

Abstract

The diploma thesis is about the organisation Sdružení pro pomoc mentálně postiženým. Using the example of this enterprise, which was founded in the late 1960s from below and without political cover, the thesis tries to show the possibilities that parents of mentally handicapped children had at that time. From the beginning of its existence, this parent-based advocacy platform sought to highlight the paradoxical unsystematic nature of the domestic institutionalised system of care for the mentally disabled. Parents were bothered by the lack of choice, as there were only year-round institutions, restrictions on visits, and above all the impossibility of co-determining the fate of their mentally handicapped children. From the beginning, the Association tried to act as a partner of professionals and social welfare institutions as well as political representatives, both at the national and local level. At the same time, however, they had a clear and comprehensive programme, which they defined even before its official establishment. The issue is viewed through the concept of the "field of intellectual disability," an imaginary sociopolitical arena into which the Association entered as a new actor. Through the analysis of historical sources, the thesis focuses on the first 8 issues of the newsletter Information to the Members of the National Association for Assistance to the Mentally Handicapped. These volumes identified the strategies by which the Association tried to balance between criticizing and making claims on the one hand and emphasizing partnership and cooperation with other relevant groups on the other. Through what the author calls 'platform positions', the Association was able to choose different strategies and thus maximise their coalition potential and thus their ability to effectively promote their own agenda, while avoiding suspicions that they were merely an activist pressure group in the era of incipient normalisation. The work provides a perspective within which parents, despite fundamentally limited options, were able to take tactical action and develop surprising strategies in an attempt to secure a decent future for their offspring. In line with the above, therefore, parents organized in the Association cannot be seen as merely passive subjects suffering under totalitarian unfreedom, for it is important to emphasize, in line with contemporary historiographical trends, that even in times of "disabled" opportunities they were able to negotiate their group interests with the state.