



Formation of the “New Teacher” in Socialist Czechoslovakia

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Agenda

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This paper is one of the outputs
of a project called

Everyday life of basic schools in the normalization period as seen by teachers.

Applying oral history to research in history of contemporary education

(2014-2016)

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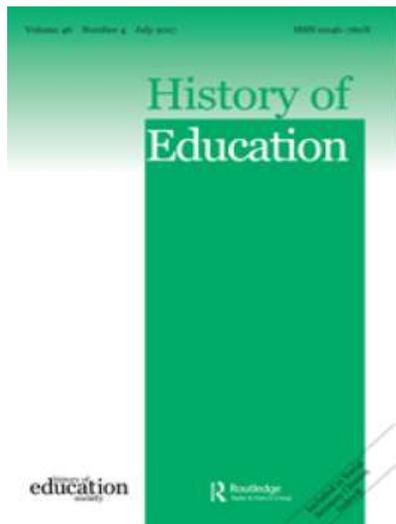
Selected results

2018

“You have betrayed us for a little dirty money!” The Prague Spring as seen by primary school teachers

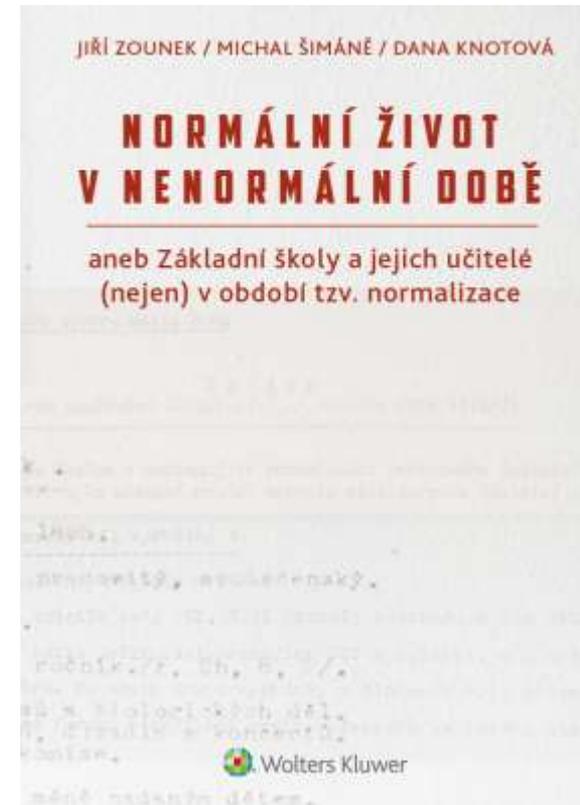
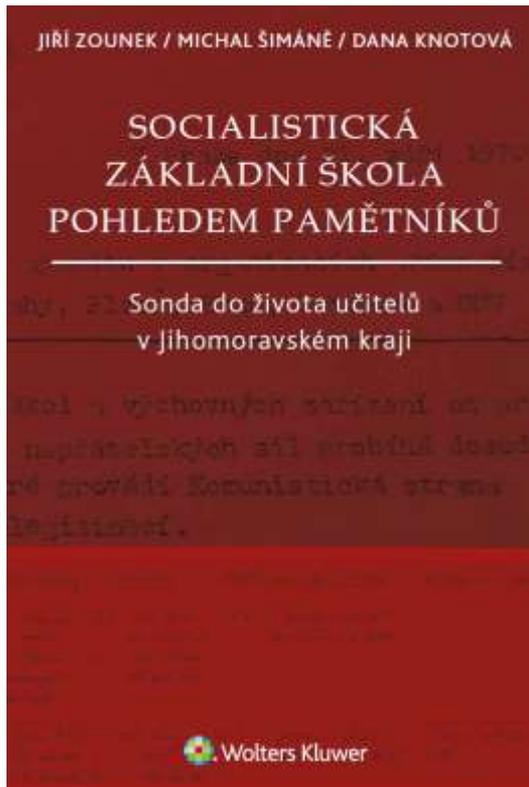
2017

Primary school teachers as a tool of secularisation of society in communist Czechoslovakia



Books (in Czech)

Normal Life In Not So Normal Times. Primary Schools And Their Teachers (Not Only) During The So-Called Normalization Period (2017)



Socialist Primary School as Seen by Eyewitnesses: Probing teachers' life in the South Moravia Region (2017)

About research project

The objective of the project was:

to explore and describe everyday life of primary schools (in Czechoslovakia) during normalization (1969-1989) including teachers' life and work.

Historical-pedagogical research based primarily on **oral history method.**



Methodology

Population sample and data collection

ISCED 1 and 2 **teachers/headmasters** with various teaching specializations who worked in former South Moravia region.

Age of respondents: 58-83.

In total, **53 interviews with 37 respondents** of **74 hours** were recorded (approx. 1500 pages of transcripts).

Typically 2 interviews per respondent:

- Biographical narrative
- Dialog between the respondent and the interviewer

Archival research (traditional historical sources)

**Brno City Archive
(AMB)**



**Moravian Land Archive
(MZA)**



**National Archive in
Prague (NA)**





Historical context

1945

Liberation of most of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army.

1948 – 1960

Communists take over all political power and state administration.

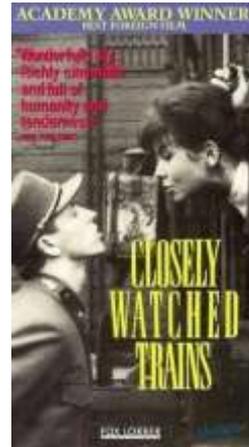
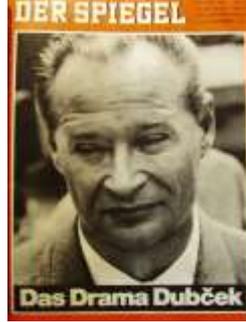


1960 – 1968

Gradual relaxation of political situation.

Efforts to revitalize the Communist Party.

1968 turnover – Warsaw Pact Army invasion.



1969 – 1989

A new tightening up of the communist rule (**normalization**).

End of 1980s – gradual dissipation of the Eastern Block.

1989 – the Velvet Revolution



“New man – New teacher“

“**New people**“ – active, loyal to the regime and honest citizens whose **professional and private lives were to be largely driven by the then power as dictated by the state ideology** (Overy, 2006).

Education was to be re-fashioned with the **goal of not only forming new intelligentsia loyal to the socialist regime but also to form new staff in education** devoted to communist ideology (Lunačarskij, 1982).

“New man – New teacher“

The teacher was to act on behalf of the regime, literally to be “*an ideological tool, with whose help the Party arms the maturing generations and masses ... with communist morals.*”

(National Archive, Central Ideological Committee of the Communist Party)

Výchova a vzdělání mládeže i dospělých je v socialistické společnosti významnou součástí revolučních přeměn, v nichž dělnická třída v čele s komunistickou stranou upevňuje výsledky politického vítězství nad buržoazií, rozvíjí socialistickou ekonomiku a socialistickou kulturu. V dějinném zápase socialismu s kapitalismem sehrává škola a celá výchovně vzdělávací soustava úlohu důležitého ideologického nástroje, s jehož pomocí strana vyzbrojuje dorůstající generace i masy pracujících vědeckým světovým názorem, komunistickou morálkou a všemi potřebnými znalostmi a dovednostmi, které umožňují člověku, aby plně rozvinul své schopnosti a uplatnil své zájmy.

Škola není jen záležitost pedagogická v úzkém smyslu. Má i vyhraněně politickou funkci, a proto odpovědnost za ni přísluší nejen odbornému resortu, ale celé společnosti.

Formation of new teacher

Entrance procedure

- Factors considered included family background, political opinions, faith, attitudes towards Warsaw Pact Army invasion

*“I knew I would be accepted, I had had no problem **because I was that child from a proletarian family.**” (Nora)*

*“...**prioritize children from working-class families and families of people working in agriculture** (...), make sure that fundamentals of **political theory** were examined within the oral interviews (...), find out about their family background, prioritize men”*

(Moravian Land Archive, meeting minutes, 1985, f. r. 3).

Formation of new teacher

Ideological education as a part of studies

- Compulsory subjects focusing on Marxism-Leninism (also part of final exams)

Ideological briefings for teachers

- Especially after 1968 ideological tightening in teaching staff teams was emphasized, using so-called ideological political teacher training (IPVU) as a tool

Teacher's Pledge:

“I promise I will always work in the interest of the working class and implement policies of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia....

I will adhere to the principles of communist education when cultivating love for their socialist homeland in pupils ... bringing them up in the spirit of the Marxist/Leninist world outlook. “

(Code of Practice, 1985)

SLIB

Slibuji, že budu vždy pracovat v zájmu dělnické třídy a uskutečňovat politiku Komunistické strany Československa. Budu věrný Československé socialistické republice a budu obhajovat a upevňovat její socialistické zřízení.

Slibuji, že budu zachovávat ústavu Československé socialistické republiky i ostatní zákony a právní předpisy, budu svědomitě plnit své povinnosti a pokyny vedoucích pracovníků a zachovávat mlčenlivost v pracovních věcech.

Budu podle zásad komunistické výchovy pěstovat v žácích lásku k socialistické vlasti. Povedu je k úctě k dělnické třídě a Komunistické straně Československa. Budu je vychovávat v duchu marxisticko-leninského světového názoru. Zavazuji se rozvíjet u mládeže internacionální citění a prohlubovat přátelství se socialistickými zeměmi, zejména se Sovětským svazem.

Jsem si vědom toho, že svým osobním životem, postojem a jednáním, účastí ve veřejném životě a vystupováním podstatně ovlivňuji jako socialistický učitel chování a jednání žáků i nejbližší veřejnost.

Při veškerém svém jednání budu mít na zřeteli prospěch Československé socialistické republiky a jejího lidu.

Jsem si vědom důsledků, které by pro mne vyplynuly z neplnění slibu.

v 1981

podpis

Teachers – a “state tool“ to educating new generations

- Teaching and a number of **political tasks in school and beyond**
- Pressure on parents and students in connection with Catholic faith = an example of the teacher being an ideological tool of the regime

“We had to visit families, we were ordered to go and had to go and persuade those parents not to sign up their children for religious instruction“ (Dáša).

Zounek, Šimáně & Knotová (2017).
Primary school teachers as a tool
of secularisation of society in communist Czechoslovakia.
History of Education, 46:4, 480-497



Teachers – a “state tool“ to educating new generations

Educational goals in classes

- Teachers were to pay special attention to bring up students in traditional friendship with the Soviet Union
- Specific outputs – for instance classroom decorations, noticeboard content, participation in voluntary work etc.
- Important anniversaries and days were one of the means of achieving these educational goals

Teachers – a “state tool“ to educating new generations

- Student careers were shaped through so-called **comprehensive evaluation reports**
- One of the important tasks of basic school teachers besides teaching
- The evaluation reports were attached to students’ applications for secondary schools

Teachers – a “state tool“ to educating new generations

- The evaluation criteria were not limited to pedagogical concerns. Teachers also had to evaluate for example:

“whether their parents were Communist Party members or had been expelled after 1969, that was a compulsory item, whether they attended religious instruction, whether their parents were religious – these paragraphs were given emphasis in the evaluations“ (Lara).

“Two faces“ of new teachers (Teacher: a double-edged tool)

- Teachers (in our sample) were trying to **protect children from pressures of the regime**

*“she was attending classes of religion and did not attend the Pioneers meetings, ..., and now she was applying for grammar school ... and I did not mention the religious instruction in the report, I did not mention she was not a member of the Pioneer organisation, **I withheld this information**“ (Lara).*

“Two faces“ of new teachers (Teacher: a double-edged tool)

- Protecting children = **teachers in danger** – e.g. dismissal from work, wages reductions, transfer to a less attractive position, transfer to another school, etc.
- In private lives – **two-morals principle** (behaviour at home vs. in public)

Conclusion

- The concept of shaping The New Man (new generations) was naturally present in Czechoslovakia too.
- It was practically and systematically applied in the educational system.
- **The New Teacher: from the onset of studies and throughout the career** – ideological re/education, various forms, methods, kinds of evaluation, sanctions, formal rules (teacher's pledge)

Conclusion

- Varying response from teachers – **resistance, participation, support**
- This limits our research – **recollection optimism**, current view of the Normalisation period = they keep things to themselves etc.
- Teachers were truly an educational tool – in classroom instruction and beyond, control but also formalism (even within the Communist Party)
- Impossibility to check on everything – differences between regions, schools

Thank you for your attention.

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