

TITLE:

Propaganda campaigns in Czechoslovakia 1948-1953

AUTHOR:

Pavλίna Kourová

DEPARTMENT:

History & History Didactics Department

SUPERVISOR:

Prof. PhDr. Jiří Pokorný, CSc.

ABSTRACT:

This dissertation concerns propaganda campaigns conducted by the communist regime in Czechoslovakia during the years 1948-1953. The main objective is to describe, on the basis of archive research, how these campaigns proceeded, how and by whom they were organised, in which way party organs, state institutions and the media were involved and how the general public was engaged in these campaigns. Since a large number of propaganda campaigns were mounted in the selected period, all attention in this dissertation is focussed on six divergent campaigns, which together provide a representative picture with regard to the chosen theme. It concerns the campaigns that accompanied the 70th birthday celebrations of J. V. Stalin, the trial of the former politician Milada Horáková et al., the battle against the "American beetle" (potato beetle), the "Lánská akce" (a mass recruitment drive for young people to work in the mining industry), the attempt to introduce a "děda Mráz" ("Father Frost") tradition to replace traditional Christmas celebrations and the trial of former general secretary Rudolf Slánský et al. All these campaigns were organised by top state or party organs but were often presented as spontaneous affairs. The campaigns targeted all echelons of society, including children, constituting a clear effort to engage all citizens of Czechoslovakia and can therefore be considered an attempt at achieving the total participation of the whole of society in these public events.

In this way the communist regime tried to deflect attention from some of its - for example economic - problems and, at the same time, demonstrate the support it enjoyed from the population. The campaigns served to cement the sense of identification among the populace with the ruling regime and also to create an enemy. During the campaign accompanying the trial of Rudolf Slánský anti-Semitic sentiments surfaced, resulting in, to a certain extent, the organisers losing control over their campaign. This dissertation is not only a contribution on the mechanism of power in the Czechoslovak people's democracy of the 1950s but also on its daily life.

KEYWORDS:

propaganda, campaigns, communist regime, political trials, Czechoslovakia 1948-1953