

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE**

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**Changing the interpretation of monuments for  
the purpose of influencing the Czechoslovak  
collective identity through *Rudé Právo* and  
presidential speeches  
(1948-1957)**

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## Abstract

The Communist Party of Czechoslovak (KSČ) tried self-servingly to shape the interpretation of Czechoslovak history. National identity can theoretically change over time by adapting amongst others collective memory. As collective memory also consists of several components the thesis focuses on early attempts to influence Czechoslovak national identity by altering the meaning of certain historical events represented by specific monuments in the period 1948-1957. A monument's meaning derives from discourse and traditions. The analysis shows that *Rudé Právo* articles and Presidential speeches were part of a discourse used to influence the meaning of monuments. The case studies: Bethlehem Chapel was to symbolize the historical Hussite legacy continued by the KSČ; the Monument of National Liberation was to commemorate World War Two soldiers and important communists; the Monument of the Soviet Tank Drivers was to commemorate the Red Army as Czechoslovakia's sole liberator. These interpretations were meant to generate legitimization, justification and credibility for the KSČ's claim to power and help over time to facilitate a national collective identity supportive of socialism. The analysis shows that for this purpose certain tools were employed for instance first-person-plural narration, black-and-white depiction of issues, exclusion and falsification of facts, credibility through academic authors and seemingly genuine accounts by ordinary citizens.