I spoke to politicians from a wide spectrum, from National Democrats to Agrarians to members of the National Socialist Party and Social Democrats. I discovered that they had recommended me to each other, saying I was trustworthy. It was pleasing when not only I but also my research students discovered in their letters after their deaths that they had said not only that I could be trusted but that it would be a good thing to talk to me.

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They wanted their testimony to be preserved.

Yes. I remember my meeting with the influential politician, lawyer and journalist Lev Sychrava, who actually approached me himself in 1957. It was an early evening in October. I was at work in the Kinský Palace, which was used by the Arts Faculty – it was home to the collections of the important Czech historians Josef Pekař and Otakar Odložilík – when the telephone rang. I answered it and the voice on the other end said: *This is Lev Sychrava*. Dumbstruck, I said: *Dr Sychrava, are you calling from London?* which was a stupid thing to say as he'd recently returned from exile. He said no, he was back in Prague and would very much like to meet me and talk about Munich – and not just Munich. I'd been recommended by another politician – a National Socialist Party member in fact – who'd said he should contact me. I had no idea he was in Prague. And so we met. So I was lucky that none of the politicians I contacted refused to talk to me. Of course if the net had been widened even further then I'm sure I would have found someone who would have said no, but I have to say that I was able to have normal conversations even with the military men, such as the former Chief of Staff, General Ludvík Krejčí.

Aside from their recollections, did they also furnish you with historical documents for example?

Of course, most of them were already working on their memoirs. Some of them had recently been released from prison. While they were behind bars they were offered the chance to begin work on their memoirs. They accepted because it made their situation more tolerable. They were allowed to order copies of newspapers from the 1920s and 1930s; they were delivered to them in prison. So they used these in their recollections.

We've spoken about the circumstances surrounding the publication of your book *Osudná mise*. But this was not your only work which had a somewhat unusual fate.

In 1989 the first volume of my work *Obtížné spojenectví. Politicko-diplomatické vztahy mezi Československem a Francií 1937–1938* (A Difficult Alliance. Political and diplomatic relationship between Czechoslovakia and France 1937–1938), about the political and diplomatic relationship between Czechoslovakia and France between 1937 and 1938 was published by Charles University. I'd gathered documents for the second volume, only they were destroyed by the fire brigade. I was renovating my house in Jičín and had discovered dry rot. I had to take everything out of the room – on my own, my son was doing his national service. I had to tear up the floors and blowtorch the walls. I had to blast every crevice in the brickwork. It was a terrible job. The insulation in the bedroom caught fire from the blowtorch. Mother saw the flames and called the fire brigade. I told them everything was under control but they turned their hoses on it just in case. In doing so they destroyed documents for the second volume, including meticulously chosen extracts from large volumes of French diplomatic material.

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There's a wealth of material about Munich, from memoirs to archive documents, whole volumes of published documents. Do you think there are any still untapped sources of material which could change the way we look at the Munich crisis?

From time to time I hear that we should wait until they open the archives so we can see this document or that document. It's so much hot air, a form of ignorance, like believing that a locked safe must necessarily contain a secret which will reveal something unusual, something that would turn black into white and vice versa. I believe that we already have all the important sources at our disposal. Most of the actors in this drama are no longer with us, and it would make no sense to take down the memories of an old man who's already past a century. And the official documents are such a rich resource, that when you start studying them, you want an extra lease of life because there's so much material available.

Our active knowledge of languages does sometimes lag behind. We didn't have the contacts which would have deepened it, but it was enough to understand. Compared to western researchers, however, we have the advantage of understanding the languages of the less prominent actors in the Munich crisis. The English and the French – with exceptions such as Professor Antoine Marès – do not have this advantage. We can read the Romanian, Polish and Russian documents, whereas they are capable of writing about 1930s Soviet policy yet they don't speak Russian. Our perspective, therefore, can be more comprehensive. It's said that a great power sees things differently. But we respect this, even though “getting inside the head” of a great power and how it viewed things can be difficult for us. We can only guess that this is indeed how they thought. But in general our ability to comprehensively understand primary sources is exceptionally wide and represents an advantage for us, in comparison – for example – with western historiography.

We know from history that many historians, either under pressure or voluntarily, have become servants of various political parties and regimes in a bid to create “official” versions of historical events. In connection with the time we're speaking about we might mention the talented German historian Josef Pfitzner, who as the Protectorate-era deputy mayor of Prague had a negative influence on this city. How do you see the moral responsibility of a historian towards the ethics of his craft? Is there such a thing? Are historians careful to respect them?

It's very individual. I don't know whether one can speak about ethics. One can speak of honesty. I would even say professional honesty. That means that you don't go further than the facts at your disposal if it doesn't suit your academic concept; on the contrary, you must change that concept to fit the facts, you must reformulate it. Or it means that it's OK to be unsure about something. You might be surprised by something, but you cannot keep silent about it. So you alter your language to describe a controversial passage or controversial depiction of events, by toning down your

words for example. Where others would add five exclamation marks and jab their fingers in the air and say: *Look how this person failed!*, you merely state what happened as something that has been recorded by history. It happens. I don't like the idea of historians having a special moral mission or moral responsibility. We are not exceptional. What is exceptional about us, what to me seems exceptional about what we do, is that we can never be limited to one single topic, that topic must always have a wider base. And that it doesn't bother us having to learn about ancient history when we specialise in more modern history. Our base should not be narrow and insular, or fussy. There are historians who know historical calendars off by heart. But what use is that? One can always find the right data if you know your way around the job. But thinking, contemplation – that is what the job is really about. As far as historical responsibility is concerned, it calls on us to take great care in how we express ourselves. The Czech language is not only witty, but rich. We must endeavour to express ourselves – even when discussing complicated matters – in a way that is comprehensible. So in other words we have a responsibility towards what we write, because the moment we write it down, it is no longer our property. At that moment it is up to the reader. We may want to force upon them our opinion, that is only natural. We want them to share that opinion. But if afterwards they do not share it, and express this disagreement in a way that forces us to go back and think about the issue once again, then of course that too is of value to us. For me, it is the morality of this kind of responsibility.

Interest in Munich tends to ebb and flow amongst both experts and the lay public. Why do you think this is?

Sometimes the interest is irrational, to some extent artificially maintained. There are a number of contemporary or recent events that are seen as comparable with Munich, even if they have little or even nothing to do with it. It's a popular theory that Munich was a reflection of something, that it has a tendency to repeat itself, and so on. That can spur interest in the topic, because people who have never heard of the Munich Agreement are all of a sudden confronted with journalists in the media making references to Munich. So they want to find out more about it. That's one reason why the topic of Munich keeps making an appearance. The second reason is that historians often need to refer to Munich to explain later events. Munich's impact was extraordinary. The great power alliance that Churchill and Beneš wanted to create in 1938 was not formed until 1941. Why so late? Because of Munich. Because the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 would never have been signed if it hadn't been for Munich. For years I naturally pushed back against the idea that Munich was an anti-Soviet agreement. But then I came to the realisation that it was true. But not in the way that the Russians and Soviets presented it. Chamberlain believed it would be possible for the great powers to reach agreement with Germany and Italy. He believed that these "mad dogs" would turn against each other and tear each other apart. When you read Chamberlain's correspondence with his sister Ida you will understand how things were taking a turn for the worse because there were no strong political personalities. It's similar to today. We're lacking strong personalities in politics, because politics is something

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that third rate people go into. The top people are in science and the arts, the second tier are in business, and only then do you get to the third rate lot, who go into politics. That's why people so often turn to Munich to explain why things turned out the way they did. I always think of Munich as an event of far-reaching consequences which had an effect on the history of states, the fate of societies and the lives of people far, far away, who regarded Czechoslovakia as a little country and something of a nuisance. But I don't blame them for thinking this, not at all. I understand the widespread fear of a war being just around the corner. Munich is an example of how things of which we have little or no inkling can enter our lives and decide whether those lives will be shortened. Those sixty million victims of World War Two should have lived far longer than they did.

People often speak of the “trauma” of Munich. Is there such a thing, or was it healed in 1945?

I think the use of the word “trauma” is a little exaggerated. It was used as an argument for a certain foreign policy orientation of Czechoslovakia. But people did feel satisfaction and retribution in 1945, that Nemesis had taken what was due to her. They accepted it with satisfaction, without realising that it was a retribution built on more problems, more conflict and shortening of lives. What do we know of today, what will be tomorrow? Tomorrow could be worse than we can possibly imagine. Or not. After all, we're not soothsayers. And even if we were, it's better not to know. So as far as the trauma of Munich is concerned, it is possible to use it as an argument if we're speaking about 1945, but personally I'm convinced that society didn't experience it in such dramatic and drastic terms as it's sometimes believed. Because we got our revenge. They got what they wanted. That's how people thought.

Society felt a little different about what the future would bring.

Of course. It was logical. They thought the future was bright.

Seeing as you know all these twists and turns of history, which paint a terribly pessimistic picture, are you able to remain an optimist?

That's a question which was often asked of the generation before ours. I believe that professor Jaroslav Goll answered it for us. He said that history had never succeeded in teaching people to be optimists. After all, as soon as you're born, you're heading towards death. And that's why history exists, so that people realise that their time on earth is finite. The entire field of history as mythology and literature was born because at a certain point a person asked himself whether it makes sense to exist seeing as at some point he will no longer be around. What's the point of creating something if I will no longer exist? So life itself is not even a very optimistic thing and that way of looking at things is not very pleasant. It's beautiful when a little child is born, it's so sweet, but I always said to myself – I've brought something into the world that has an

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end date. He doesn't know it yet, but as soon as he finds out, he's not going to like me very much. So optimism – no. But neither pessimism. I see history as a sort of realism which has two sides. Life is worth living; there are moments when a person feels wonderful. There are moments when a person is cursed in absolutely everything he does. That's life. If history was not human with these different sides, which twist and turn, it would be dull and uninteresting. Even if I personally could have done without a few of those interesting moments.

This interview, recorded in Liberec on 24 August 2018 during the 28th annual Czech-Slovak Seminar, was conducted by Stanislav Kokoška, Jaroslav Pažout and Kateřina Portmann. It was edited by Jaroslav Pažout, who also wrote the short biography of Professor Kvaček. The accompanying text is written by Kateřina Portmann (the Czech version of this interview has been published as *Téma, které se stále vrací* (A Topic That Keeps Returning). *Paměť a dějiny*, 2019, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 54–59).

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The case of Max Frinker and the death of the teacher Otakar Kodeš

In January 1947, Max Frinker, a resident of Heřmanice, was executed in the courtyard of the Frýdlant District Court gaol. He was one of eight people sentenced to death by the Extraordinary People's Court in Liberec. He was sentenced for his activities in the Sudeten German paramilitary organisation, the Sudetendeutsche Freikorps (SF), as a member of which he was found to have committed the murder of a Czech teacher named Otakar Kodeš during an attack on the customs house of Heřmanice. A study of the court file reveals only partial information; Max Frinker was sentenced very quickly. The court did not investigate the killing in detail and Frinker was found guilty of Kodeš's murder despite pleading his innocence throughout. It cannot be ruled out that his case was used by the court as an exemplary punishment. Involvement in the SF was punished with great severity by the post-war courts of retribution. Frinker was most likely simply the only member of this organisation that bore responsibility for attacking the customs house who had survived the war. However, despite all of this, the fact remains that Kodeš lost his life.

So what, according to the court documents, happened in Heřmanice in September 1938? Frinker initially crossed the border to Germany, from where he returned to Czechoslovakia as a member of an SF unit during the Sudeten German uprising in the borderlands. Together with six men he later took part in an attack on the customs house in Heřmanice – his home town. Their primary goal was not the physical liquidation of the customs house staff, but the destruction of Czechoslovak state symbols and their replacement with symbols of Nazi Germany. Incidentally, according to the testimony of Inspector Emil Kalanda of the Heřmanice Financial Guard, the customs house was empty at the time of the attack; an assault by SF units had been expected and on the night of 22 September the Czech customs officers had withdrawn into the interior of Czechoslovakia. When they returned on 23 September, a swastika flag was hanging from the building, portraits of Czechoslovak presidents had been torn down and the interior of the customs house had been destroyed.

During the attack the aforementioned teacher Otakar Kodeš and a German anti-fascist named Ernst Pörner (his name is misspelled as Porner in the court documents) had had the misfortune of cycling there together to explore the situation. The SF unit were startled and reacted by opening fire. Kodeš was hit and, according to the doctor who was called to treat him, died soon afterwards. Pörner was dragged off to Germany by the SF paramilitaries and interned at Dachau concentration camp, where he died in May 1940.

Source: *Státní oblastní archiv v Litoměřicích* (National Regional Archive in Litoměřice), f. Mimořádný soud Liberec (Extraordinary People's Court in Liberec), file symbol Lsp 57/1947

Professor Robert Kvaček's Curriculum Vitae

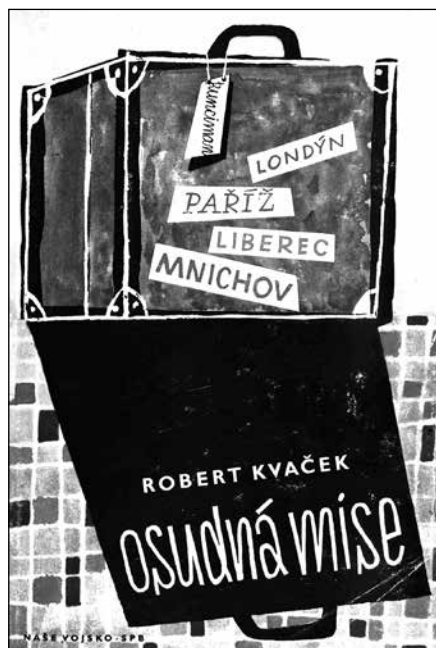
The leading Czech historian and university professor Robert Kvaček was born on 5 July 1932 in the small village of Dvorce just outside Jičín. He attended Jičín's prestigious Lepař Gymnasium, from which he graduated in 1951. In the same year he was accepted to study history at the Arts Faculty of Prague's Charles University (FF UK). Even before graduating, in 1956 he began to work as an assistant at the Institute of Czechoslovak History, and eleven years later he was appointed Associate Professor there. Aside from his book *Osudná mise*, devoted to Lord Runciman's 1938 mission to Czechoslovakia, (published by Naše Vojsko, Prague 1958) he has written a number of specialist and popular texts primarily on interwar European politics and its effect



on Czechoslovakia, including *Nad Evropou zataženo. Československo a Evropa 1933–1937* (Overcast Skies Over Europe. Czechoslovakia and Europe 1933–1937) published by Svoboda, Prague 1966. During the period of so-called normalisation his contact with students was limited, and he was prevented from lecturing on 20th century history, which led to a deeper interest in 19th century history. Nonetheless he continued publishing high-quality work, such as his book *Historie jednoho roku* (History of one Year) about 1936, a key year in the interwar period (published by Mladá fronta, Prague 1976), while there was also great interest

in his *Diplomaté a ti druzí. K dějinám diplomacie za 2. světové války* (Diplomats and the Rest. A History of Diplomacy During the Second World War) published by Panorama, Prague 1988. The fall of the Communist regime in 1989 allowed Robert Kvaček to return fully to teaching; in 1990 he was appointed as a full professor. Since then he has published a whole range of works. He has made a great contribution to the popularity of modern history, not only with his books that fall into the category of factual literature – such as *Causa Emil Hácha* (The Case of Emil Hácha) with Dušan Tomášek, published by Themis, Prague 1995, *Obžalována je vláda* (Government On Trial) published by Themis, Prague 1999 and *Generál Alois Eliáš. Jeden český osud* (General Alois Eliáš. One Czech Fate) published by Akcent, Třebíč 2001, but also with many media appearances and public lectures. During his long career at Charles University's Arts Faculty in Prague and since 1998 at the Department of History of the Faculty of Science, Humanities and Education of the Technical University of Liberec (TUL) he has also greatly influenced more than one generation of students, in part due to his con-

siderable rhetorical talent. He has overseen the completion of dozens of final papers. His contribution to history has also been emphasised by the creation of textbooks as well as his work on the instructional DVD *Obrazy z českých dějin 1914 až 2004* (Images from Czech History 1914–2004). Professor Kvaček is a member of a number of professional and specialist associations (including the Learned Society, the Czech-Slovak Commission of Historians and the Association of Factual Literature Authors), as well as the editorial boards of professional periodicals and scientific councils. He has received a number of awards, including on a number of occasions the Egon Erwin Kische Prize for Best Work of Factual Literature, the 2007 Vojtech Zamarovský Prize for Continuous Contribution to Factual Literature in Slovakia, and the Jičín Prize. In 2015, he was awarded the Golden Linden Tree military prize and in 2018 the Medal of the City of Liberec. In 2012, the Technical University of Liberec awarded him the TUL Gold Medal, and in 2016 the University of Pardubice awarded him the title of Doctor Honoris Causa. Professor Kvaček has always striven to achieve the widest possible knowledge of the context of historical events and possesses a deep knowledge of many other areas of society, including culture. He has a lifelong devotion to sport, both as a talented athlete and as a regular sports fan.



Front covers of professor Robert Kvaček's principal books – *Osudná mise* (left) and *Obtížné spojení*