

IDEOLOGICALLY EDUCATIONAL WORK OF CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALISTS. PROBING LIFE WITHIN THE CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALIST PARTY BETWEEN 1948 AND 1989

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The 1948 Communist coup in Czechoslovakia radically reshaped the country's party-political system, which had already been disrupted in 1945 by the decision to ban right-wing political parties, but had nevertheless remained workable even in its curtailed form. The party-political system in place between 1948 and 1989 might be described as essentially a one-party regime, given that the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia held a dominant position within it after establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat. Nevertheless, it did allow for the existence of five other political parties, four of which (following the absorption of the Social Democrats) were able to engage in activity. The Communists made this concession in an attempt to create the impression internationally that the new political regime in Czechoslovakia was democratic. Those political parties that were permitted to exist could do so on condition that they endorsed the programme for the building of socialism and were supervised by the Communist-led National Front (NF), which dictated their activities and exercised control over them. The Czechoslovak Socialist Party (ČSS), which was founded in 1948 as the successor to the reformist and, in terms of its membership base, middle-class Czechoslovak National Socialist Party, was tasked by the Communists with winning over the middle class, social groupings of small businessmen, craftsmen, tradesmen, small private farmers, employees, civil servants, and a section of the intelligentsia, all of which the Communist Party had found it difficult to infiltrate. The ČSS undertook this mission by setting up a sophisticated system of instruction and education that operated both at the level of the party's headquarters and further down its organisational structure, with the aim of bringing under its influence all members of the party, starting with its presidium, central committee, parliamentarians, and members of the party apparatus, and ending with rank-and-file party members and those interested in joining it. The central political school in Javorník, as the capstone of the entire structure, was given the mission to organise educational modules – including short-term courses, residential training, and multi-year schools for external students – that would groom suitable candidates to be party officials involved in party work and the activities of the NF and its branches. One yardstick for judging the success of this intra-party training was the scale of party members' engagement in socialist building activities in their workplaces (their involvement in the “improvement” and “invention” movements, the socialist labour brigades, the shock worker movement, pledges to exceed production quotas, etc.), in positions within the party, in national (read: local administration) committees, in NF organisations, and in voluntary brigades, e.g. in the execution of NF electoral programmes, environmental protection, resource extraction, blood donation, etc. All the party's ideological efforts were directed at combating the “national socialism syndrome” that weighed heavily on the ČSS's existence. Party members were made to understand that there was only one revolutionary path to socialism and that it could only exist in a single form – the Soviet one.

Keywords: politics, party, ideology, socialism, instruction, Czechoslovak Socialist Party.

Formulation of the issue. The Communist coup of February 1948 [Veber; Hanzlík; Kalvoda] established a “dictatorship of the proletariat” in Czechoslovakia, put the country on the road to socialism, and had a profound impact on the party-political system [Malíř, 1996; Rataj, Martínek; Olivová; Šolle; Balík, Hloušek, Holzer, Šedo; Malíř, 2005, pp. 31–44; Harna, pp. 535–552]. In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the multi-party system had already been drastically diminished, with the National Front (NF) uniting only four political parties in the Czech Lands and two in Slovakia with a socialist or social reformist programme. [Kocian, p. 1126] Then, in a one-party system steered by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ; the “Communist Party”), the non-communist parties not only lost their *raison d'être*, but also

became a meaningless and essentially undesirable presence for the regime. For several weeks directly after the political coup, the Communists contemplated the prospect of liquidating them, either by banning their activities or by merging them with the Communist Party to form one national political party, [Kaplan, p. 95] but ultimately, swayed by Gottwald's¹ position on the matter, the alternative of letting them continue their activities, albeit under radically altered conditions, was the preferred option. Within the NF system [Pavliček; Kaplan], they were relegated to the status of grassroots interest groupings and became “shadow” entities, with the Communist Party assigning them the role of assisting it in the pursuit of its goals. At the same time, in the context of presenting the regime on the international stage, they were expected to

¹ Klement Gottwald (1896 – 1953), chairman of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, prime minister of the post-war Czechoslovak governments, and president of the republic from 1948 to 1953.

contribute to the illusion of democracy in Czechoslovakia.

Study objectives. In the Czech political landscape, the Czechoslovak Socialist Party (ČSS) played this role alongside the Catholic-oriented Czechoslovak People's Party [Lukeš] and, briefly, until it was absorbed by the Communists, the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party [Nedvěd]. The ČSS was a political party that emerged in February 1948 [Marek, 2023] from the ruins of one of the oldest Czech left-wing political parties, the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party (ČSNS), with roots dating back to 1897. At the time of the Communist coup, its left-wing pro-Communist faction expelled Zenkl's¹ existing party leadership from the political scene, renamed the organisation, established new organisational structures, and, in its manifesto, subscribed to the objectives pursued by the Communist Party. The only thing it carried over from the old party was a small section of the membership base willing to build the Soviet Stalinist model of socialism (initially in a rhetorical form, as a specific brand of socialism that reflected national traditions) under the tutelage of the Communists. Shortly after February, ČSS deputy chairman Alois Neuman² proposed to Rudolf Slánský³ that he would dissolve his own party and transfer its membership to the Communist Party [Kalpan, pp. 395–396]. The Communists rejected the offer, believing that it would be more useful and beneficial for them to make the Socialist Party an instrument of servitude. They recognised that, although the ČSNS had presented itself as a workers' party during its lifetime and did have a proletarian component, the core of its membership was made up of middle-class elements, craftsmen, tradesmen, shopkeepers, employees, clerks, peasants, housewives, and some of the intelligentsia, i.e. the very social strata that tended to be hard to infiltrate. In a situation where the two parties distrusted each other, it would be expedient for the Communist Party to set the ČSS the task of winning over these population groups to the idea of building a socialist society. The ČSS leadership knew full well that the Communists were not prepared to allow the heirs of the National Socialists, their most formidable opponents in the interwar years of the Third Republic, to be anything more than an extension of the Communist Party. Therefore, it accepted this proposition and made the socialist re-education and instruction of society the chief *raison d'être* of the ČSS. In addition to holding meetings, the party's ideological work, agitation and propaganda, and the training of the membership base across all organisational levels and categories, together with the associated and consequent guidance of party members towards the exemplary performance of socialism-building tasks both in the workplace and in their own private time, became the central focus of the party's day-to-day activities.

The aim of this paper is to probe, on the basis of samples, how the ČSS was involved in the socialist instruction of the membership base through the system of

party training in 1948 – 1989. It also examines the extent to which the party's efforts in this regard were successful. The intention is not to present and describe all the minutiae of the party's activities, as this would not only be beyond the scope of the study, but would also be tainted by the scepticism that arises in the mind of the historian when dealing with this subject. Hence the decision to conduct a sample-based probe.

Analysis of sources and literature. The present paper is the first attempt to sum up findings in this area. This is a subject that has not yet been addressed in books, journals, or conference proceedings. Our findings are informed by a study of archival sources and articles printed in contemporaneous magazines and newspapers. First and foremost, we drew on documents deposited in the former archive of the Czechoslovak Socialist Party (ČSS) and now held in the National Archives in Prague (NA) as part of the Archive of the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party (AČSNS), and on documents kept in the personal collection of Emanuel Šlechta. Printed sources include articles and analyses in the party's monthly periodical *Socialistický směr* and in the daily newspaper *Svobodné slovo* from 1949 to 1993. Some of the documents are available in anthologies of sources published by the ČSS either on the occasion of its national conferences or in compilations edited by the party publishing house for purposes of propaganda and agitation.

Research results. In 1950, Alois Neuman, one of the party's leaders, proclaimed, "The challenge of our era is not only to bring socialism into being, but, above all, to educate socialists."⁴ The party stuck to this mandate from the very first days of its existence [NA, f. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-3, kart. 30 – Zhodnocení základního politického školení; NA, f. AČSNS, kart. 303 – 4. celostátní konference ČSS 1963, Zpráva o činnosti ÚV ČSS; NA, f. AČSNS, kart. k. 601 – 6. celostátní konference ČSS 1972 – Politickovýchovná práce strany] and pursued it through the continuous organisation of political training. The party leadership explained the purpose of this to the membership base by emphasising the importance of lifelong education for an individual's life. As a builder of a fundamentally new socialist society, a person cannot rely solely on faith in the idea they are pursuing and on the emotional aspects of their being. Instead, they must also possess deep knowledge and understanding, comprehend the laws of social development, have a broad worldview, and develop their intellectual and moral qualities and attributes [O úkolech lidové správy v budování socialismu, 1948; Kapitola, 1954]. In practice, the party elite either directly took on or, within their role as auxiliaries to the Communist Party, adopted – under NF supervision – the mission of ideologically guiding those social strata and population groups that, while accepting the vision of socialism, had not fully embraced the Communist concept of how a socialist society was to be built and what it should actually

¹ Petr Zenkl (1884 – 1975), the party leader from 1945 to 1948, was a former mayor of Prague. He survived the Nazi concentration camps at Dachau and Buchenwald. In August 1948, he succeeded in emigrating, and from 1949 to 1974 he chaired the Council of Free Czechoslovakia in Washington, DC.

² Alois Neuman (1901 – 1977), ČSS deputy chairman from 1948 to 1960 and chairman from 1960 to 1968, minister in governments of the Czech Socialist Republic and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

³ Rudolf Slánský (1901 – 1952), general secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and member of the National Assembly, one of the main architects of the post-1948 Communist terror. He was executed in 1952 after a political show trial, but judicially rehabilitated in 1963.

⁴ Quoted in a footnote in *Socialistický směr*, vol. 2, no. 9, 1 May 1950, p. 339.

look like in the future. The party wanted to purge them of the “old”, national socialist mindset (i.e. to re-educate former national socialists) [Kapitola, 1984, pp. 24–25] by means of systematic, long-term educational efforts in the spirit of scientific socialism [Vědění k tvořivé práci a socialismu, 1950; NA, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-3, kart. 30 – Celkové zhodnocení činnosti ČSS, 1950]. Its aim was to persuade them that there was only one form of socialism: Marxist-Leninist, Soviet socialism. The ČSS intended to carry out its mission of championing the Communists by re-educating the middle classes. By the mid-1960s, it was confident that it was doing a sterling job. A report on the party’s activities presented at the 5th National Party Conference in 1966 observed that “Virtually all party members from the former small-scale production sectors have been integrated into the state sector or into cooperatives” [NA, f. AČSNS, kart. 305 – 5. celostátní konference ČSS 1966 – Zpráva o činnosti ÚV ČSS; NA, f. AČSNS, kart. 601 – 6. celostátní konference ČSS 1972 – Politickovýchovná práce strany].

At the turn of the 1970s, there was a formal shift in the rationale behind the relevance and need for party members to be politically educated. The ČSS’s normalisation-era leadership accepted the Communist interpretation of the events of 1968/69 in the country and publicly conceded at the ČSS’s 6th National Conference in 1972 that the hard-built system of intra-party instruction had faltered both in terms of its organisation and, especially, its outcomes [NA, f. AČSNS, kart. 601B – 6. celostátní konference ČSS, Zpráva o činnosti ÚV ČSS; NA, f. AČSNS, kart. 601 – 6. celostátní konference ČSS 1972 – Politickovýchovná práce ČSS]. Therefore, the party elite considered it necessary to “rely on the Communist Party” and to devise a “new” ideological platform, which the party then spent the next 15 years developing. The ČSS declared that goal of its ideological instruction was to mould engaged party members who would contribute to the building of real socialism. It was intent on guiding their socialist consciousness. It wanted to eradicate from their minds the last vestiges of “bourgeois and petty-bourgeois thinking”. Most importantly, it was concerned that party members respect the Communist Party’s spearheading role in society, understand how imperative it was to cooperate with the Communists, fully support the NF system and be disciplined in the way they joined in with its activities, and help to foster friendships and alliances with the USSR and other socialist bloc countries. In its propaganda of the second half of the 1970s, the party leadership expanded these educational goals to include the more flexible acceptance of scientific socialism. In truth, this whole “normalisation concept” of internal party tutelage merely reiterated, in different words, what the ČSS leadership had been pursuing since February 1948.

Over the past 40 years, political training within the ČSS had undergone a bewildering array of changes and innovations. These were grounded both in the search for new forms and methods of educational work based on the

experience that had been accumulated, and in efforts to reinforce the party leadership’s ability to shape the ideological profile of the membership base. Nevertheless, it could be argued that this was a system that had retained its core features throughout the period we are studying. Training essentially took place at four organisational levels – central, regional, district and local.

Political education at central party level was the most important and was given priority. Headquarters concentrated on management, planning, and oversight in order to influence, in particular, the content of intra-party training. It also took charge of preparing candidates for the internal workings of the party, for work in the national committees and at the NF and its organisations, [NA, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-5, kart. 30 – Zápis ze 79. schůze generálního sekretariátu ČSS, 24. 3. 1954] and for the political instruction of staff at the party’s central secretariat. The ČSS’s presidium set the themes of individual lectures and their series on a party-wide scale. The content coincided with the aforementioned objectives pursued by the party.¹ From roughly the mid-1950s onwards, the existing theoretical and historical orientation of the training was updated to include topics addressing current political, economic, and cultural problems and matters within society [NA, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-5, kart. 30 – Zápis o 79. schůzi generálního sekretariátu ČSS, 24. 3. 1954; NA, f. AČSNS, kart. 305 – 5. celostátní konference ČSS 1966 – Zpráva o činnosti ÚV ČSS]. Starting in the mid-1960s, there was a clear tendency towards deeper specialisation. Participants in the training, especially at district political seminars, which after 1960 became “the ideal form of political education” within the party, [NA, f. AČSNS, kart. 305 – 5. celostátní konference ČSS 1966 – Zpráva o činnosti ÚV ČSS] wanted generalisations to be dropped in favour of explanations from knowledgeable experts. Over time, from around the turn of the 1970s, organisations were also given the opportunity to include supplementary lectures directly related to life in the regions in which they operated.

The party leadership was very meticulous when it came to selecting the right instructors. Those occupying positions within the party apparatus at the lower echelons of the organisational structure were required to work with centrally issued briefs to ensure that the information they were passing on was of high ideological and factual quality. The leadership was systematic in making sure that they were properly trained. It initiated the formation of regional and district “speaker” teams and regularly assessed their performance. A similar objective of “creating a unified mindset” within the party was pursued through the preparation of printed study materials for seminar participants and instructors alike.

At the root of all work related to political instruction and education was the planning process. Right away in October 1948, the first party-wide training schedule was drawn up, with the intention that some 10,000 officials, members of regional, district, and local ČSS action

¹ The themes dealt with Marxist theory and were tied to issues surrounding the building of socialism in the USSR and Czechoslovakia. They regularly responded to the latest congresses and resolutions of the Communist Parties of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, with the instructors placing an emphasis on the resulting tasks for the ČSS. In the 1950s, studies of the works of Stalin and Gottwald were a common theme, and

ample space was given over to the struggle for peace and interpretations of the current international situation. Seminars devoted to the NF and its activities were very frequent. From the 1960s onwards, the emphasis on mastering the principles of scientific socialism was joined by a focus on lectures dealing with the ideology of the former ČSNS, nationalism, Masaryk’s bourgeois humanism, and revisionism.

committees, party members working in national committees, and all party secretaries would be required to complete this training within four to five months [NA, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-1, kart. 30 – Zázpis z jednání předsednictva ÚAV ČSS 20. 9. 1948]. These ambitions were evidently revised by a new training plan drawn up by Luděk Kapitola¹ and adopted by the party's presidium on 14 March 1949. This plan stipulated that members at the lowest organisational rungs were to attend at least two lectures a year. As of the 1950/51 academic year, the "Basic Political Seminar", meant for the entire membership base, was held for the first time. The results of an annual evaluation of this seminar indicated that 1,210 lectures were delivered by around 220 instructors. Held across 180 centres, these lectures were attended by 28% of members. This was viewed positively, as the lectures were reportedly successful in galvanising part of the membership base and improving communication between party officials and members. However, the events also exposed failings in the work of the regional committees, which allegedly sent out invitations without engaging in personal agitation, direct contact with party members, and persuasion to ensure attendance [NA, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-3, kart. 30 – Zhodnocení základního politického školení, 1951]. Basic Political Seminars continued to be held in a slightly modified form in subsequent years, as the party leadership viewed them as a means of mobilising members and imparting elementary political knowledge. It also appreciated the contribution they supposedly made to increasing members' interest in working for the NF and engaging in public life, deepening Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship, and propagating the peace movement. Ultimately, these seminars also aided the process of "sorting those with a constructive outlook from the inveterate enemies of our people's democratic state" within the membership base. At a meeting of the ČSS general secretariat on 12 November 1951, it was proposed that Basic Political Seminars be declared the primary and most important activity within the party, and that its outcomes form part of party members' reviews [NA, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-3, kart. 30 – Zázpis ze schůze generálního sekretariátu ČSS, 12. 11. 1951]. The speaker was following up on a statement made a few days earlier by party chairman Šlechta,² who had exhorted those present at a meeting of regional and district secretaries to monitor every member of the ČSS "so that we know exactly how they think and where they harbour misgivings" [NA, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-3, kart. 30 – Stenografický zázpis z pracovní porady krajských a obvodních tajemníků, 5. 10. 1951]. In 1950, there were eight week-long and 13 two-week training sessions, attended by 634 party members. Between 1949 and 1952, 12% of party members were reported to have received residential training. The party presidium had plans for all party members to attend a

special six-month course³ from November 1950 to April 1951, at which they would learn the fundamental principles of scientific socialism (i.e. Marxism) [NA Praha, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-6, kart. 30 – Zpráva o činnosti ČSS za říjen, listopad a prosinec 1950].

The party considered residential training to be the most effective form of political instruction. It took two forms: short-term seminars and lectures lasting for two or three days, and long-term courses running for up to six weeks, as well as distance learning programmes spanning from one to three years. One key development was the establishment of the Central Political School in Javorník, a town in the Benešov district, which opened on 9 January 1950. Because the spatial capacity of these facilities (the local guesthouse in Javorník could accommodate no more than 40 trainees) did not conform to the party's overwhelming "training mania" of the time, buildings were structurally altered and the number of trainees was regulated by means of candidate interviews conducted at the party's regional and district secretariats, which delegated their members to the training sessions. The principle of selectivity was soon intensified by the need to compensate trainees' employers for their wages, which was not without its own difficulties. Under the party's annual budgets, spending on this activity was the largest item after payroll costs and ran into millions of crowns.

An extraordinary national ČSS conference in 1960 was seen as a major milestone in the organisation of intra-party-political training. [NA, f. AČSNS, kart. 160 – 3. (mimořádná) celostátní konference ČSS, 1960] It brought to a close the "Šlechta era" within the party, and a group that had coalesced around Alois Neuman emerged at its head. This new group, understandably, positioned itself in opposition to the former leadership and was keen to take party education in a new direction.⁴ It talked about creating a system aimed at switching from the training of a select few officials to mass education of the entire membership base. The new leadership introduced a scheme of three-year planning for party instruction. This included lectures at the member meetings of grassroots organisations and at "trusted offices", as well as regional and district political seminars, a central party school, and individual study for party members. An emphasis was placed on visual agitation using bulletin-board newspapers and posters, as well as on work with books, audio recordings and film [NA, f. AČSNS, kart. 303 – 4. celostátní konference 1963 – Zpráva ÚV ČSS; NA, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-6, kart. 30 – Zpráva o činnosti ČSS za druhé pololetí 1951]. At the end of the 1980s, 50% of local organisations had noticeboards and took part in competitions for the best design. Agitators were briefed at regional level, with the party leadership organising gatherings for the most successful of them in Prague.

¹ Following his expulsion from the Communist Party in 1948, Luděk Kapitola (1922 – 2002) joined the ČSS, where became one of the most prominent figures in its history. He was a member of the presidium of the ČSS Central Committee, editor-in-chief of *Svobodné Slovo* from 1959 to 1968, ambassador to Argentina from 1969, member of the Federal Assembly of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, secretary of the NF Central Committee, and secret StB collaborator.

² Emanuel Šlechta (1895 – 1960) – founder of the ČSS, its first chairman, member of the National Assembly, minister in governments of the Czech Socialist Republic. StB collaborator. After being removed from all

positions and expelled from the ČSS in 1960, he and his wife committed suicide, presumably out of fear of arrest and imprisonment.

³ There were six lectures: Socialist Worldview; With the Soviet Union for Eternity; Socialism and Patriotism; The National Front and the People's Democratic System; Our Economy in the Transition to Socialism; Our Party and Its Mission.

⁴ In reality, the underlying forms of political training within the party had been moulded by a decision of the ČSS presidium's inner circle as far back as the turn of the 1950s.

Kučera's¹ normalisation-era party leadership later followed up on these forms with a view to improving and broadening them. This is how the 7th National Party Conference in 1977 prompted the launch of a new *Stranická knihovnička* series to publish ideologically and agitationally conceived works and important party documents. By 1987, 35 volumes had been published in this series. At the end of the 1980s, this offering was expanded with the publication of the internal *Informační zpravodaj* (Information Bulletin), which gave the membership base access to the full texts of documents from meetings of the ČSS Central Committee, along with reports on the international situation, economic developments, etc.

As we have noted, after 1960 the focus of mass party education was shifted to the level of district organisations, whose powers were redefined and strengthened by the party's revised organisational rules. According to a summary presented at the party conference in 1963, member meetings were held four times a year, and political lectures on themes set by the headquarters in Prague were attended by about a third of members. At annual member meetings, this number rose to 55%. District political seminars, "one of the most attractive and effective forms of instruction", were intended for district and regional officials, members of national committees, members of NF organisations, members of socialist labour brigades, and others who had been cleared in the selection process. They all received printed educational materials from party headquarters for personal study during their free time. The lecturers, members of the district speaker teams, were required to attend briefings at the central political school. Between 1960 and 1963, some 1,200 party members attended this form of training, with an attendance rate of around 75% for each lecture. From the mid-1970s, the idea of "mass training" was re-evaluated and replaced with training for selected promising candidates and with seminars for district-level activists [NA, f. AČSNA, kart. 602B – 7. celostátní konference ČSS 1977 – Politická výchova na úrovni okresů a míst]. Starting in the 1978/79 academic year, training took the form of a one-year district political school with one- and two-year lecture cycles. On average, about 1,200 party members completed the programme each year. In the 1980s, district political seminars ran concurrently as a complement to the district political school. The speakers were senior officials from Communist Party and NF District Committees, and from the District National Committee. The agenda addressed issues related to the improvement of life in the district and the contribution made to this by the ČSS [NA Praha, f. AČSNS, kart. 603B – 8. celostátní konference 1982 – Přehled činnosti od 7. do 8. konference].

The strengthening of the role and powers of the party's district committees diminished the relevance of regional political seminars for mass instruction. They continued to organise training courses for officials at regional level, mostly on topics related to social and economic life. From the mid-1970s, the themes covered aspects specific to the regions. However, the main focus of their educational work was switched to the training of instructors for district

speaker teams, which they took over from the party's headquarters. Starting in 1973, responsibility for working with new party members was permanently transferred to regional bodies. This agenda was ceded to them by the central political school [NA, f. AČSNS, kart. 602B – 7. celostátní konference ČSS 1977 – Politická výchova na úrovni krajů; Dokumenty 8. celostátní konference ČSS, p. 53]. Within six months of joining the party, each new member was required to undergo a two-day training course, where they attended four lectures on the party's programme objectives, the political system, international relations, and the development of the Czechoslovak economy. Another form of training was new-member meetings, which involved discussions with members of the party's regional committees. The role of regional organisations in party education took another turn in early 1982, when the 8th National Conference decided to hand over the management of this agenda (both planning and implementation) to regional committees. This increased the importance of the regional political seminars, where officials learnt about current developments both globally and on the domestic front. New topics were introduced on the development of the region, with lectures given by the chairpersons of regional national committees and by the secretaries of Communist Party and NF Regional Committees. Another innovation was the holding of regional information meetings attended by senior party officials.

Lectures held at meetings of grassroots organisations were the weakest link in political training. It was difficult to organise training outside this platform. Problems were related both to selecting suitable themes and to finding speakers willing to give lectures. Attendance depended on how appealing and topical the issues discussed at the meeting were, or how they were linked to local concerns of interest to party members. The quality of the speaker was another factor determining the success of a lecture. Even so, the ČSS's 9th National Conference held in 1987 described lectures at member meetings as "having the most influence, in terms of mass political instruction, on the party's membership base" [NA, f. AČSNS, kart. 603A – 9. celostátní konference ČSS 1987 – Přehled činnosti ČSS od 8. do 9. celostátní konference].

At central level, 1963 can be considered a particular milestone in intra-party political training. Distance learning was introduced for party officials, [NA Praha, f. AČSS, kart. 305 – 5. celostátní konference ČSS – zpráva o činnosti ČSS přednesená A. Neumanem; Celostátní konference Čs. strany socialistické, 1967] and over time these developed into an organisational structure resembling external university studies. In the 1960s, it was run as a three-year course in philosophy and political economy, and a one-year course in sociology and social psychology. From 1973 and in the 1980s, it was conducted solely as a three-year programme for officials with "good future prospects", as selected by the party's central office. Javorník hosted regular sessions of lectures and seminars, with participants taking exams and writing a final thesis at the end of their studies. Teaching was generally provided

¹ Bohuslav Kučera (1923 – 2006) was a long-standing political worker for the ČSS, its general secretary, and its third chairman from 1968 to 1991. Deputy of the National and Federal Assemblies of the Czechoslovak

Socialist Republic, deputy of the Czech National Council, justice minister, deputy chairman of the Federal Assembly and the Central Committee of the National Front of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

by external instructors from universities and research institutes, most of them, of course, Communist Party members [Dokumenty 8. celostátní konference ČSS, pp. 52–53]. Students could advance to the next year only after successfully meeting all study requirements. In the early 1970s, the number of distance learning graduates was relatively small (a total of 23 officials completed their studies in 1970–1972, and 27 in the 1975/76 academic year), but by the turn of the 1980s there were some 100 students, and 60 further on in the decade. Those who enrolled generally completed their studies. The party rewarded successful graduates of the training courses with book gifts from Melantrich, such as Marx and Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*. Later, the best of them were invited to go on trips to the USSR as part of the "Trains of Friendship" scheme. Many courses concluded with events such as a group visit to the Lenin Museum in Prague.

Besides the distance learning programme in Javorník, short-term courses (of 15–18 seminars per year) were also held, with the same goal of providing instruction to new officials. In 1972–1977, for example, these courses were attended by 1,850 members [NA, f. AČSNS, kart. 603B – 8. celostátní konference ČSS 1982 – Přehled činnosti ČSS od 7. do 8. celostátní konference].

Party statistics indicate that party members receiving training at the central school totalled 2,561 in 1972–1976, 2,821 in 1977–1982, and 2,319 in 1982–1987 [NA, f. AČSNS, kart. 603A – 9. celostátní konference ČSS 1987 – Přehled činnosti ČSS od 8. do 9. celostátní konference].

Research conclusions. The application of Sartori's [Sartori, p. 74] classic minimal definition of a political party to the ČSS in 1948–1989 degrades this political organisation to a "shadow" entity. Although it was an organised entity of individuals united by a common political interest, it did not engage in a battle for political power. It nominally participated in undemocratic elections as part of the Communist-dominated NF and accepted NF decisions. In the totalitarian and *de facto* one-party system, the ČSS was given a subordinate role and could only function within a narrowly defined space and under the direction of the Communist Party, of which it was merely an extension. The ČSS leadership knowingly accepted this role. Indeed, it had no other choice if it wanted to keep the party in existence. The Communists fiercely stifled the slightest hint of a change in this position after 1953 and 1956, [Kaplan, pp. 235–238] and especially after 1968. There were no shifts in this status quo in the 1970s and 1980s thanks to the normalisation policy pursued under Husák's leadership of the Communist Party and to the actions of long-time party official and chairman Kučera, whose cautious policy of "realism" inhibited any initiatives. By advocating "what was possible in the circumstances", the ČSS remained an "ally" of the Communist Party almost until the last days of the totalitarian regime. Action taken after 17 November 1989 cannot possibly redeem the ČSS or justify its practices in the preceding 40 years.

The elite at the helm of the ČSS elevated the mission of participating in the instruction of socialist-minded individuals, with a particular focus on the middle class, and thus actively contributing to the building of a socialist society under the leadership of the Communist Party to the core *raison d'être* of the party. They continued to treat this

as a priority even after this social stratum of small businesses and smallholders had effectively been eradicated. After 1960, they focused their ideological efforts on the struggle against "the vestiges of the mindset of the classes and strata integrated into the production process". They claimed that although the bearers of petty-bourgeois holdovers had been exterminated, these holdovers themselves persisted in the form of petty-bourgeois mentality and psychology, and their goal was to put an end to that petty-bourgeois mentality [NA, f. AČSNS, kart. 721 – Podmínky a smysl existence nekomunistických stran v NF]. Within the ČSS, the adoption of the principles of scientific socialism was considered to be the most effective tool in re-educating people.

The ČSS leadership viewed the system of instruction set up within the party positively. It was a subject of sustained interest to the party presidium and was discussed both at plenary sessions of the ČSS Central Committee and at national party conferences. Annual analyses reflected innovative efforts and the search for new ways to influence the participants of events. For the party leadership, one yardstick for judging the success of training was the scale of party members' engagement in socialist building activities in their workplaces (their involvement in the "improvement" and "invention" movements, the socialist labour brigades, the shock worker movement, pledges to exceed production quotas, etc.), in positions within the party, in national committees, in NF organisations, and in voluntary brigades, e.g. in the execution of NF electoral programmes, environmental protection, resource extraction, blood donation, etc. From a formal perspective, there was a logical structure to the system of party education within the ČSS. The favoured part of the system was the central political school, with various training modules ranging from short-term courses to multi-year forms of distance learning for selected party officials or party members with good future prospects, who were being groomed for higher office. At the other end of the scale, training within local organisations was the system's weakest link. At most of them, a lack of interest meant that lectures were held not as standalone events, but at the beginning of member meetings. The most successful instructors were those who were able to link the centrally dictated theme with local issues. The ČSS leadership was aware that there was a problem with the quality of instructors as pivotal figures in the party's educational work. At the central political school, it used proven teachers from universities or workers from the Communist Party apparatus. Speakers at lectures and meetings held by lower organisational units, on the other hand, were routinely recruited from the party's own ranks. The leadership set up teams of instructors whose members were required to attend training seminars. In order to guarantee uniformity in their ideological work, the headquarters provided them with printed information materials, as well as the texts of the lectures themselves.

As for the content of training sessions, seminars, and courses, bearing in mind that the participants had joined the party as a manifestation of their support for the vision of socialism as the realisation of the historical traditions of the Czech nation in the spirit of humanism and democracy, it was not primarily aimed at highlighting socialist values,

because then the speakers would simply be preaching to the converted. Rather, the instructors were tasked with convincing the membership base that a merely “patriotic and elemental approach to socialism is not enough”, but needs to be expanded and enriched with a scientific approach. In the eyes of party ideologues, this lay in scientific socialism. In other words, all the party’s ideological efforts were directed towards the need to combat the “national socialism syndrome”, which, although weakened as one generation gave way to the next in the party’s membership base, was never eradicated over the whole period of the party’s existence. ČSS members were made to understand that there was only one revolutionary path to socialism and that it could only exist in a single form – the Soviet one.

The party training system served as a means to galvanise the members of the party and its apparatus. The ČSS leadership had a twofold use for it: to test the “ideological integrity” of the membership base and to select and prepare future party and NF functionaries. Leaving aside the situation at the level of the grassroots organisations, the party’s membership was not

fundamentally averse to this form of party work. Members’ reactions were varied. Some viewed it as a “necessary evil”, while others saw it as an opportunity to learn something new, knowledge that was not ordinarily available, that would broaden their education and political horizons, to establish and cultivate friendships, or to take a break from the daily routine for a while at the party’s expense in the pleasant setting of a guesthouse. The question remains as to whether the mindset of the masses can be influenced by lectures, discussions, visual forms of agitation, etc. At moments of crisis in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1980s, it always transpired that the views of the majority of the ČSS membership base diverged from official party propaganda in many fundamental respects.

Our study describes the basic level of ideological education work in the party. Further research will need to focus on its integral component, which is the involvement of party members in the practice of building socialism. The party called on them to work voluntarily, in their spare time, for the benefit of industry, agriculture, education and culture. They performed tasks that the state and party apparatus of the CP was unable to solve in any other way.

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ІДЕОЛОГІЧНА РОБОТА ЧЕХОСЛОВАЦЬКИХ СОЦІАЛІСТІВ. ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ВНУТРІШНЬОПАРТІЙНОГО ЖИТТЯ ЧЕХОСЛОВАЦЬКОЇ СОЦІАЛІСТИЧНОЇ ПАРТІЇ У 1948 – 1989 РОКАХ

Комуністичний переворот у Чехословаччині 1948 р. кардинально змінив і партійно-політичну систему країни. Вона вже була порушена 1945 р. рішенням про заборону правих політичних партій, але навіть в обмеженому вигляді продовжувала функціонувати. Партійно-політичну систему, що діяла у 1948 – 1989 р., можна схарактеризувати, по суті, як однопартійну, оскільки КПЧ, яка встановила у країні диктатуру пролетаріату, посідала в ній домінуюче становище. Проте водночас вона допускала існування п'яти інших політичних партій, чотири з яких (після поглинання соціал-демократії) могли розвивати діяльність. На цю поступку комуністи пішли, намагаючись справити на міжнародну спільноту враження, що новий політичний режим у Чехословаччині є демократичним. Дозволені політичні партії могли існувати за умови прийняття програми побудови соціалізму та нагляду Національного фронту, очолюваного комуністами, який визначав їхню діяльність, а також контролював її. Чехословацька соціалістична партія, заснована 1948 р. як наступниця реформістської та з погляду членської бази середньокласової Чехословацької націонал-соціалістичної партії, отримала від комуністів завдання залучити до ідеї побудови соціалізму середні верстви населення, соціальні групи дрібних підприємців, ремісників і торговців, дрібних приватних фермерів, найманих працівників, державних службовців і частину інтелігенції, до яких КПЧ було важко проникнути. Це завдання ЧСП виконувала, створивши розвинену систему освітньо-виховної роботи, що діяла як на рівні центрального апарату партії, так і на всіх нижчих ланках її організаційної структури, з метою охопити своїм впливом усіх членів партії – від президії, центрального комітету, депутатів, працівників партійного апарату до рядових членів партії та осіб, зацікавлених у вступі в організацію. Найвищою ланкою цієї системи була Центральна політична школа в Яворнику, завдання якої полягало у підготовці відповідних кадрів для майбутньої участі в партійній роботі та діяльності НФ і його організацій за допомогою окремих навчальних модулів, зокрема короткострокових курсів, шкіль-інтернатів і кількарічних шкіл з екстернатним навчанням. Критерієм для констатації успіху такої внутрішньопартійної підготовки був рівень участі членів партії у соціалістичному будівництві на робочих місцях (у раціоналізаторському та винахідницькому русі, бригадах соціалістичної праці, ударництві, укладенні зобов'язань щодо перевиконання виробничих норм тощо), у виконанні партійних функцій, роботі національних комітетів і організацій НФ, а також у волонтерській роботі, наприклад в межах виконання передвиборчих програм НФ, захисту навколишнього середовища, збору сировини, донорства крові тощо. Вся діяльність партії у сфері ідеологічної роботи була спрямована на подолання “синдрому націонал-соціалізму”, яким було обтяжене існування ЧСП. Її члени мали зрозуміти, що до соціалізму веде лише один революційний шлях і що він може існувати також лише в єдиній, радянській формі.

Ключові слова: політика, партія, ідеологія, соціалізм, виховання, Чехословацька соціалістична партія.

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