

FATHER FROST WELCOMES YOU OR THE MYTH¹ OF NEW PRAGUE AS A BEAUTIFUL CITY IN A SOCIALIST WAY 1948–1953, until the deaths of Stalin and Gottwald

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Motto: *“Today we are at a crossroads. Either Prague will be a city with socialist-conceived development or it will be a big city of disharmony and mediocrity ... Prague for progressive architects is not only the Golden Prague of beautiful views of Hradčany, the pride of the Baroque Lesser Quarter. There is also a different Prague and it is an incomparably larger Prague with the infinite poverty of housing in Žižkov, the Old Town, Holešovice and all the dark corners of Prague and makeshift barracks on the extreme outskirts where behind a wooden wall, just like a wall of noble plaster, is the maimed life of children, where every rebellion on the road to a better tomorrow is suffocated by the dirty air of courtyards into which the sun vainly finds its way to windows of human dwellings. And that is Prague, which aches, which irritates and which stirs up resistance.”* (Kříž, J. [1949]. *Towards a New Prague. Architekt*, 1-XLVI, 2, March, 18.)

“The castle and the settlement below the castle and its parts in front of and under the ramparts, the later city and paupers’ quarters, proletarian quarters... these are the sad distinctions of architectural dissimilarity of those times...” (Krola, J. [1950]) A socialist engineer, a socialist architect, socialist builders, socialist architecture. *Věstník SIA, Časopis spolku čs. inženýrů a techniků*, 18, 12, 31.12., p. 117.)

“The sense of construction of new Prague is the care for the needs of the working man, an attempt to make Prague a more beautiful and well-known city.” ([1951]. Letná, the first construction site of socialist Prague. Prague: The Central National Committee of Prague, p. 5, from a speech of Gustav Bareš.)

“Socialist Prague will be a dignified picture of Libuše’s prediction and a dignified monument of the great era of construction.” (Fleissig, J. [1951]). Up with the first construction site. *Nová Praha*, 54, 3, 4.2., 50.)

¹ The term myth is used in this study in the sense of a social charter which clarifies the development of society and at the same time morally justifies the interests of the powerful, that is, in the concept close to Bronislaw Malinowski, the British anthropologist. Its shaping function, its key importance in forming its identity is the most important characteristic of a myth.

*“The West is preparing an atom bomb to destroy the cultural values in Europe and we answer that threat this way: that we are not only protecting the cultural monuments of the glorious past, but we are renovating them for the next generation. We are also laying foundation stones for the peaceful construction of the people’s democracy under the leadership of our greatest friend and protector, the Soviet Union.” ([1951]. We are renovating the cultural values of the past. *Nová Praha*, 54, 2, 26.1., 28.)*

Abstract: *The study applies the proposition of French anthropologist Marc Augé that the city is an exemplary object of the imagination to Prague after the Communist Revolution (1948), when the Communists quickly reinforced their position as the leading political power. In Prague they offered an image of the beautiful socialist city of the future. Specific fulfillment of this myth meant the factual and symbolic occupation of the capital. The Communists won decisive influence in communal politics, nationalized numerous buildings in the city and their inventory, eliminated urban tradesmen. A harsh centralized bureaucracy and service went hand in hand with a transformation of the urban space. A myth could fill only a city with a well-arranged plan, with generous high-rise buildings, with extensive residential buildings, with purpose-built infrastructure, with new historical traditions and with new symbols. The socialist city went the way of balancing social differences with extensive investments in its outskirts. The center of the city, earlier inaccessible to the lower social classes, decayed. The Communist myth of the socialist city was an inseparable part of the Party ideology. In practice, however – and in view of the inefficient economy and investments in preferred parts of the state – in Prague it clashed with daily reality. In its light although it appears homogeneous, at the same time, however, it appears like an empty ideological-political construct.*

Keywords: *socialist city, Prague, myth.*

Mircea Eliade, a historian of religion of Rumanian origin, attempted an analysis of communism and its acceptance among the lower social classes (in his terminology “folk”) from an eschatological position. In the structure of communist ideology he recognized the renaissance myth about the golden age, a myth with which the beginning and the end of history were connected. Karl Marx, according to Eliade, further detailed this myth as a myth of the proletariat as a modern Messiah who leads humanity to the removal of tension in

society. (Eliade, 1998, p. 15)² The megalomania and optimism of the communist myth were, however, a very contagious phenomenon, especially after 1945. The tragic war interruption, which drastically disrupted European spiritual sources, led (not only) Czech post-war society to search for absolutely new values, patterns of human behavior, new symbols and/or new social structures. In the lower and middle social classes there was, to a certain extent, a naïve, absolute reappraisal of the social situation connected with the spontaneous support of communist ideology.³

The victory of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the election of May 1946, confirmed in February 1949, was reflected at the same time in the position of the new governing team toward the city and its inhabitants. However it is impossible to state that all the ideas asserted after the February Revolution were new.⁴ The communist myth in the city was demonstrated (although different urban myths of various time layers survived beside it in managed and unmanaged ways) especially 1) in purges on the level of communal politics,⁵ which were to guide “new” people (general employees were bound to a promise that they would be “*in ideal unity with working people*” – intensively work for the building of socialist society)^{6,7} 2) in the evaluation of factories and plants with

² According to Eliade, myth is an explaining narration about what really happened, what leads to imitation and to bringing the past into the present. (Eliade, 1998, pp. 8-9, 13-14).

³ Within the framework of Jewish studies we have already repeatedly pointed out this unpopular fact. The implication of mass emotions, patterns of behavior and experience during the establishment of the totalitarian regime after World War II have also been pointed out by Czech social historian Jiří Matějček. (Matějček, 2008, pp. 377-386)

⁴ The Council of the Central National Committee of the Capital City of Prague was already elected on July 1, 1946. It developed a program of renovation and construction of liberated Prague. It was to be a socially just plan (e.g., they counted on a revision of residential space), confiscated property of the Germans was to pass to the Prague community. The plan counted on generous complex construction, part of which would be day-care centers, youth centers, laundries, heating plants, services, health centers, maternity clinics. There were to be established children’s playgrounds within housing developments and retirement homes. Extensive modernization of city transportation, including the construction of an airport and a bridge across the Nusle valley (1946), were planned. *Budovatelský program rady ústředního národního výboru hlavního města Prahy. Praha, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12.*

⁵ Re: the purge of the municipal government in Prague, cf. *Dějiny Prahy II., 1998, pp. 450-451.* – These purges also concerned the sphere of education. *False defenders of folk, disseminators of poison, silencers of Socialist thoughts, kitsch makers and pornographers were separated from the ranks of educators and are also forcefully expelled from associations,*” wrote Josef Kabát. (1948). View into Prague Education. *Věstník, 51, 12, 27. 3., 267- 268.*

⁶ The purges, however, also proceeded in the bureaucratic machinery, in security, in the army, in the universities, in Sokol. (Kaplan, 1991, pp. 19-11, 14)

⁷ The new mayor and his second vice-mayor were members of the Communist Party. (1948). The newly constituted board of the Central National Committee of Prague. *Věstník hlavního města Prahy (Věstník), 51, 10, 13.3., 219*



Ruins of cities as a symbol of the capitalist relation to cities and tower-like constructions as a symbol of socialist cities. Drawing: K. Vaca. (1951). *Dikobraz*, VII, 45, 4. 11., 5.

young male and female shock-workers as the most important part of the city organism, in evaluation which corresponds to state goals through extensive development of heavy industry, which did not need a too-highly-qualified work force, 3) in the propagation of “voluntary” physical work in so-called *national shifts of victory* as one of the main ways of creation of city values, 4) in rehabilitation of the outskirts, 5) in forcing into conformity and in consequent control of city institutions, alongside boards of associations, schools,⁸ cinemas, museums and theaters as *people’s gathering places*, 6) in forcing into conformity the need of the population of the cities in the sphere of living, the way of food consumption, transportation, shopping, experiencing festivities and entertainment, 7) in the positive evaluation of new historic traditions of the city.

Already at this time, however, there appeared in public programmed, directed and relatively sharp criticism under the proclaimed slogan “*criticism guarantees us that we will not stop*,”⁹ bad organization of part-time work, unwillingness and dishonesty of employees in restaurants, stealing in enterprises, possible criticism of the uncultivated behavior of the inhabitants of big cities (pollution of sidewalks, devastation of green parts of the city). Such

⁸ Cf., e.g. Jaroš, V. (1948). Unified school – bridge to a happier future of the nation. *Věstník*, 51, 15, 17. 4., 337

⁹ Zich, R. (1950). We develop criticism and self-criticism on a mass scale. *Praha*, 53, 2, 9. 1., 13

Volunteers as a symbol of socialist Prague. National exchange on Klárov 1955. (1955). *Večerní Praha*, 1, 3, 4. 4., 1.



expressions of general coarseness of post-war society, however, were judged to be a result of the survival of the amoral bourgeois regime which needed to be eradicated. An insufficiency of construction (long-term construction, wasting of material, high costs) and services (insufficient quality and costliness, as well as long waiting times) proved to be so serious that they were also brought up on the level of Party meetings.¹⁰ Instead of criticism of their own regime, however, in this way they created the illusion that it was actually the Communist Party that really cared strongly about improving the social situation.

Unique propaganda means were undoubtedly also thousands of hours the communists dedicated, e.g., to the cleaning up of Prague after the Second World War.¹¹ Prague city government employees then regularly and with appropriate publicity went out on so-called coal brigades.¹² With general agreement, public use was made of confiscated property: at least some former millionaires' villas spectacularly housed day nurseries (e.g., the confiscated villa on Russian Avenue or the villa of the actor Vlasta Burian in Prague)¹³, nursery

¹⁰ (1960). *Resolutions and documents. Central Committee of the Communist Party. From the eleventh meeting to the whole-state conference 1960*. Prague. State publishing house of political literature, 25 and 51. – E.g., still in 1957 one residential unit was built in an average of fourteen and a half months. Despite all efforts, from 1948 to 1957, “only” 414,000 apartments covering million square meters were constructed. *Resolutions of the eleventh meeting of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, June 18-22, 1958*. Ibid, 100 and 103.

¹¹ In autumn, 1948, the Communist cemetery near the Veletržní Palace in Prague was fixed up (1948). The Communists fixed up the cemetery, *Praha* 1, 12, 5. 11., 2.

¹² (1948). Coal brigades 1948 – participation of public employees. *Věstník*, 51, 27, 10. 7., 617. (1948).

¹³ (1948). Vršovice children got a villa. *Praha*, 1, 3, 27. 8., 7; Ledrová, Z. (1948). The villa of Vlasta Burian to the children of workers. *Praha*, 1, 6, 24. 9., 6-7.



First of six prefabricated houses in Prague – Pankrác. (1955). *Večerní Praha*, 1, 22, 27. 4., 1.

schools,¹⁴ or health centers.¹⁵ The famous Prague night enterprise “5P” turned into a children’s home.¹⁶ City halls, headed by communists, proclaimed no less than a populist fight against black marketeers (this is even how Prague communist mayor Václav Vacek assessed the February Revolution)¹⁷. Of course, the extension of official hours in city agencies to evenings as well as the declaration of the reduction and humanization of the bureaucracy¹⁸ were accepted with the agreement of the majority. At the post-February meeting of the National Committees in Kroměříž they abolished housing rights; appealing requests for humanization of offices and a sufficiency of apart-

ments, as well as a suspension of so-called black construction were proposed.¹⁹ These were even called the greatest disincentives of the biennial plan.²⁰ On the contrary, hidden from public view was to be the fact that the secretariat of the Czechoslovak Communist Party got buildings, automobiles and furnishings from nationalized enterprises (Kaplan, 1993a, p. 70)

Socialist symbols and cultural phenomena allegedly corresponded in cities to the new relation of the regime to the people. We can divide them into

¹⁴ This concerned fifteen nursery schools. -Rg- Pražská kultura včera, dnes a zítra. *Věstník*, 51, 18, 8. 5., 436.

¹⁵ (1950) The National Committee of Prague district into the second year of the five-year plan. *Pražský kraj*, 2, 1, 1. 1., p. 2.

¹⁶ (1949). *Praha*, 36, 5. 9., 7

¹⁷ Vacek, V. (1948). Dear Fellow Citizens! *Věstník*, 51, 8, 28. 2., 169..

¹⁸ -Rg- (1948) Citizens, the administration must serve the people! *Věstník*, 51, 13, 3. 4., 296.

¹⁹ (1948). Less paperwork and more services for the people! *Praha*, 1, 3, 27. 8., 3, 4, 5.

²⁰ (1948). *Praha*, 1, 3, 27. 8., 11.

1) ornamental symbols (the five-pointed red star shining until night on the enterprises which fulfilled the plan, but also on numerous buildings, including the Černín Palace in Hradčany,²¹ Soviet flags flying together with Czechoslovak flags on state holidays, posters with portraits of the builders of the new regime, etc.), 2) architectural symbols (high-rise buildings and constructions of socialist realism, prefabricated housing developments), 3) symbols, monuments of representatives – tolerated national culture and representatives of Marxist and Communist ideology, as well as the Soviet liberators, for whom streets were named, 4) symbolic public festivities (mainly political celebrations: May 1, May 9, November 7, state visitors from Socialistic states, and, further, the birthdays and death dates of communist and blue-collar politicians), but also selected folk celebrations (especially harvest festivals, grape harvests and also, after 1955, the Spartakiade, which replaced the gymnastic organization Sokol shows) 5) symbolic artistic events (exhibitions, theatrical performances), 6) “new” institutions allegedly serving citizens (offices, ministries, department stores, communal services into which were also “socialized”²² trade and crafts),²³ 7) city scenery (improvement and creation of green spaces for the healthy socialist man or beautification of the outskirts, 8) verbal city symbols and political folklore (mainly mottos, an anecdote or an easily remembered jingle – a short form of some sort of propaganda, 9) the symbolism of the names of streets, squares, embankments, parks (e.g., in 1948 in Prague Bredovská Avenue was changed to the Avenue of Political Prisoners, the Rieger embankment became Gottwald, Rieger Square became Jirásek, the Park on Poříčí became

²¹ Later the stars were limited. (Kohout & Vančura, 1986, s. 174)

²² In reality it was nationalization with central steering.

²³ From 1949 to 1954, the first stage of liquidation of private small-scale production was under way. (Kaplan, 1993, p. 220) It launched its operation with the first twelve communal enterprises of Prague on June 1, 1949 (a construction company, an apartment enterprise, a transportation enterprise, an auto service, a guard business, a horticulture company, water works, a mortuary, an employment agency, a purchasing center, a spa recreation service, Prague hotels and restaurants. Communal enterprises were defined as national property in the hands of management of the people. They were part of the socialist sector of the economy, supplementing national enterprises. The National Committee provided them with financial means; part of their profit belonged to it; it did not, however, share in their losses. (1949). The first communal enterprise established. *Věstník*, 52, 2, 7. 1., 3-4. Gradually there appeared Pramen, Kovomat, Tep, Textilia, Clothing Outlets, Jas, Zdar, Glass and Porcelain, in 1949 Pastry Shops ([1949] Prague Pastry Shops – a new communal enterprise. *Praha*, 11, 31. 2., 9), two years later, Chemodroga, Elektra, the SBS Mír Publishing House, Kovoslužba, Autorenova, Obnova, Elektra, Narpa, Mototechna, Sanitos, the Pramen chain, movable shops (from October 1949). At the beginning of 1951 there were already 15 communal enterprises (1951). Prague communal enterprises in the third year of the five-year plan. *Nová Praha* 54, 1, 12. 1, 6.



On the location of a closed bourgeois bar they are opening a workers' factory kitchen. Bourgeois loungers and prostitutes are thrown onto the street. Above the city it is becoming light. (1949). *Dikobraz*, V, 4. 1., 1.

1949-1953 the economy was subordinate to the *concept of iron and steel* [Renner & Samson, 1993, p. 33]), or volunteers, with the help of shovels, a pickaxe and old brooms, beautifying the old or perhaps creating a “new” city. A further symbol was the smiling and obliging saleswomen in department stores and in public canteens. These new signs and, in addition, emphasized examples corresponded to the mentality of lower social classes – supports for the new regime which traditionally, according to socio-historic research, overestimated handwork. (Matějček, 2008, p. 380)

the Jan Šverma Park, Holešovice Square became the Square of Jiří Dimitrov, etc.²⁴ 10) symbolism of city photography which appeared in the daily press and in magazines on newsstands, but also on public notice boards of factories and enterprises, 11) symbolism of myths concerning the city – after February, e.g., the anti-German myth of the famous old Slavic city²⁵ and the myth of our Mama of cities²⁶ or the myth of Prague as a lovely woman and good housewife²⁷ were used for Prague.

Symbols of the people of the city also corresponded to the new (or seemingly new) socio-political situation. In terms of the program, one of the symbols that were created of the socialist city became manual factory workers, in the optimal case miners (in

²⁴ (1948). New names of Prague streets. *Věstník*, 51, 14, 10. 4., 322; 16, 24. 4., 362.

²⁵ Telegram of the Prague mayor to the Soviet army. *Věstník*, 51, 8, 28. 2., 170

²⁶ (1948). *Věstník*, 51, 17, 1. 5., 391.

²⁷ (1948). Prague cleans up before the Sokol gymnastic meeting. *Věstník*, 51, 24, 18. 6., 565.

“... a large city ... it is an exemplary object of the imagination” wrote the French scholar Marc Augé (Augé, 1999, p. 109) about one of the new worlds of contemporary anthropology. The extraordinarily skillful communist propaganda meanwhile gained control of the whole city which very distinctly separated the old town from the new socialist, communist town. Here it also placed the outskirts in perspective, allegedly a symbol of the alarming bourgeois treatment of undesirable parts of the city organism. The communist image of the bourgeois city placed in contrast the center–outskirts, wealth–poverty, or the pampered center and shunned outskirts, a detested or at least hardly prestigious, hopeless place where the bourgeoisie took its trashy entertainment – an amusement park. Workers’ colonies (in Prague, e.g., Na Krejčárku or V Číně, Arizona in Jinonice) were to be liquidated as remains of capitalist poverty. From this intellectual source, then, came the unfriendly relation of the new regime to the city centers, heretofore virtually unattainable for the lower social classes. During the Second World War and immediately after it these centers lost their original owners and inhabitants (as a result of the Shoah, the displacement of the Germans, the forced evacuation of the politically handicapped population to the country) and its former importance. The slump, however, also had to do with the fall of the living standard: while new construction (in Prague, e.g., the Prosek housing development [from 1949] with its own heating plant, park and playground, Kobylisy, Strašnice, Vršovice with prefabricated houses with blocs of 16,000 inhabitants, skeletal houses in Dejvice, later housing developments in Břevnov, Michle and Vysočany)²⁸ offered relative comfort: apartments with central heating and hot water, kitchens with built-in furnishings and with an electric stove²⁹; the city center, where almost nothing was invested, decayed. The prototype of housing under capitalism became the bloc of apartment houses with courtyard porches and with one tap with running water and one toilet per floor.³⁰

Hatred, however, was also directed toward the solvent inhabitants of the city. The new town was to house new people. A program of change of the social structure of Prague to the benefit of the working class was presented by Rudolf Slánský, the secretary general of the KSČ (Czechoslovak Communist Party)

²⁸ For Prague housing developments, cf. *Dějiny Prahy II* (The History of Prague II), 1998, pp. 454-455, 458-459.

²⁹ Cf. Information about Prosek. (1950). The model housing development in Prosek. *Praha*, 53, 1, 2. 1., 2.

³⁰ (1949). The biggest home owner in Great Prague. *Praha*, 10, 17. 3., 12



Construction site at Letná – the first important collective Prague building. Propaganda drawing O. Mrkvička. (1951). *Dikobraz*, VII, 7, 13.2., title page.

in the Fifth regional conference concerning administration of the people in May 1949: “Prague must become a state of working people ... We will create a plan of systematic bolstering of the percentage of the working class in the population of Prague, and, tenaciously and, more quickly than till now, we are going to drive out of Prague all parasitic and reactionary elements. A social and class analysis of Prague shows that the percentage of workers to the entire population is only 30 percent. That is an incommensurate number of members of the blue-collar ruling class which must give character and determine the tone of the capital. Our shock-workers, the cream of the working class, must have priority for the best apartments.”³¹

A similar request was also repeated at the plenary session of the Central National Committee: Prague was to become a city of working people, the capital of the people’s democratic republic heading for socialism.³² On March 26, 1952, the Communist Center decided about the eviction of the politically unsuitable population of Prague within the framework of Operation B. In reality, the operation followed the assurance of apartments for army officers and the State Security and for leading communist functionaries. (Kaplan & Paleček, 2001, pp. 30-31)³³ (Kaplan, 1992)

We have to start our analysis of how Prague coped with its own historical tradition and with the pressures of the “new” times by the affirmation of

³¹ (1949). Prague conference on people’s administration. *Praha*, 52, 21, 20. 5., 3.

³² (1949). Action program of the Prague people’s administration. *Praha*, 52, 27, 4. 7., 1.

³³ The operation lasted until August 1953. During that time, only in Prague, for example, 3700 to 4000 people moved out. (Kaplan & Paleček, 2001, pp. 30-31)

the fact that even in post-February Czechoslovakia the eccentric location of the capital³⁴ remained respected as well as its front row cultural and educational function. (The identity of Prague under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and partly during the First Republic was formed from the rivalry with Vienna). The new constitution confirmed the status of Prague as the capital (paragraph 168), seat of the legislators (paragraph 39), main seat of the President (paragraph 67), and regular seat of the government (paragraph 80).³⁵ The establishment of the districts actually diminished the power of Prague. The importance of Prague as the capital was, thus, still not permanently appreciated. (Kohout & Vančura, 1986, p. 171) The greatest financial resources were, in addition, spent on the construction of Slovakia, the Ostrava region and the border area. (Kohout & Vančura, 1986, p. 170)

On March 30, 1948, the Central National Committee of Prague approved the action program, on the basis of which systematic construction of apartments that counted on volunteer workers was to have begun. Physically able Prague Germans³⁶ were also to join in the public works. That is, Prague was desperately short of apartments³⁷ (8,000 of them were destroyed during the war; expropriation of apartment spaces soon turned into into offices, seats of new state institutions and cultural organizations.[Kohout & Vančura, 1986, 170]) The action program counted on the transformation of nine brothels into rooming houses. Endowment houses and confiscated property were to fall to the municipal apartment organization.³⁸ Not even this measure, however, could solve the apartment shortage. On April 28, 1948, the management of city apartments had to be regulated by law, which counted on the creation of a list of applicants for apartments and assigned apartments, with apartment inspections, with tenants assigned to larger apartments, with division of apartment units.³⁹ Of course the insufficiency of apartments was used for propaganda purposes. The communist mayor Václav Vacek attributed the greatest blame for the apartment scarcity in Prague to “*destructive activity of reactionary*

³⁴ This led, e.g., to the consideration of the necessity of constructing a new Prague airport. Pour, I. (1948). Will Prague have a new airport? *Věstník*, 51, 9, 6. 3., 201

³⁵ (1948). The gates of the Slavic agricultural exhibition are opening. *Věstník*, 51, 17, 1. 5., 391.

³⁶ (1948). Action program of the Central National Committee of the Capital, Prague. *Věstník*, 51, 13, 3. 4., 289, 290.

³⁷ This was allegedly the greatest apartment crisis in the history of the city. (Dějiny Prahy II., 1998, s. 453)

³⁸ *Ibid*, 290.

³⁹ Bäuml, F. (1950). Care for apartments in the Prague district. *Pražský kraj*, 2, 1950, 3, 1.2., 39.



On Letná, the so-called first construction site of socialist Prague, mothers with little children also worked (1951). *Letná, first construction site of socialist Prague.*

elements that infiltrated into the top places... of the National Committee.”⁴⁰ It was necessary to crack down firmly on alleged members of the bourgeoisie. An apartment official, J. Lutovský, promised harsh punishment for non-declaration of oversized apartments, inhabitanacy of apartments without certificates, etc.⁴¹ In the autumn of 1949 inspections were launched of apartments in Prague’s Vinohrady,⁴² which riled the new political higher-ups as a bourgeois district. Negative features were to be balanced with positive activities. Bars became clubs for workers.⁴³ With the help of volunteers thirty children’s playgrounds, week-end youth camps,

and a swimming pool in Vysočany were to be constructed; suburbs were to be improved; lawns and parks were to be opened... They expected improvement of work of district and factory doctors, completion of construction of Bulovka and Krč hospitals, completion of the reconstruction of the Podolí sanatorium. Museums and galleries were to be opened for workers.⁴⁴

The new city rulers harshly criticized the capitalist era of the city in which its structure was allegedly damaged and disfigured. The bourgeoisie allegedly had not had respect for medieval Prague, which it had demolished and reconstructed feelinglessly. Above all, however, there was no concept of the development of the city. Prague had allegedly become a Babylon of opposing

⁴⁰ Action program Quoted article 289.

⁴¹ (1948). *Věstník*, 51, 17, 1. 5., 385.

⁴² Fleissig, J. (1949). *Praha*, 25, 15. 10., 9.

⁴³ Ký. (1949). *Praha*, 5, 28. 1., 6-7. – The first club appeared in an adaptation of the nightclub Ermitáž on National Avenue. (1949). *Praha*, 9, 25. 2., 8.

⁴⁴ Action program ..., Quoted article 290.

interests, an unhealthy, dangerous and inhospitable city.⁴⁵ Socialist planners rehabilitated unperceived localities that were to become “*the innovative places of our time.*” Urbanists sketched a transportation loop, bridging the Nusle valley,⁴⁶ a university city, expansion of Ruzyně airport, green belts, mainly, however, miles of new housing developments with a sufficient number of day-care centers, nursery schools, schools with their own playgrounds, apprentices’ and student housing, swimming pools, a Prague recreational area in Jevany⁴⁷ – a former middle-class resort. The guiding plan for Prague of October 28, 1948, arose like a synthesis of First-Republic and post-war concepts of construction and development.⁴⁸ (Kohout & Vančura, 1986, p, 171, 178)

Notice was given that the wound of Prague remained as the railway network did not connect Prague to other world-class cities. Letná standing 30 meters above the level of the city, a housing crisis (in 1949, 70,000 applications for apartments were registered), obsolete districts.⁴⁹ Therefore architects counted on globally strengthening the industrial character of the proliferating city at the same time, however, that they counted on the development of transportation and green areas and on the stripping of the differences between the center and the outskirts.⁵⁰ The city was to be divided into parts for the requirements of work, living, transportation, administration, culture, services and recreation.⁵¹ A very successful publicity attraction was the opening of reconstructed noble gardens on the basis of the governmental resolutions of February 15 and July 13, 1949. (Kohout & Vančura, 1986, p. 173)⁵² More green space appeared with the fixing up of in-bloc gardens in the framework of the self-help project “M.”⁵³ Attention was paid especially to the green areas on the outskirts. “*In Vysočany, among the shacks, fences, hovels – hotbeds of wheeling and*

⁴⁵ Chamrád, V. (1951). Towards a new, beautiful Prague. *Nová Praha*, 54, 1, 12. 1., 3

⁴⁶ Development of the project was commissioned in the middle of 1948. -Rg- (1948). We are realizing ten-year-old plans. *Věstník*, 51, 24, 18. 6., 553.

⁴⁷ Dream ... Prague yesterday ..., Quoted article 5.

⁴⁸ Until April 1948 more than 1,200 construction firms were nationalized and the creation of state construction and planning firms came into being. (Kohout & Vančura, 1986, p. 172)

⁴⁹ Havlíček, J. (1949). Urgency more than urgent – planning of the capital. *Architekt*, I - XLVI, 2, March, 18.

⁵⁰ (1949). Prague of the future. *Architekt*, XLVII, 1, April, 1, 7, 8..

⁵¹ Vomastek, F. (1950). We are building recreation for Prague workers. *Praha*, 53, 4, 24.1., 8

⁵² In 1949 the Portheim garden in Smíchov was accessible. fig. (1949). We are changing the face of Prague. *Praha*, 26, 24.4., 12.

⁵³ Until June 1, 1949, 199 playgrounds came into being. Beránek, E. (1949). Building of children’s playgrounds in Prague. *Praha*, 33, 15.8., 4.



Václav Vacek, red Prague mayor, took part in a spectacular shift of the Central National Committee of Letná (1951). *Letná, first construction site of socialist Prague.*

dealing and black-marketeering, in short in the typical, neglected outskirts of the former capitalistic big city whose rich didn't care about the way a worker lives in the Prague West End, in the middle of this junk on which the District National Committee of Prague 8 will cast light as soon as possible, there was erected a wonderful, perfectly fixed-up recreational area for worker's children and their parents," wrote *Praha*, the weekly publication of the Central National Committee of the Capital, Prague (came out on June 30, 1949).⁵⁴

Letná became a symbol of the new Prague, demonstratively fixed up by volunteers starting February 1, 1951. Among the volunteers was Gusta Fučíková, widow of an executed communist journalist, the mayor Václav Vacek, but also the rector of the Theological Faculty Tripský. *"Let the agitators explode as well as those who hope that this work will not succeed. We, under the leadership of our Communist Party and our President, Comrade Klement Gottwald, are building Prague the beautiful, the happy, socialist Prague!"* commented, *"the great initiative of the Prague people"* engineer Vladimír Chamrád.⁵⁵ The first swallow of the new architecture was a four-story prefabricated house on Zelená liška in Pankrác, the so-called house from a construction kit of the Stavosvit company in Gottwaldov.⁵⁶

On the contrary, Wenceslas Square, a modern Prague boulevard, was considered a place which had arrived under capitalism with repeated suppression by the gendarmerie of the working class and with roundups of communists. Therefore, here in 1949 the Communists placed an *exhibition of the construc-*

⁵⁴ flg. (1949). We are changing the face of Prague. *Praha*, 26, 24. 6., 12.

⁵⁵ Letná, quoted work, p. 16.

⁵⁶ (1955). Houses from construction kits. *Večerní Praha*, 1, 19, 23. 4., 1.

tive efforts of Prague,⁵⁷ which was to document the changes in the city under the leadership of the KSČ, and thus symbolically change the space.⁵⁸ But the aversion to Wenceslas Square lasted. In 1951, there appeared for the first time in the press the term ideological center of the city. This was to be on the axis of Čech bridge. The ideologists assumed that it would lessen the importance of Wenceslas and Old Town Squares and create an important counterpart to the Prague castle.⁵⁹ The new attributes given to Prague also corresponded to this idea: Prague of Klement Gottwald, the first worker President; Prague, the city of the issuing of the nationalization edict; Prague, the city of the February Revolution, congress of council of enterprises, congress of farmers, the ninth congress of the KSČ. The castle was to be perceived as the place of election of the first worker President and the space for the meetings of the Central Committee of the KSČ.⁶⁰

In the new era at the same time was born and established a symbolic picture of Prague, the city in which “*brotherly friendship was sealed forever*” between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union.⁶¹ This image was then and henceforth codified with frequent memorials of Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship: e.g., from May 1945 to November 7, 1947, a burial ground of honor was built for 435 fallen soldiers of the Red Army, a cemetery respecting the rules of Soviet military cemeteries. In March 1948 a memorial was unveiled on Velvary Road in Dejvice, where the Red Army first crossed the border of Prague in May 1945.⁶² Not less important were also public activities of the socialist states – Soviet satellites (e.g., the Slavic agricultural exhibition, 1948) and the unconditional taking over of the Soviet cultural model (e.g. the introduction of a unified school in 1948⁶³). In the first post-February months, indeed, the traditions of the democratic First Republic (celebrations of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the legions in Italy on Old Town Square,⁶⁴ the Sokol show in

⁵⁷ Kaucký, F. (1949). *Praha*, 52, 20, 13.5., 3.; Bonhardová, N. (1949). Exhibition of Socialist construction. *Praha*, 52, 23, 3. 6., 6-7.

⁵⁸ Two years later there was an exhibition at the Liberation Monument in Žižkov. 30 years of the KSČ. (1951). *Nová Praha*, 54, 10-11, 1. 6., 182.

⁵⁹ (1951). Plans of the socialist city are born. *Nová Praha*, 54, 25-26, 21. 12., 482.

⁶⁰ (1952). Letter from the president of the Republic to Klement Gottwald. *Nová Praha*, 55, 1, 9. 1.

⁶¹ Telegram, cited article.

⁶² Mollík, Z. (1948). Monuments of Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship. *Věstník*, 51, 9, 6. 3., 194.

⁶³ On April 26, 1948, pupils and teachers organized a manifestation of appreciation for the introduction of the unified school in Old Town Square. (1948). *Věstník*, 51, 18, 8. 5., 415.

⁶⁴ (1948). *Věstník*, 51, 18, 8. 5., 398.



Gigantic monument to J. V. Stalin in Prague on Letná. Condition in 1955. (1955). *Večerní Praha*, I, 24, 29. 4., 1.

1948) were still taking place; the following years were, however, already under the sign of the unambiguous Sovietization of Prague. In April 1948 a meeting of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship⁶⁵ took place in Prague. The May Prague Uprising was interpreted as a matter of communists and leftists opening the way to massive nationalization, to the displacement of the Germans and to the demonstrative denial of Prague German culture.⁶⁶

The biggest symbolic tendency to the new lifelong friend was, however, the Stalin monument, a work of the sculptor Otakar Švec and the architect Jiří Štursa, unveiled for May 1 and May 9, 1955, under the official nickname *Monument of sincere gratitude*.⁶⁷ Preparations for the construction of the monument, however, had begun much earlier. The idea of building a Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin monument was updated on September 1945 at a meeting of the Central National Committee in Prague by the then-mayor Petr Zenkl (Hojda & Pokorný, 1997, p. 205) On April 7, 1949, the Central National Committee of Prague announced a contest for a monument or a memorial which would “*ideologically express the personality of Generalissimo Stalin.*” “*It would actually be a state obligation to construct to Generalissimo Stalin the most venerable monument in Prague as the throne of our republic,*” commented minister Václav Kopecký on the decision.⁶⁸ Finally the project won which allegedly most clearly connected Stalin’s personality with the people and

⁶⁵ (1948). *Věstník*, 51, 18, 8. 5., 422.

⁶⁶ Pražák, A. (1948). Five May days. *Věstník*, 51, 18, 8. 5., 409.

⁶⁷ (1955). Monument of Sincere Gratitude. *Večerní Praha*, I, 26, 2. 5., 1.

⁶⁸ (1949). A Work of the highest honor. *Praha*, 43, 24. 10., 1.

as the only one whose solution mastered the Letná hillside.⁶⁹ Stalin's birthday was also celebrated every year: forums, meetings, lectures, small Stalin exhibitions, theaters, concerts and short political meetings. This was not only the case in Czechoslovakia. 1951 saw a monument to Stalin by Sándor Mikus in Budapest. (Hojda & Pokorný, 1997, pp. 211-212) At the same time, East Berlin renamed Frankfurt Avenue *Stalin Avenue*. The architect Hermann Henselmann proposed for this prestigious avenue buildings in the style of so-called confectionary architecture (Buffet, 1999, pp. 334-335) The panorama of Warsaw was dominated by the J. V. Stalin Palace of Culture and Science.⁷⁰

A symbol of the new era and Sovietization of Prague was also supposed to be the first high-rise building in the city: the 88-meter-high Hotel Družba in Podbaba, a collective work of so-called socialist realism from the years 1952 to 1956, architecturally imitating high-rise buildings in Moscow. (Kohout & Vančura, 1986: 172) The unaccustomed height and its non-human dimensions, gaudy, in regard to the post-war situation, costly decorations (brown and red sgraffiti, gilded linden leaves) were explained to Praguers through the purported objective of the building, "... we are building not only for today. We are building for Communism."⁷¹ The socialist city was to be proud of nine- to eleven-story buildings on broad boulevards with stately avenues. Tower-like buildings were called the new silhouettes of the city.⁷² "*It is a true expression of reality in its revolutionary development. It presents an organic synthesis of realism with revolutionary romantic. It includes in itself the pathos of construction and struggles; it tries with its means to change reality; it agitates for its ideal happiness.*" This is how Julius Šif described socialist realism in Soviet architecture in 1948.⁷³

An image of Moscow as an ideal *city of victorious socialism*, the Prague model, was concocted. It was constructed on the implacable bipolarity of the world: "Look at capitalist London, New York or Paris! Everywhere there we see the same picture: unforgivable contradictions exist there coming from the capitalistic social order. *"On one hand the rich – exploiters with their ways of luxurious ostentatiousness, on the other hand the poverty of the masses, unemployment,*

⁶⁹ (1950). Prague is going to have a monument to Generalissimo J. V. Stalin. *Praha*, 53, 1, 2. 1., 6-7.

⁷⁰ (1955). Warsaw yesterday and today. *Večerní Praha*, 1, 36 ze 13.5., 2.

⁷¹ Vojtěch, J. (1955). A high-rise building in Prague. *Večerní Praha*, 1, 21, 26. 4., 2.

⁷² Chamrád, V. (1953). Prague of tomorrow. *Nová Praha*, 56, 18, 9. 9., 278.

⁷³ Šif, J. (1948). Socialist realism in Soviet architecture. *Architekt*, 1 – XLVI, 6, March, 85.



First high-rise building in Prague. Hotel Družba in Podbaba (later Hotel International, today Holiday Inn). Condition in 1955. (1955). *Večerní Praha*, I, 21, 26.4., 2. Photograph E. Einhorn.

living under bridges and hunger. Socialist Moscow provides a quite different view, a city of workers who, with their work, provide everything and on their streets, in the metro, in factories, shops, apartments in the care of the working man we see the character of the socialist capital."⁷⁴ The year 1952 saw Sovietization and the anniversary of folk tradition. The Infant Jesus disappeared from the pre-Christmas city and was replaced by Father Frost. In Prague they began to organize *Father Frost Markets*. In them were sold desired electric goods, stainless-steel utensils and washing machines as well as fruit (a limited number of baskets of apples) and meat. In the Julius Fučík Pioneer House a Father Frost factory made Christmas

decorations.⁷⁵ Socialist Christmas was to be rich because it was to document the successes of the socialist economy. Father Frost alone was named as the messenger of plenty.⁷⁶ As the communist mayor Václav Vacek said in 1952, "*...(Father Frost – note of BS) does not like empty shops and an unset table. Father Frost is the messenger of plenty, of course not for some privileged class of people, but the messenger of Soviet plenty for all honest workers. Father Frost is also a symbol of a good reward for well performed work, a symbol of real love of children which we can express with deeds because we have enough for them!*"⁷⁷

The image of historic Prague also conformed to the needs of power of the new ideology. The first post-war graduation in the renovated Karolinum in

⁷⁴ We are developing on a mass scale...

⁷⁵ (1956). *Večerní Praha*, II, 297, 14. 12., 1.

⁷⁶ (1953). *Nová Praha*, 56, 25-26, 18. 12., 398.

⁷⁷ (1952). What Father Frost is preparing for Praguers this year. *Nová Praha*, 55, 25-26, 26. 11., 414.

April 1948 (its longtime reconstruction based on the plan of architect Jaroslav Frágner began in 1946) was arranged as a demonstration of the warm communist relation to education, which was to become the people's property.⁷⁸ Poor, however, was the list itself of emblems of the communist reflection of historic Prague. On the list were, next to the historic university building, above all mainly the Lesser Quarter⁷⁹ and Old Town Square, which was, however, conceived as a backstage for communist demonstrations. Of the monuments from the end of the 19th century there was the popular Výstaviště space, converted into the Park of Culture and Leisure with *an Avenue of Socialist Trade*, the Czech cousin of the Polish Stalinogorod. In a certain shadow stood the National Theater. Monuments to Charles' time were tolerated: the Charles IV monument at the Charles bridge, the ruler's tomb in St. Vítus' church in Hradčany.⁸⁰ Exceptional attention, to the credit of Zdeněk Nejedlý, under the motto "We will outshine in all directions the old bourgeois society,"⁸¹ was paid to the Bethlehem chapel, which was newly opened in 1955 after reconstruction (1950–1953). The communists proclaimed themselves to be the heirs of the Hussite tradition and the Bethlehem chapel was to become a place of national pilgrimmage.⁸² With his authority, Zdeněk Nejedlý promoted the Hussite movement as a national, not as a religious movement. National all-inclusiveness of Hussitism, according to Nejedlý, was expressed in the Hussite understanding of the times of Charles IV as a time of strength and power. (Nejedlý, 1952, pp. 62-63) The Hussite revolution itself was, according to his article *Communists – heirs to the great traditions of the Czech nation*, published by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, "a fight of the exploited against the exploiters and a fight against the bad old order for a better new order – a fight which we know in new forms even today." (Nejedlý, 1952, p. 22)⁸³ Ing. Bedřich Spáčil came up with an even more daring updating: "If we read the letter of the Papal legate Cardinal Brando against the Hussites, then we see in it almost all the arguments which the English and American radio use today against communists and mainly against the guarantee of socialist

⁷⁸ Zdeněk Nejedlý also expressed himself in this spirit. (1948). *Věstník*, 51, 17, 1. 5., 397.

⁷⁹ (1948). A dream that became reality. *Věstník*, 51, 22, 5. 6., 506.

⁸⁰ The Prague mayor finally visited this place on the occasion of the 632nd anniversary of Charles IV's birth in 1948. (1948). *Věstník*, 51, 22, 5. 6., 518.

⁸¹ (1950). We are renewing the Bethlehem chapel. *Praha*, 53, 2, 9. 1., 7.

⁸² Kubiček, A. (1955). Hus' Bethlehem. *Večerní Praha*, I, 8, 9. 4., 1. – The chapel was labeled as a shrine of the nation. (1955). In the shrine of the nation. *Večerní Praha*, I, 89, 12. 7., 1.

⁸³ Realization of this historic tradition, cf. in summary Rataj, 2003, pp. 99-100.



Bethlehem chapel in Prague after reconstruction. Condition in 1955. (1955). *Večerní Praha*, 1, 8, 9. 4., 1.

*construction of the world, against the USSR. If we see that in the Hussite movement are contained all the fundamentals dear to us of the socialist revolution, then we understand why the Czech bourgeoisie was not in a rush to renovate the Bethlehem chapel.”*⁸⁴

Attention was also paid to the personality of Jan Žižka, a Hussite military leader. In 1949, the idea arose of a representative square opening onto the national monument in Žižkov. Here one year later the Žižkov monument was erected. (Kohout & Vančura, 1986, p. 172) On the other hand, the slump of localities of revivalist Prague was typical: primarily Vyšehrad, but also the Vltava and partly also the Charles

bridge, but mainly the symbol of Czech statehood – the Prague castle. Žižkov, Nusle and Košíře, considerable parts of which were to be demolished,⁸⁵ symbolized capitalist attributes of Prague to the Communists. To these Prague localities were joined the aggressivity of bourgeois entrepreneurs and a negative esthetic impression. The na Františku monastery, the first evidence of Gothic architecture in the Czech lands, in the thinking of the period, however, “*the Prague reservation of rats and sewer rats*”⁸⁶ and the famous Union coffee house on National Avenue at Perštýn, were also destined to be torn down^{87,88}. The violent end of the “Unionka” was explained as a victory of life: “... *the Brauner house must make way to the more valuable – life ... we are acting then without sentimentality and without tears because here in Prague we are sav-*

⁸⁴ Spáčil, B. (1950). Renovation of the Bethlehem chapel. *Praha*, 19-20, 4. 8., 7.

⁸⁵ Dream ...

⁸⁶ (1948). Pickaxes and František! *Praha*, 1, 4, 8. 9., 6-7.

⁸⁷ (1948). “Unionka” on Perštýn will be torn down. *Praha*, 1, 10, 22. 10., 5.

⁸⁸ -ego-. (1948). Prague yesterday ... and tomorrow. *Praha*, 1, 30. 7., 4.

ing human life.”⁸⁹ The dům U Kaštanu (House at the Chestnut Tree), now the Museum of the Beginnings of the Czechoslovak Workers’ Movement in the Břevnov district of Prague (1953),⁹⁰ was to recall older worker traditions. In that inn, in 1878, the Socialist Democratic Party was founded. In 1951 the museum of the novelist Alois Jirásek was opened in Hvězda.⁹¹ On that occasion Antonín Zápotocký emphasized that Jirásek had popularized the fertile revolutionary tradition.⁹² If in May 1948 it was still expected that in Prague there would stand a statue of T. G. Masaryk,⁹³ the first President of the Czechoslovak Republic, and they would deal with the debts of the First Republic (Hojda & Pokorný, 1997, pp. 200-201), in future years this was already unreal. Gustav Bareš, the deputy central secretary of the KSČ, at the constituent city conference of the Party in 1950 promised a memorial only to the writer and journalist Jan Neruda, the composer Vítězslav Novák, and Jan Žižka. The memorial to the founder of Czech historiography František Palacký was to be renovated. The painter Josef Mánes,⁹⁴ the writer Božena Němcová, the painter Mikuláš Aleš, the proletarian poet Jiří Wolker, the composer Antonín Dvořák, and the communist politician Jan Šverma⁹⁵ were also to be remembered.

The Sovietization and the forcing into conformity of society, of which only three large groups existed: workers, other employees and cooperative farmers (The history of the population of the Czech Lands, 1998, p. 339), proceeded – alongside housing – on the level of further material and spiritual needs of society, in public alimentation and entertainment. In factory dining rooms 200,000 Praguers were to take their meals.⁹⁶ Taverns, which replaced the people’s dining rooms, appeared toward September 1, 1949.⁹⁷ The declared objective was to create a casual environment in which Prague consumers would not be socially segregated according to their clothing and money. The

⁸⁹ (1949). Not even the “Unionka” can be eternal. *Praha*, 4, 21. 1., s. 9.

⁹⁰ (1953). Opening of the museum of the beginners of the workers’ movement. *Nová Praha*, 56, 8, 22. 4., 127.

⁹¹ Jirásková, A. (1951). Prague pays back its debt to Alois Jirásek. *Nová Praha*, 54, 14, 13. 7., 257.

⁹² (1951). Jirásek museum in Hvězda open. *Nová Praha*, 54, 18, 14. 9., 325.

⁹³ The city council decided on it on August 14, 1947. Kozák, B. (1948). TGM: I am going to look at you. *Věstník*, 51, 19, 15. 5., 433.

⁹⁴ His monument, a work by Bohumil Kafka, was unveiled in December 1951 on the Aleš Embankment. (1952). *Nová Praha*, 55, 1, 9.1.

⁹⁵ (1951). Prague pays back its debts to its forefathers. *Nová Praha*, 54, 1, 12. 1., 11.

⁹⁶ (1948). *Praha*, 15, 5. 12., 5.

⁹⁷ (1949). *Praha*, 34, 22. 8., 9. – By January 1, 1950, 17 were to be found. (1950). *Praha*, 53, 4, 24. 1., 14.



Prague tram in the city center during rush hour. Drawing O. Sekora. (1946). *Dikobraz*, II, 6, 6.2., 2.

Koruna and the Vltava buffets on Wenceslas Square became institutions of contemporary Prague. The Tavern in Družba was famous for its pancakes and night service (until 1 a.m.).⁹⁸ The differences among people were also removed in clubs of workers and enterprises for people's entertainment: "*Workers of all layers and occupations: worker, official, student, soldier and artist and members of all other professions and of all ages will meet in them. Through mutual contact, recognition and understanding, social casteism which is inadmissible in a Socialist state will be remove ... In former bars, then, working people will sit in the place of capitalists, loungers and black marketeers... After finishing work they will come and enjoy themselves with the awareness that despite the differences in occupation there is equality among them, among people who earn their living through honest work, whether with their hands or their minds.*"⁹⁹ Such unanimity was, in the meantime, to be pleasurable: e.g., in 1950 bands of some Prague enterprises played for the workers on their way to work in the new year, in the second year of the Gottwald biennial plan.¹⁰⁰ The city radio, from whose loud speakers resounded optimistic, constructive marches and constructive mottos joined the enterprises.¹⁰¹ A specific form of street propaganda was the puppet theater of the Prague employment office. Under the Christmas trees in 1949, they played the scene *A Happier Christmas of the First Five-Year Plan*.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ (1952). Czechoslovak tavern serves workers. *Nová Praha*, 55, 1, 9. 1., 13.

⁹⁹ Ký. (1949). Prague hotel business. *Praha*, 52, 5, 28. 1., 6-7.

¹⁰⁰ (1950). The people's administration salutes the second year of the biennial. *Praha*, 53, 2, 9. 1., 7.

¹⁰¹ (1950). The city radio played for the workers. *Praha*, 53, 2, 9. 1., 15.

¹⁰² (1950). Puppet scene of the employment office under Christmas trees. *Praha*, 53, 2, 9. 1., 15.

In the following year on Wenceslas Square one could see the puppet show *In Need You Know Your Friends*, adoring the Soviet Union.¹⁰³

Despite the effort of the new ideologues and rulers of the city, however, in the opinions of many of their population their memories of the interwar city lived as some sort of lost paradise. Complaints of Praguers about the abundance and neatness under the First Republic were rejected by saying that the abundance was only for the narrow group of the bourgeoisie. For example, a resolution of the whole-state conference of the KSČ in 1953 declared: "... president Preiss of the Mercantile Bank... himself acknowledged that he had a yearly personal income of five million. This parasite could spend daily as much as about what 8,000 people eked out – miners and their families, who slaved away for their bloody earnings. Such was then the life of people under Masaryk's 'most democratic democracy,' during the old 'golden times,' when 'there was enough of everything.' Yes, there was enough of everything, but only for the fat paunches of capitalists, bankers and landowners. There were also enough scraps, fallen from overstuffed tables of gluttonous millionaires for their lackeys and ploughboys. But life of the working class was full of poverty, hunger and tuberculosis, life in holes and under bridges."¹⁰⁴ The communist press then published hundreds of adventures of unemployed workers who compared the joy of the present with the bitter past. The current alleged prosperity was even documented by the communist central with statistics: "*During four years of the five-year plan there were sold in the business network a further 880,000 radios, over 40,000 electric washing machines, 30,000 refrigerators, over 130,000 sewing machines, a further 640,000 bicycles, more than 118,000 motorcycles and nearly a half million arm-band and pocket watches.*"¹⁰⁵ On October 1, 1948, the state began to pay out pensions (in Prague approximately 25,000 people had a right to one). "*The last beggars who sporadically reminded us of the 'golden old' prewar republic disappeared from the Prague streets,*" the press commented on an administration law about national security.¹⁰⁶ Already on March 25, 1948, a law was passed relating to state support of newly-weds.¹⁰⁷ At the same time the phrase was heard in the city about the

¹⁰³ (1950). Six weeks of the puppet show "In need you know your friends." *Praha*, 53, 3, 17. 1., 14.

¹⁰⁴ (1953). *Resolution of the state Conference of the KSČ about ideological propaganda*. Praha: Rudé právo, vydavatelství Ústředního výboru KSČ, 28.

¹⁰⁵ Idem, p. 34.

¹⁰⁶ -Rg-. (1948). Volunteers unlike any here before. *Věstník*, 51, 1948, 24, 18. 6., 561.

¹⁰⁷ (1948). What do you need to know? *Věstník*, 51, 1948, 24, 18. 6., 564.



Free sale of eggs
in caricature.
Dikobrazu. Kresba
J. Popa. (1949).
Dikobraz, V, 9,
1. 3., 6.

liberation of the working woman from the requirements of the household: in shops, ready-to-cook foods were found,¹⁰⁸ in 1951, the cooperative of Liberation from Housework opened a large laundry in Strašnice.¹⁰⁹ However, women might have to wait for a few months for their wash; laundry got lost, exchanged or returned damaged.¹¹⁰

Conclusion or **Myth versus reality**. “*We want Prague not only with a hundred spires, but mainly clean, healthy, beautiful!*” Called the post-February Prague city hall transformed into the Central National Committee of Prague.¹¹¹ “*Only communists accomplish Libuše’s prophecy: I see a great city whose fame reaches the stars!*” announced Gustav Bareš at the constituent conference of the City Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in December 1950.¹¹² “*Former capitalist Prague, the center of exploitation and oppression, a city of rich people and palaces, but also of thousands of unemployed workers, tattered children, a city of alms and beggars, has become today, under the government*

¹⁰⁸ E.g., Krutina, F. (1951). About some tasks of organizations of the KSČ in Prague. *Nová Praha*, 54, 4, 23. 2., 63.

¹⁰⁹ -KF-. (1951). Factory for the convenience of Prague women. *Nová Praha*, 54, 5, 9. 3., 85.

¹¹⁰ (1951). To liberate the working woman from major cleaning. *Nová Praha*, 54, 7, 13. 4., 125.

¹¹¹ -Rg-. (1948). *Praha*, 1, 7, 1. 10., 6-7.

¹¹² Letná, quoted work, p. 4; (1950). Construction of Prague. *Praha*, 53, 29-30, 19. 12., 5.

of workers, a beautiful city with generous socialistic perspectives,” wrote *Nová Praha* in 1952.¹¹³

The idea of a model socialist city, as professional literature observed, however, first came into existence and was tied to harsh conflicts with reality. Moscow itself, to which the vision of the communist rulers of the city became attached, might immediately after the Second World War make an impression with its circular boulevards and underground railway system, but in no way with its wooden buildings. In communist myth Prague was therefore conceived of as the city of the future: it was to be industrial, fewer than one million inhabitants, full of green and streams, with electrified transportation, circular communication and functioning integrated mass transportation, with modern living standards. It was to symbolize not past glory, but future prosperity. Sentiment was replaced with the creative optimism of the new regime. Communist rhetoric corresponded to generous treatment with the height and with the space in the city, just as with its symbols. While old Prague – *a stone fairy tale*¹¹⁴ – is not appropriate as a solid symbol for the whole of communist declared values, its factual rival, new Prague, was unreservedly applicable. It is therefore logical that the regime for its confirmation chose only certain places from old Prague that worked appropriately as part of its propaganda. Metaphorically said: the myth of the hundred-spired Prague was basically less important than the new myth of Prague – Great Prague – as the most western socialist city, “*the most western guard of the socialist order.*”¹¹⁵ The emblem of new Prague became prefabricated houses as a symbol of socialist living, in contrast with family houses as a symbol of luxurious uneconomical bourgeois living,¹¹⁶ bourgeois hotels,¹¹⁷ coffee houses and villas transformed into housing for workers and, finally, also rejoicing demonstrators celebrating the clear present and even more glorious tomorrow. For it, from 1949-1956, Praguers worked twelve million volunteer hours (Hlavsa, 1960, p. 23).

Of course reality was different and this difference also had its undesirable symbols. Pokorný’s statue *Becoming Close Friends*, a homage to the Soviet

¹¹³ (1952). Long live Comrade Dr. Václav Vacek! *Nová Praha*, 55, 17, 15. 9., 277.

¹¹⁴ Prague yesterday..., cited article

¹¹⁵ Dream ...

¹¹⁶ Eng. P. (1948). We will live better ... *Praha*, 1, 15, 5. 12., 6-7.

¹¹⁷ February gave apartments to students, was one of the titles of *Praha*. The article gave information about the transformation of prostitute hotels into student houses. Such was the fate of the Atlas Hotel on Melantrichová Street and the famous Jewish Hotel Bristol and the Hotel Chaloupka on Řeznická Street. (1948). *Praha*, 13, 11. 11., 6-7.

liberators of Prague at the Main Station, fell into disrepair.¹¹⁸ Father Frost was not accepted, even by the majority of communists. (Franc, 2008, p. 241) Still in the mid 1950s in the seedy center of Prague could be seen remnants of the protectorate.¹¹⁹ In the Prague center, for years attired in scaffolding, shops closed behind blinds.¹²⁰ Neither the insufficiency of apartments nor the burdensome transportation situation was eliminated. Until the end of 1945, 14,000 apartments were indeed assigned after the Germans' departure, 8,000 apartments made available after the Czechs' departure, and 2,100 rental apartments, but the need exceeded the availability. The overwhelming majority of apartments (76 %) contained only one room with kitchen.¹²¹ Water pipes in houses were old and often collapsed. At Christmas 1951 the cause of the breakdown was attributed to Christmas carp which Praguers kept in bathtubs and which allegedly broke down the pipes.¹²² Despite the declared equality of people, workers and, mainly, shock-workers had preferential treatment in the allotment of apartments.¹²³ New housing developments, however, lacked infrastructure. City mass transportation was also insufficient. Between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. trams, buses and trolley buses were crowded.¹²⁴ A great problem that also remained was supplying food to the city. Bananas from Ecuador and Colombia appeared in Prague and other big cities only before May 1, before the meeting of the KSČ or before celebrations of the October Revolution. Oranges, citrus fruit and nuts (as a rule, peanuts from China), but also better apples were a matter of Christmas markets. And after the cancellation of the ration system (1953)¹²⁵ there was a frequent insufficiency of groceries. In 1952, as comically witnessed in *Nová Praha* by one of the house custodians. concerning the newly established institution: "A representative of the Brotherhood in the district pointed out how working women don't profit sufficiently from the advantages of prepared shopping bags. He also complained that women want

¹¹⁸ (zf). (1955). What does not do honor to our city. *Večerní Praha*, I, 12, 15. 4., 2.

¹¹⁹ Balak, K. (1955). Prague is still haunted by... *Večerní Praha*, I, 22, 27. 4., 3.

¹²⁰ Idem.

¹²¹ Beránek, E. (1949). Apartment politics in Prague. *Praha*, 52, 36, 5. 9., 6-7.

¹²² Hulinský, J. (1952). Presentation of the work of one year. *Nová Praha*, 55, 2, 23. 1., 25.

¹²³ In 1950, (until Sept. 1) 57% of apartments were assigned to workers' families, 21% to civil servants, and 22% to others. Shock-workers received 887 apartments (1951). Day by day life of Prague people is richer. *Nová Praha*, 54, 8, 27. 4., 147. – Apartments were assigned in cooperation with trade unions. (1951). Assignment of new apartments. *Nová Praha*, 54, 9, 18. 5., 173.

¹²⁴ (1950). We are going to travel to work more comfortably. *Praha*, 3, 17. 1., 15.

¹²⁵ In September 1948 they ended ration tickets for bread, flour and potatoes. In December milk, butter and eggs were available on the open market. (Procházka, 1991, p. 49)

only goods that are hard to get.”¹²⁶ Constructed housing developments lacked infrastructure. The activity of the communal enterprise *Restaurants* was criticized as insufficiently clean in the dining area, zero initiative of the innkeeper.¹²⁷ But other services (laundry) were also of poor quality. The dream of prosperity for all workers of the city, as well as the whole myth of the socialist city, socialist Prague, vanished in the difficult everyday reality. Probably the most oppressive was, however, the fact that the socialist city was created as a city without a plurality. Marc Augé presumes identification with a certain district as a basis for belonging to a city. (Augé, 1999, p. 113) For the present, however, we lack research on what importance the fact that the socialist city was surrounded by uniform housing developments had on city identity.

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¹²⁷ Berger, J. (1949). About the development of Prague communal enterprises. *Praha*, 26, 26.10., 4.

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