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Forced use of secondary school students during the occupation

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Abstract

This dissertation deals with yet completely unprocessed issue of forced labor deployment of secondary and vocational school pupils in the Czech lands during the occupation by Nazi Germany. After the initial characteristics of the development of the German and the Protectorate economy and the Nazi attitude to use workforce of its own population and of occupied countries, the other chapter is devoted to the situation in the Czech education in 1939-1945. The Nazis considered the Czech intelligence as the enemy, so after the closure of Czech universities they deliberately restricted Czech secondary education. These restrictions did not have only national political, but also economic significance. From 1939 workers from the Czech lands were sent to work in the Reich. This trend increased significantly from 1942, when Germany intensified the expansion of war production and at the same time they started extensive program of forced labor of foreign workers in German industry. One of the labor sources were secondary school pupils, who the new legislation from February 1943 allowed to acknowledge de facto incomplete education based on the confirmed certificate in forced labor deployment.

The main chapters of the thesis deal with monitoring the development of work use of pupils in 1942-1945. During the research archival documents of secondary schools from Pilsen and surrounding smaller towns were used and to compare also documents of the major industrial centers of Brno and Ostrava and then of the more agriculturally oriented areas of České Budějovice and Tábor. Research found out that the various occupation authorities proceeded to the use of labor force among school children in different ways, and even if centrally proclaimed so called year events. In addition to direct sending to the Reich students were often used as a replacement forces in local businesses and offices where they had to substitute persons transferred to Germany to work. During school lessons, the local administration used them for various short-term work, ancillary agricultural work and collecting waste materials as "support the war effort" became an integral part of school life. In addition to work in factories, students were largely placed in organizations called Technische
Nothilfe and Luftschutzpolizei, which participated in the raid protection and liquidation of the Allied air raids. This dangerous service carried the risk of casualties. The occupation authorities often emphasized the alleged less incorporation of Czech youth in the "war effort" than German, so the final chapter is devoted to comparison of the situation of Czech and German secondary schools using the example of Pilsen.

**Keywords:**

the Second World War, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, forced labor, education, the youth, students