

Abstract

This Ph.D. thesis investigates Prague urban toponyms used between the end of the Second World War and 1989. While the number of texts concerned with names of public spaces within cities/towns has been rising continuously since the 1980s, no detailed analyses have been presented that focus on urban toponymy as it was used during the Communist Party reign in Czechoslovakia. This Ph.D. thesis examines commemorative names with an objective to trace the development of urbanonymy of this period, perceiving commemorative names as the most suitable instrument that can be used to describe how Prague toponymy, a politicized space reflecting historical milestones as well as claims staked by the elites then in power, formed.

The theoretical part of the Ph.D. thesis seeks to both define commemorative names and offer classification thereof based on a variety of classification criteria including, without limitation, lexicosemantic and structural criteria. Additionally, the theoretical part touches upon urban space and its memory as well as on how urban landscape myths are created by officially sanctioned urban toponyms. It also addresses how urban spaces are perceived and how people orient themselves within these spaces.

The second part of the thesis applies the theoretical framework to actual urban toponymy. Specific examinations are performed that shed light on how urbanonymy helped to shape the identity of post-World War Two Prague (i.e. its socially constructed post-February 1948 identity). In the 1950s, the regime in power made use of commemorative urban toponyms to conquer the space within the Czechoslovak capital in political and ideological terms, however, commemorative names containing conspicuous and ideologically significant motives for the Communist Party ceased to permeate through Prague urban toponymy as early as 1960. The analytical part also investigates the limited degree to which Prague Spring affected how Prague public spaces were named. In contrast, the case study presented, which is dedicated to *náměstí Jana Palacha* (*Jan Palach Square*), documents the extraordinary degree of public interest in incorporating a specific commemorative name into Prague toponymy. Also, an analysis shows commemorative names gradually concentrated in different types of urban spaces (e.g. historical centre, peripheries, various types of built-up areas).

Finally, the thesis also focuses on non-standardized urban toponyms obtained during interviews with contemporaries of the period. These officially unsanctioned toponyms are perceived as being no less important a layer of urban toponymy than their official counterparts. The thesis also includes a description thereof as well as an analysis of the naming motives in question.

Keywords

Czechoslovakia, commemorative names, identity, ideology, non-standardized names, Prague, urban toponymy