

Abstract

Post-war supply of uranium from Czechoslovakia was USSR's fastest way of obtaining the material necessary to catch up on the advantage of USA in the nuclear arms race. The Central European state, outwardly still democratic (although already strongly left-wing at the time), was forced into cooperation by agreement signed in November 1945. Social democratic minister of industry Laušman was the only qualified member of cabinet present at the negotiation. He displayed his ability to oppose the Communists, even though until recently he has been considered an ally to the regime by historians, largely for his positive attitude towards nationalisation.

The thesis shows that the Soviets were unable to obtain a monopoly on Czechoslovakian mining according to their wishes, but still dictated the volume of exploitation and the pricing and gradually transformed the joint commission conducting the mining into an official authority. Uranium mining turned into self-reliant industry which became a burden for the state, concealed at first and admitted later. Analysis of data until 1989 proves that the industry was regularly unprofitable. The totalitarian regime kept everything secret. First information became available at the beginning of the 1990s, but historiography at the time concerned itself primarily with the political prisoners, who laboured in the uranium industry at the beginning of the reign of communism. Present findings show that the organisation of mining even in 1945-50 was full of inner disputes and was at the verge of rentability. The state violated its own ethnic policies as well as Geneva conventions regarding prisoners. Since the Communists rose to power, substantial state funding has been invested into the mining industry without return. At the end of the "uranium fever" in the late 50s, principal mining region of Jáchymov was suddenly deserted and irrecoverably scarred urbanistically, ecologically and humanly. Two major regions followed its fate later.