

Editorial

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The year 2008 was not only in Czechia and the neighboring countries of Central Europe, but actually elsewhere in the world, a year of observing the anniversaries of "years ending in eight" – 1348, 1618, 1848, 1918, 1938, 1948, 1968 and indisputably many more. These are dates that are easy to remember and which students in many schools still learn as if they were foreign words, that is to say without further recognizing their deeper meaning. Unfortunately even many of the students coming to study at our university can only associate these years just with important events – the founding of the university by King of Bohemia and Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV, the revolt of the Bohemian estates and the start of the Thirty Years' War, the end of feudalism in the Habsburg Monarchy, the end of the First World War and the creation of Czechoslovakia, the occupation of the Czechoslovak borderlands by Hitler's Germany and its allies, the Communists' rise to power, the occupation by the fraternal armies of the Warsaw Pact. Period. Knowledge of history proven. But what about comprehension, discussion, creating one's own opinion, and thinking about history?

In 2008 there was a rise in the number of academic conferences and symposiums, exhibitions, and appearances by scholars in the media paying surprisingly significant attention to these types of anniversaries. After having followed many programs, documentary films and discussions I cannot seem to get rid of the impression that we are "mystified" by years ending in eight, as we forget about the important things: the significance of dates or individual events taking place in individual years (often in centers of power and under the control of a limited group of actors) does not directly correlate with the significance of the events, phenomena and processes, which as a result over the decades change not only the lives of millions of people - their societal standing, activities in the landscape, and their daily lives, but also the shape of the landscape and people's relationship to it. Reflecting on more general questions, the complex changes in the relationship between society and nature in the periods bounded by important years, changes in values among different generations and the permanent changes these generations have recorded in Mother Earth's imaginary chronicle as well as on the shape and current condition of the landscape, have again been relegated to the very edge of these recollections.

It is already 2009. The stock value of years ending in eight on the imaginary stock market of daily life will drop, as we begin to recall events that took place in years ending in nine. The current rising economic crisis will certainly not put an end to this "trade" in numbers. Someday they will write in the history books about how in 2009 the crisis hit the entire world at full strength; scholars will argue over where and why it developed and who caused it, and in decades to come will sum up its overall results. It will be interesting to note if they incorporate into their figures changes in values,

as they are hard to put numbers on. It will be interesting to note if we will reflect on the sustainability of our lives and on how much more “progress of civilization” our planet will be able to endure.

Therefore let us not recall only sheer numbers. Let us look for positive examples in the reactions of millions of our ancestors to critical events in history, and ask about how they changed the way they behaved and acted during and after these events, and then let us think about the results. As we can observe on our natural surroundings and the environment some of these results can be “real”. Maybe it will be enough to not blindly follow in the footsteps of previous generations.

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