

Šimáně, Michal

Czech minority education in the Czechoslovak Republic : to the everyday life of primary schools in political district Ústí nad Labem : summary

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SUMMARY

Czech minority education in the Czechoslovak republic. To the everyday life of primary schools in political district Ústí nad Labem.

The Czech minority primary education during the period of the first Czechoslovak republic is the topic of this publication. The author follows-up a long historical tradition of studying Czech/Czechoslovak education history as part of this book. The main aim of this text based on historical-pedagogical research is to identify, describe and interpret the everyday life of the Czech minority primary schools during the first Czechoslovak republic in broader socio-historical context. The author examines the everyday life of these schools in political district of Ústí nad Labem, which was located in Czech-German linguistically mixed area during the era of the Czechoslovak republic. Author explores the topic through the historiographical macrohistory and microhistory approaches. Besides these approaches he also uses traditional methods of historical research and visual history. The book is based on the study of historical archive sources, legislation, analysis of historical periodicals, photographs and memoirs of students of minority schools. The historical sources were gained mainly in the Municipal archive of Ústí nad Labem and the National archive in Prague. However, the author also uses in his work the sources from the Sudetendeutsches Institut in Munich and sources from the Fachbereichsbibliothek of the Institut für Geschichte of Vienna University, which are currently unavailable in the Czech republic. In the introductory parts author pays attention to the general development of the Czechoslovak society with emphasis on the development of Czechoslovak education, particularly primary and minority primary education. Nevertheless, he also follows-up the issues

of general political, economic and cultural development of the state, which form the broader context of the studied problems. In particular, he focuses on the Czech-German relations, which besides other things had an influence on minority education. Introductory chapters represent insight into the problems of everyday life of Czech minority schools in political district of Ústí nad Labem. In this part the author presents the main results of his research in several chapters, such as the establishment and opening of minority schools, which is first chapter of this part of book.

In this way is not suprising that Czech schools were established in the Ústí nad Labem region before 28th October 1918, like in other parts of the Czech lands. For example like the schools in villages Krásné Březno and Chabařovice. The fundamental problem of this period was the fact that the opening of these two schools was far from sufficient for the real needs of the Czech population living in this area. Therefore, Czech children had to attend German schools. This situation was made possible by the free interpretation of some provisions of the Hasner Law and its amendments and the predominance of the German population in the region. Czechs were generally perceived by the German population as „agents“ who disrupt their long-standing sovereignty in the region. For this reason, the German population used various options (both legal and illegal) to prevent or at least delay the establishment of the Czech school.

A change in the issue of establishing of Czech schools in the Ústí nad Labem region occurred after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic. Although the priority of the newly established MŠANO was the unification of school legislation within the new state, in 1919 a new regulation of the establishment and opening of elementary schools (Metelka's Law) was adopted thanks to the work of a long-time representative of the ÚMŠ Jindřich Metelka. This adjustment has caused literally a „boom“ of Czech schools throughout the country. The exception was not even the Ústí nad Labem district, where, for example, in 1918–1920 schools were established in Ústí nad Labem, Neštětice, Velké Březno, Předlice, Trmice, Tuchomyšl and Roudníky – in the villages where the Czechs formed a significant minority within the Ústí nad Labem region. In the following years, the number of established Czech schools grew and basically did not stop until the end of the First Republic (the last school in the district of Ústí nad Labem was founded in 1937 in the village of Bukov).

Of course, the everyday life of Czech schools in the district of Ústí nad Labem was most influenced by their teachers and pupils as well as by the process of education. It is these key actors and the process of school life that took place at school that I focused on in my next chapters.

The first Czech teachers arrived in the Ústí nad Labem region together with the newcomers who were looking for a job there. It was also in many cases they who initiated the establishment of Czech schools during the Austro-Hungarian

Empire. After the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic, the arrival of teachers in this area was also influenced by the unfortunate post-war economic situation of the state, for example because of lack of job opportunities in the linguistically homogeneous areas of the country. The boom of newly established schools in the border region also played a role in increasing count of teachers in this region. With hindsight and based on the study of archival sources we can, however, say that their arrival was influenced by the adoption of legislative norms on their official translations. This norm didn't give to teacher a choice. Either they had to obey MŠANO's command and occupy the prescribed place, or they had to face the uncertain outcome of disciplinary action that might have resulted in the loss of their job – in essence the end of their teaching career. Teachers with different character, opinions, goals or education were thus getting to Ústí nad Labem region. It all influenced the school life to a different degree and created other problems.

Most of these problems arose because these teachers were not prepared for their activities in nationally mixed areas. Problems continued even when they entered classes. In the classrooms, children which were waiting for them, were very poor in the Czech language. This was due to the day-to-day encounter of children outside school with German children, with whom they maintained friendship relationships to varying degrees. At the same time, the fact that many children came from mixed or directly German families played a role. In some cases, as in the Czech school in Zálezly or in Varvažov, even children from German families prevailed. So the teachers could easily lose ground again. Simply because they were not prepared for this situation during their studies.

As a result, the teachers were primarily dependent on themselves. Ideally, they tried to educate themselves in various teacher meetings, which they themselves organized with the help of various associations – without the help of state authorities. Alternatively, they listened to the advice of more experienced colleagues at monthly teacher conferences (school meetings), or the inspector's advice, who visited the school. In worse cases, if these teachers did not completely resign from their occupation, they turned their attention to matters that could have an adverse effect on the school's reputation in the village.

The school's reputation in the village is one of the final chapters of this work. The relationship between the school and the municipality was largely influenced in particular by the communication between teachers and the other public of the municipality in which the school operated. At this level, the didactic-pedagogical activity of teachers was only one of many aspects of their activities in minority areas. In the framework of extracurricular activities, as in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, minority teachers worked in various associations and actively participated in the life of the Czech minority. However, their activities were often influenced by the circumstances prevailing within the Czech minority. Everyday life brought

not only the joy of various balls, balls or trips and plays, but also a number of problems and disputes that the local teacher had to react to. While higher education institutions expected him to resolve the disputes and problems in a moderate way, with some prudence and insight, in fact, he was in a series of totally hopeless situations. The hopelessness of the situation, together with the inability to freely determined by their place of operation could then contribute to some frustration of teachers. As a result, their dissatisfaction could threaten both the reputation and the school's course. An example of this might be the embezzlement or – from today's perspective – the „innocent“ philandering of a teacher with a married woman, which triggered a flow of events that culminated in the dismissal of this teacher from his former place of work and the difficult search for his successor.

The relationship between schools and municipalities, however, was also given a wider events that have their response in the life of the individual municipalities in the district, or in the local schools. Especially since the mid-1930s, Czech schools have been experiencing effects of the economic crisis and the rise of German nationalist parties such as Konrad Henlein's SdP. Both of them brought mainly the loss of Czech children in schools. This was mainly due to the departure of the Czech population from the region, which could not find a job here. In the background of this fact was not only the generally unfortunate of the economic situation of the Czechoslovak Republic, but also the pressure of SdP members on the owners of various German companies to refrain from accepting Czechs in their services. In a similar way, the SdP members also influenced the owners of the apartments in which the Czechs lived.

However, the cooperation of schools with other municipal public did not have to be carried out only in the spirit of solving various disputes and conflicts or national friction. This is evidenced, for example, by the concern for the health of minority school pupils, as described in the last chapter of this book

Although the Czech minority schools represent only one piece of the extensive and complex mosaic of Czechoslovak history in the 20th century, the study of Czech minority schools is important not only for the subsequent development of Czechoslovak society or education (especially in the border areas), but also for understanding the current issue of the displacement of the German population after the end of World War II. The roots of these events can be seen in the long-term everyday contact of the Czechs with the Germans, which was less influenced by the life of schools.