

**Conference POSSIBILITIES  
AND LIMITS OF RESEARCH  
OF THE HISTORY OF  
COLLEGE EDUCATION  
AFTER 1945.**

October 14-5, 2009, Hradec  
Králové, Czech Republic.

The above-mentioned conference was devoted to colleges which are typical urban institutions. And it was and is also a college educational system for which cities are considered to be centers of cultural life and focal points of innovation. On the other hand, universities often changed into fuses of conflict, or in them in concentrated form loyalty to totalitarian regimes arose.

The aim of the organizers of the conference was to encompass schools of all levels and types in Czech cities after 1945 as well as the problem of education and intellectuals in a totalitarian regime. The history of colleges was to be embedded in the general social frame, but not compared to the history of college education in other socialist states.

In the introductory paper, Jan Mervart, a Hradec Králové historian, focused on characteristics of the communist regime in the 1960s. In doing so he cautioned against the assessment of those years as a time of continual liberalization and/or eras in which communist power stood on one hand and opposition intellectuals on the other. At the same time he pointed out a certain programmed helplessness of the intelligentsia who did not go against the essence of the regime.

The first thematic session was devoted logically to Charles University. In his

paper, Prague historian Petr Cajthaml characterized the mechanisms which the Communist Party – despite certain periods of relative social relaxation – attained a leading position at the university. Vice deans and assistant professors, as well as applicants for studies abroad were approved by the City Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Party groups were also founded as part of scientific councils and the influence of communists at the university gradually strengthened. Departments of Marxism-Leninism existed independently of the heads of the universities. Michal Svatoš, Cajthaml's colleague from the Historic Institute of Charles University and Charles University Archive, presented the history and results of his institution (founded in 1959), which he termed *a little island of positive deviance*. His criticism concerned only the dominance of older history in research and its certain fragmentation. Bohdan Zilynskyj of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University chose the topic of Ukrainian students as a specific national, linguistic and religious group at the university in the years 1945-1949. He was concurrently interested in where this group came from and what its ethnic and political orientation was.

The second session, focused on the most controversial faculty of Charles University – the Philosophical Faculty, was the domain of young and very critically humored historians, its contemporary workers. Kateřina Volná focused mainly on the role of the State Police at the faculty. In contrast to the generally reigning myth about the “screened” school, she pointed out that the awareness of the STB (State Police) was not absolute,

despite the fact that this repressive institution watched over foreign teachers, broadened the atmosphere of fear and worked in cooperation with the heads of the faculty. In the years 1974-1985, then, youths became, from the viewpoint of the State Police, the main surveilled group. Jakub Jareš criticized the mechanisms of the admission of students into college studies in the fields of history and ethnography in 1987. Ideology, according to him, compromised, however, with unrestrained clientelism. Examinations became untransparent and politicized. Matěj Spurný then rejected the image of the Prague Philosophical Faculty as a victim of communist terror and the image of the society of totalitarian Czechoslovakia as a society generally longing for liberty, controlled by only a handful of the powerful.

The third session focused on medical and pedagogical faculties. Local historian František Dohnal presented the history of one of seven medical faculties, that of Hradec Králové, which was founded in 1945, and generally the development of the idea of military medicine. Cajthaml's and Svatoš's colleague Petr Svobodný spoke of the specifics of medical faculties and of the difficulties which historians encountered. Brno historian Jaroslav Vaculík dealt with the model case of the fate of pedagogical schools: the school he attended, the Pedagogical Faculty of Masaryk University. He mainly presented to the audience opinions about the mission of pedagogical faculties and their place in higher education. In the last paper of the first day, Pilsen historian Naděžda Morávková portrayed Adolf Zeman (1902-1985), a college teacher

and recognized social and economic urban historian who did not succeed in obtaining scientific esteem for his work in the society of the time.

On the next day, two sessions were also devoted to colleges. Ostrava archivist Jindra Biolková focused on the history of a mining college – the Technical University of Ostrava and/or the character of research sources. Brno archivist Alena Mikovcová attempted to understand the fate of the Agricultural College in Brno after the Second World War, when the school found itself in danger of being closed. Finally it went through the system of so-called political cleansing and it became Sovietized. At the same time it was victimized in the process of so-called collectivization. Local historian Michal Strobach described the specifics of the Hradec Military Aviation Academy as a type of post-war military education. Markéta Devátá of the Institute of Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences in Prague presented research of the history and functioning of the Political and Social College (1945-1949), research also carried out by her colleague Doubravka Olšáková. A similarly controversial school – the University of November 17 (1961-1974), which was founded because of a decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, was the subject of extensive research of the young historian Marta Edith Holečková. She described the problem of the structure of the institution, characteristics of the students, relation to foreign students from the so-called Third World, and contributions of the college.

The third thematic session of the second day dealt with college teachers.

Olomouc historian and archivist Pavel Urbášek attempted to describe the relation of the regime to college teachers and the composition of their profile in the '50s, in the '60s and in the years of normalization when a new generation of teachers allegedly understood the party membership card pragmatically, like a workbook.

The concluding session of the conference, called *After college*, was opened by Prague anthropologist Blanka Soukupová with the paper "The role of intellectuals in post-war public opinion." It was followed by Jana Švehlová's (read by Eva Bláhová) emotional paper about the daughters of farmers in the '50s. The subject was the psychic world of women who could not, for political reasons, study and still feel the handicap today. Today a group of them made up of 100 members work under the patronage of their benefactor, Meda Mládková.

In conclusion let us add that the Hradec conference, which was to have been linked to a conference in Olomouc in 2011, brought out a large quantity of data, methodical and civic stimulants. Open and in places explosive discussions clarified the fact that the topic is scientifically and socially enormously topical and stimulating; and this especially today, when again there is strong influence of the incompetent powerful, who would gladly get rid of the true mission of the university: scientific work and the training of intellectuals and competent specialists. Thanks for the exemplary organization of the conference go mainly to the historian Sylva Sklenářová of the university archive in Hradec Králové.

*Blanka Soukupová*

## Conference THE POLITICS OF CULTURE. PERSPECTIVES OF STATELESS NATIONALITIES AND ETHNIC GROUPS.

April 9-10, 2010, Warsaw, Poland.

The international conference with almost thirty speakers was organized by Professor Nowicka-Rusek under the patronage of the Institute of Social Studies of the University of Warsaw. The aim of the conference was to focus, from various points of view, on stateless ethnic groups and nationalities which try to negotiate and vindicate the legitimization of their very existence and their (mostly cultural-language) demands in today's world. The conference had seven thematic sessions in which scholars from several social science disciplines, mostly sociology, anthropology, ethnology and political science, addressed the audience.

The first, opening session, called "Theories and Perspectives," outlined key themes and concepts which all the researchers into stateless ethnic groups and nationalities have to deal with in their research. Ewa Nowicka-Rusek presented her ideas on the so much-discussed concept of ethnic identity which in her interpretation can encompass three different variants: "multi-story" identity ("sandwiched"), "additive" identity ("assembling" identity when to an A identity another B identity is added as an equal one) and "anti-ethnic" identity, which stands for a situation when a person refuses to express his/her identity in ethnic terms. Professor Szpociński discussed in his paper topics of historical memory and politics of its keeping,