Miriama Filčáková*
Košice

# The process of Sovietization in tertiary education in Slovakia, 1945–1956

## Abstract

The socio-political events of 1945–1956 were characterized by several phenomena that significantly marked the formation of tertiary education in Slovakia and determined its subsequent development. In the first postwar years, several Central European countries attempted to maintain political, economic, or cultural contacts with Western countries. Universities maintained their traditional internal academic structures, organization of student enrolment, content of studies, and so on. This situation was mainly fostered by the need for national reconstruction, which at the same time masked the political pragmatism of the new, but not yet fully strengthened, people's democratic regimes. Gradually, the universities became a priority concern of the Communist Party, whose aim was to gain ideological control over them. Soviet influence in education was exercised in the spirit of communist ideology, centralized state planning, and a bureaucratically controlled process of education marked by ideological influences. This paper aims to analyze the basic changes in educational models and the specific features of Slovak higher education systems after the bipolar division of the world.

**Keywords**: Slovakia, Sovietization, Soviet university model, tertiary education

This paper aims to highlight cultural factors and trends in tertiary education in Slovakia after the Second World War through an analysis of the socio-political and historical scene. We intend to enrich this field with a study of the development of higher education in Slovakia, which has so far received the least attention among Central European countries. Although, at that time, the territory of today's Slovakia formed a common state with the Czech lands (the Czechoslovak Republic), the area had its own specifics. Despite this, conceptions of 20th-century Slovak history were often interpreted as part of Czech history

* Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice; e-mail: miriama.filcakova@student.upjs.sk; ORCID: 0000-0002-0696-5669

and were referred to as Czechoslovak. The aim of our paper is to trace Slovak history after 1945 as the history of the territory of today's Slovakia, located within the Czechoslovak Republic.[1] In this context, we will research the formation of Slovak tertiary education after 1945, during the period of escalating Sovietization until the mid-1950s.

Syntheses of works dealing with the history of Central and Eastern European countries, in most cases, analyze the space of tertiary education in the Soviet bloc as an internally disparate and homogeneous whole. The predominant interpretations describe the introduction of the Soviet model of higher education as a process of uniformization, applying an identical form and content in all the countries of the Eastern bloc, each of which was reduced to a kind of Slavic model of the Soviet Union.[2] Only rarely, even given the state of research in the field of tertiary education, are there cases that would subject the above ideas to a more significant critical analysis. An exception in this context is the historian John Connelly, whose research confirms that, under the facade of uniformity, different national traditions survived in Central Europe during this period, allowing individual forms to emerge in each country. In his work *Captive University*, he reveals aspects of the historical development of universities that would have remained undescribed if the countries under study had been analyzed separately. He traces in detail the differences in the application of the Soviet model of higher education in the Central European Eastern bloc states, and analyzes the nature of the political culture and social structure applied to these institutions in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany. Like several other authors, however, Connelly limits his analysis of Czechoslovak tertiary education to the Czech part of the country. Other relevant publications analyzing European tertiary education include collective works dealing with the development of European higher education: *A History of the University in Europe, Vol. IV: Universities Since 1945*;[3] *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Education*;[4] and *The International Encyclopedia of Higher Education Systems*

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[1] For more on Czechoslovak relations after 1945, and especially after 1948, see: Š. Šutaj, 2015. R. Letz, 2013, pp. 10–34.

[2] As Connelly points out (2008, pp. 15–16), the reason for these interpretations is precisely the nature of the Stalinist period of 1948–1954, which is still characterized as a kind of ice age in the Eastern bloc countries. Connelly's monograph was the starting point for this paper, especially in terms of the research focus, as well as the rich archival research and literature used.

[3] Part of a four-book series on the history and development of European universities, this work traces the reconstruction and expansion of higher education after 1945: the changing university structures, their conditions, ideas, and values. It also analyzes the evolution of the relationships between universities and nation states, teachers and students, and fundamental changes in the content of teaching in universities. Its originality lies in its combination of historical research, comparative and interdisciplinary approaches, and transnational collaboration. W. Rüegg, 2011.

[4] J. Rury, E. Tamura, 2019. This publication presents a global perspective on the historical development of educational institutions, school systems and ideas about education. Within each chapter, it addresses issues of theory and methods, ancient and medieval schooling, the emergence of national school systems, the development of universities in different contexts, problems of inequality and discrimination in education, reform, and institutional change, including urban histories of education.

*and Institutions*.[5] All these works offer a wealth of information on developments and changes in tertiary education after the Second World War in Central and Eastern Europe. However, information on Slovak tertiary education after 1945 appears only marginally.[6]

In the satellite countries, the Stalinist era represented a period of maximum convergence with Soviet-style society. The communist paradigm remained stably established until 1989 and retained its key characteristics, including in educational contexts. A series of reforms were adopted in the Eastern block countries, intended to ensure the application of the administrative structure of the Soviet model of tertiary education in all higher education institutions. Immediately after the war, and even more intensively after 1948, the communist leadership launched a series of ideological campaigns in higher education institutions aimed at eliminating democratic traditions and fighting against the survivals of "bourgeois ideology" by imposing the ideological templates of Marxism-Leninism.[7] This reform period was marked by increasingly frequent ideological and personnel-related interventions, as well as by the intervention of the party organs in the management and organizational structure of the universities.[8] Although the basic internal structures of university organization remained intact, universities gradually lost most of their institutional autonomy. The formal structure of democratic governance of universities was preserved through changes in the composition of existing and the creation of new executive bodies; various forms of collective representation; and the organization of regular scientific congresses and academic meetings. In fact, political and administrative intervention in the functioning of universities covered practically all important components of organizational administration, from the appointment of the rector and deans to the nature of the composition of the student body and the content of the curriculum (especially in ideologically

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[5]  This collective encyclopedia offers comprehensive research charting the changes that have taken place in the field of universities, taking into account their respective political, social, economic, and cultural purposes across national boundaries from their formation to the 21st century. J. Ch. Shin, P. Teixeira, 2020.

[6]  In our analysis of Slovak tertiary education, we therefore rely mainly on archival research (the Slovak National Archives in Bratislava and the National Archives in Prague) and publications by Slovak authors. We mention a monograph by historian M. Olejnik, and one of the few scholarly works devoted to tertiary education in Slovakia in the period of Stalinization, by S. Gabzdilová. One ambitious work that has valuably enriched the research field on forms of political persecution and the history of tertiary education in Slovakia is M. Glossová's publication, which captures the course of the persecutions against unsuitable university students in the building period of socialist Czechoslovakia (1948–1960). Another study devoted to the field of Czechoslovak higher education is the monograph by P. Urbášek and J. Pulec. This publication contains an extensive analysis of the legislative, administrative, institutional, organizational, power-political, and ideological changes in the Czech tertiary education system in the periods mentioned above. The strengths of this monograph are the topicality, ambition, and comprehensiveness of the research; its weakness is that it primarily focuses on the analysis of the emergence and subsequent formation of the system of higher education in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia. The Slovak part, due to the research aim and its specifics, is only marginally examined.

[7]  J. Knapík, 2006, p. 56.

[8]  F. Morkes, 1999, p. 36.

crucial subjects such as philosophy, history, law, economics, or the social sciences). A common characteristic of these reforms was the application of the Soviet academic system and organization of science.[9] The notion of the Soviet model of higher education, or Soviet higher education, characterized the administrative structure of national academia during the Soviet period. The key components of the Soviet model of higher education, applicable to all Eastern bloc countries, were uniformity, top-down administrative administration, and the principle of one-man management.[10]

Uniformity was supposed to be the basic principle of Soviet organization, which aimed to form society into a socially unified camp. This ideal was to be fulfilled within individual countries, but equally throughout the Eastern bloc. The principle of uniformity was to ensure that each university had a comparable structural composition of administration, students, faculty, and staff. Uniformity was to be present in all important academic matters, including curriculum development, class organization, student services, textbooks, enrolment procedures, and even the state diploma. No distinctions were to exist between universities and technical colleges, or teacher training institutes.[11] However, the policy of uniformity resulted in the absence of academic diversity in Eastern European higher education, which lagged far behind the Western university model.

According to Soviet doctrine, national higher education was to belong to the state and to be organized and administered by the state. Directives for planning the development of the administrative structure and the organization of tertiary education were to be imposed from the top down by the highest levels of the political and party politburo; they were to duplicate the Soviet educational model in all Eastern bloc countries. The daily life of academics in all universities was to be strictly regulated by government approvals and permissions.[12] In the centrally planned economic system, prospective development in higher education and science consisted of five-year plans issued by the central educational authorities, which determined not only funding and the annual quota of newly admitted students and graduates, but also the staffing of each higher education institution. Coordination of planning between universities and the various sectors of the national economy was dispersed among ministries, causing

[9] W. Rüegg, J, Sadlak, pp. 86–87. In contrast to the Western university tradition, Soviet higher education reflected the internal specifics of the political construction of the Soviet state and the ideas of the communist leadership. As such, it became different and distant from the original European notion of the university and international academia. However, education on both sides of the Iron Curtain was united by several tendencies. The creation of the Soviet model of workforce training was a variation rather than a counterpoint to higher education in the traditional Western sense. This symmetry manifested itself in two of its most striking symptoms: the postwar reconstruction of higher education systems and the search for an optimal educational model that would help to mitigate and restore the current socio-political situation. It can therefore be observed that some tendencies characteristic of the Soviet university model in particular can also be traced in Western European education, and vice versa. See for more details: M. Filčáková, 2021, pp. 111–135.

[10] A. Kuraev, 2015, pp. 181–193.

[11] Ibidem, pp. 181–193.

[12] Ibidem, pp. 181–193.

a maze of administrative procedures governing higher education.[13] Higher education institutions lost their own institutional policies on student admissions or curriculum development; they became like training facilities carrying out government instructions.

The principle of one-man management was intended to provide the administrator of an academic institution with discipline and unrestricted authority throughout the national academic system. Each administrator of a central educational body (ministry or committee) was to organize and control individual academic institutions. The nomenklatura system of managing the bodies of academic institutions meant that every decision or appointment required the prior approval of the relevant party organization or regional department for education and science. The degree of political control over educational institutions, staff, and students was reinforced by the fact that Communist Party members were reminded of their duty to observe party discipline based on the concept of "democratization" and central leadership. In practice, however, this meant only that lower bodies were obliged to abide by the decisions of higher ones; the institutional autonomy of the universities was thus replaced by political and administrative control.[14] The administrative function of each rector of an academic institution was based on the same principle of one-man management. The rector bore full responsibility for the college he administered; he issued orders binding on all staff and students, and managed the finances.[15]

One might expect that the systems of higher education introduced in Central Europe at the midpoint of the 20th century would correspond faithfully to the Soviet model. However, this model cannot be seen as exclusively coherent. Although the basic objectives in each country that came under Soviet occupation were very similar, the ways in which the authorities responded to and interpreted the program differed, just as the actual application of the Soviet model of the university differed in each of the satellite states.[16] The differences were made more pronounced by the influence of long-standing legacies and the relationship of each educational system to its economic and historical-political context. The institutions and programs that were created in higher education during these years were supposed to be almost identical; what was different were the people who moved within them. They had different views, and promoted different concepts.[17]

After the war, the Czechoslovak Republic was restored as a united state of two nations. The period from the end of the war to February 1948 was characterized by a political struggle over the country's future direction.[18] The fundamentally

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[13] W. Rüegg, J. Sadlak, 2011, pp. 88–89.
[14] Ibidem, p. 88.
[15] A. Kuraev, 2015, pp. 181–193.
[16] G. Neave, 2011, pp. 35–36.
[17] G. Ekiert, 1996, p. 4. J. Connelly, 2008, p. 18.
[18] From the end of the war to February 1948, Czechoslovakia had a hybrid political system: the so-called People's Democracy, which was characterized by partly democratic but also authoritarian elements. Formally, the country's 1920 constitution remained in force, but the new

different developments, experiences, fears, and circumstances of the two nations in 1939–1945 caused different reactions to the changes introduced in the following period. While the Czechs lived through the war years in a protectorate, a much milder authoritarian regime established itself in Slovakia, leaving the country and its people with different values, opinions, and approaches to solving problems.[19] Differences in religiosity, in the shifting of the wartime frontline, and in the nature of the composition of the new government were reflected in the optics and internal problems of the country,[20] which were not easy to reconcile. Political, national, and social differences were reflected in the competences of the legislative and executive organs of state power,[21] but equally in the educational system at all levels of schools, both in terms of content and ideology. The Czechoslovak Republic, like its neighboring countries in Central Europe, became internationally and politically part of the sphere of influence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). This meant that not only the political system and regime, but also foreign policy, economic relations, the building of the army, and education, had to be in line with Soviet interests.[22] However, if we take a closer look at individual areas, we find that the Slovak part of the country was characterized by certain national specificities; this was no different in the case of the implementation of the Soviet model of tertiary education.

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postwar political system had little in common with the First Republic. Š. Šutaj, 2015, p. 21. R. Letz, 2013, pp. 10–34.

[19]   The authoritarian regime established in Slovakia until 1944 was incomparably milder than the occupation regime established in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. R. Letz, 2013, p. 10. J. Kalvoda, 1999, p. 237. K. Kaplan, 1990, pp. 159–192.

[20]   The nature of the Nazi regime in the Protectorate caused an easier acceptance of the Marxist-Socialist orientation in the Czech part of the country; the doctrine could not so easily establish itself in more religious Slovakia. The experience of the passage of the front (seven months in Slovakia, one in the Czech lands), and thus of the Red Army and the mass deportation of citizens to the USSR, had an equally significant influence on the acceptance of the new regime. While in Czechia, after the war, figures from the foreign resistance became prominent in politics, in Slovakia the authorities of the domestic resistance dominated. R. Letz, 2013, p. 11.

[21]   The asymmetrical model of state power that established itself in Czechoslovakia after the liberation was characterized by several specific features. The Slovak National Council acted as the supreme legislative body in Slovakia, taking over the administration of the country after the war. Simultaneously, however, laws of a national nature, based on London legislation, were issued by the President of the Republic, Edvard Beneš. The Board of Commissioners [Zbor povereníkov] acted as the executive body in Slovakia, while the whole country was administered by the postwar Czechoslovak government. In Bohemia and Moravia, unlike Slovakia, there were no parallel authorities; these territories were administered by the central Czechoslovak government. This model led to complex competence disputes (e.g., ministers nominated by the Slovak side had full competences in Bohemia, but in Slovakia their powers were limited by the competences of the Primary Commissioner of the Board of Commissioners). The solution to the problem was the adoption of political agreements to regulate the competences of the central and Slovak national authorities (representatives of Slovak politics proposed a system based on the principles of federation, which led to many problems in the way the country was governed in the following period). Š. Šutaj, 2015, pp. 25–26.

[22]   R. Letz, 2013, p. 10. J. Kalvoda, 1999, p. 237.

Immediately after the end of the Second World War, a number of legislative norms were adopted that fundamentally modified the organization of the central bodies of the state administration, and also Czechoslovak school policy. The Constitutional Decree of the President of the Republic (No. 1/1945 Sb. of April 2, 1945, "On the new organization of the government and ministries in the transitional period") restored the activity of the highest organization of the school administration: the Ministry of Education and Enlightenment.[23] As early as February 21, 1945, in the so-called "Kosice period" (February–May 1945), the Presidency of the Slovak National Council (SNC) adopted a similar decree (No. 1/1945 Coll., "on the establishment of central authorities").[24] This established the institutions of state power in Slovakia responsible for the new organization of political and economic administration in the liberated territory.[25] This reorganization was followed by a decree (SNC No 27/1945 Coll., "on the establishment of central offices"),[26] which harmonized the structure of the committees, including the Committee of the Slovak National Council's Education and Enlightenment.[27] With the adoption of these laws, a new, asymmetrical system of state bodies was established: in addition to the restored central state organs, there existed at the same time credentials and offices of state power and administration in Slovakia. While the Ministry of Education and Enlightenment, as the central state governing body of education, was a continuation of the prewar and wartime ministry, the committee, as the newly established central state administration body in Slovakia, was continuously returning to the administration of the country from the period of the Slovak National Uprising.[28] This allows us to trace the formation of tertiary education in Slovakia as a separate entity.

After the end of the war, Czechoslovak society sought to return to a democratic system. Discussions about the shape of the future state-legal structure of a restored Czechoslovakia and the return or rejection of the interwar order became the starting point for talks in both resistance centers (London and Moscow). The first postwar government program, however, distanced itself significantly from the prewar ordering of the country, introducing a so-called

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[23] During the 1940s and 1950s, the name of the ministry and the committee changed several times because of the adoption of legislative norms. E. Rákoš, Š. Rudohradský, 1973, pp. 396–397.

[24] Valid from February 21, 1945, replacing Law No. 27/1945 Coll. of the National Council of the Slovak Republic of April 7, 1945. The law was finally repealed on June 9, 1948, as a result of the adoption of the new Constitutional Act No. 150/1948 Coll. E. Rákoš, Š. Rudohradský, 1973, pp. 64–65, 394.

[25] S. Gabzdilová, M. Olejník, Š. Šutaj, 2005, p. 6.

[26] That legislation abolished, merged, split or created new committees. Full text of Act No 27/1945 Coll. n. SNR available online: https://www.aspi.sk/products/lawText/1/11676/1/2.

[27] A. Adam, 1975, p. 30. S. Gabzdilová, 2018, p. 13.

[28] In the interwar period, education in Slovakia was initially the responsibility of the Ministry with full powers for the administration of Slovakia, and later of a department within the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment (Act No. 64/1918). However, the War Powers Committee was an independent state body for the administration of schools of all grades in Slovakia. M. Ďurkovská, H. Hrehor, 2014, p. 8.

people's democratic system, thus outlining a new direction for the Czecho-slovak Republic. In accordance with the content of the Košice Government Program, the Committee of Education and Enlightenment was responsible for the administration of Slovak education. It became the new central governing institution for education at all levels – in charge of secondary, vocational secondary, and higher education in Slovakia; the personnel agenda of all teachers; the provision of financial resources; and the management of each school.[29] The powers and competences of this committee and others, in relation to the national authorities, were finally defined by the adoption of the three Prague Agreements (June 1945–June 1946), which significantly affected their internal system and self-government. The Agreements, a series of negotiations between the central government in Prague and the Slovak National Council, gradually reduced the powers of the Slovak authorities in relation to the President and the central government. The local authorities' complete degradation was confirmed by the third Agreement, which placed the executive power of the Board of Commissioners under the control of the government and subordinated the superintendents to the ministers. The education superintendent was subordinated to the minister of education, and the government bodies gained control over the already truncated legislative activity of the Slovak National Council.[30] This, the most significant of the three Prague Agreements in terms of content, was a consequence of the failure of the Communist Party in Slovakia in the 1946 elections. Its aim was to undermine the victory of the Democratic Party and the powers of the Slovak national authorities. The asymmetrical model of the organization of state administration was subsequently codified in the Constitution of May 9, 1948, and became a source of tension in the country in the following years.[31]

Between 1945 and 1948, of the two Communist parties active in the country, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia[32] showed less interest in educational issues. In the May 1946 elections, the Ministry of Education was handed over to the National Socialists and replaced by the Ministry of Internal Trade.[33] In that period, the Communists in Czechoslovakia succeeded in pushing through only

[29]   Under the new organization of committees in 1952, the administration of the universities (and science) was taken over by the Fourth Department of the Committee of Education. E. Rákoš, Š. Rudohradský, 1973, pp. 396–397. K. Kaplan, 1990, pp. 167–170, 190–191.

[30]   M. Barnovský, 1993, pp. 37, 100–118.

[31]   Š. Šutaj, 2015, p. 124–125. K. Kaplan, 1990, pp. 167–170, 190–191.

[32]   In 1945–1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Slovak: Komunistická strana Československa, KSČ) and the Communist Party of Slovakia (Slovak: Komunistická strana Slovenska, KSS) operated within Czechoslovakia as two formally separate parties, which immediately after the war gained key positions in both sets of state structures. After 1948, the Communist Party of Slovakia was only a territorial organizational component of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

[33]   After the parliamentary elections of 1946, Jaroslav Stránsky, a nominee of the National Socialist Party, replaced Zdeněk Nejedlý (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) as Minister of Education. A similar event occurred in neighboring Poland, where the Polish Communists lost the Ministry of Education for almost two years (1945–1947). In Slovakia, the communists managed to retain the leadership of the education committee throughout these years: Ondrej

two minor changes in tertiary education.[34] One was the relatively uncontroversial incorporation of pedagogical faculties into the university structure; the other was the creation of new Soviet-era departments staffed by teachers without proper habilitation.[35] However, unlike in the Czech lands, the foundations of the new focus of the educational system in Slovakia were laid as early as September 1944.[36] While in Bohemia, the Communists did not attach as much importance to university policy, in Slovakia, immediately after the war, they occupied the Committee of Education and began to nationalize schools of all grades and their teaching staff.[37] There was a general nationalization of education, coupled with the liquidation of church and boarding schools; paradoxically, this was carried out in Slovakia, the more religious part of the country. In the Czech regions, no such blanket crackdown on Catholicism took place (except for German Catholicism);[38] the idea of nationalizing schools did not meet with much support. This was mainly because of the different religious situation in the Czech lands and the smaller number of church schools in Bohemia and Moravia compared to Slovakia. However, the decisive factor was the different position of the schools in relation to the church. While in the Protectorate, the diversity of church and state schools was preserved even during the war, in Slovakia, state education belonged exclusively to the church; this was immediately reflected in the postwar "purification" of the school system.[39]

The government program adopted in Košice in April 1945 set the fundamental priorities for the further development of postwar Czechoslovakia.[40] The new

Pavlík (KSS) was replaced by Ladislav Novomeský (KSS). S. Gabzdilová, 2018, p. 18. T. Mołdawa, 1991, pp. 337–339, 443. J. Connelly, 2008, pp. 64–65.

[34] The decrees of the President of the Republic in matters of higher education focused on the abolition of German universities, the restoration and opening of all universities in the country, and the establishment of pedagogical faculties. S. Gabzdilová, 2018, p. 12.

[35] However, this reform of teacher education had already been promoted in the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic. J. Connelly, 2008, p. 63.

[36] The regulations were adopted by the newly created Slovak National Council (established in December 1943), the supreme Slovak legislative body, on the basis of an agreement between the leadership of the Communist Party of Slovakia and the Civic Bloc. They unambiguously expressed the direction in which Slovak education and school policy would develop after the liberation. They had a fundamental influence on the development and direction of the educational process in Slovakia and defined its character. In this context, the regulation on the nationalization of education was particularly decisive. S. Gabzdilová, 2018, pp. 8–9. S. Gabzdilová, 2021, p. 51. Full text of Act No. 5/1944 Coll. n. SNR available online at: https://sk.wikisource.org/wiki/Nariadenie_Slovenskej_n%C3%A1rodnej_rady_%C4%8D._5/1944_Zb._n._SNR._zo_6._septembra_1944_o_po%C5%A1t%C3%A1tnen%C3%AD_%C5%A1kolstva_na_Slovensku.

[37] S. Gabzdilová, 2018, pp. 11–13; State Archive in Košice (further SAK), f. Okresný národný výbor Košice – okolie (1945–1948) (further ONV), box 64, inv. no. 61, sign. 5986/1945.

[38] I. Petranský, 2001, pp. 131–197, 271–276; R. Letz, 2013, p. 13.

[39] The Communists in Bohemia, given the country's secular character, did not consider the Church strong enough to threaten their power ambitions. Another strong argument against the nationalization of schools in Bohemia was the high number of municipal schools, which were built by the municipalities themselves. Š. Šutaj, 2015, p. 130–131. K. Kaplan, 1990, pp. 161–162. R. Cigánek, 2009, p. 35.

[40] This emerged from meetings of representatives of exiled and domestic political forces in London and Moscow; it was adopted in Košice on April 5, 1945.

program had a primarily organizational focus in relation to education and did not pay much attention to it, but it did include reforms. Chapter XV defined a new direction for education in the spirit of "democratization" and access to schools for all sectors of society;[41] it ordered the closure of educational institutions with German or Hungarian as the language of instruction, a postwar purge, and checks on national and political reliability in the teaching corps and among students. Among other things, the text set out a new direction for relations with the USSR in the fields of education and culture. Any criticism of the Soviet Union was to be removed from textbooks and literature; Russian was to have a prominent position among foreign languages taught in schools; students were to acquire the necessary knowledge of the origins, development, economy, and culture of the Soviet Union; and universities were to establish departments of the history of the economy and law of the USSR.[42] In 1945–1948, education became part of a political struggle[43] that was equally reflected in the postwar reconstruction of the higher education system, even though higher education was not among the priorities of even the second postwar Czechoslovak government.[44] Attention was particularly focused on the need for reform, and several new national laws were therefore adopted as a result of postwar events. Schools were forced to adapt to the new conditions and had to resolve a number of current problems, ranging from material and technical provisions to their relationship with the new "democratic" establishment. While the first area was mainly concerned with the repair of war-damaged buildings and the construction of new ones, the second was more complicated and required more extensive

[41] The democratization of education was already an important issue in the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic. After the Second World War, this issue once again became an important part of not only social but also political debate. The idea of democratization of education and culture was appropriated by the Communist regime, which promised access to education for all inhabitants of the country, regardless of their social status. E. Londáková, 2017, pp. 110–111. The term "democratization" in the context of ongoing modernization was meant to make tertiary education more accessible to the wider society. After World War II, this process can be traced not only in Europe but all over the world. In the Eastern bloc countries, however, "democratization reforms" were characterized by the gradual loss of academic autonomy and self-government, vetting of teaching staff and students, unification of the university system, ideological integration, and loss of dominance in research. See: J. Requate, 2009, pp. 190–192. M. Glossová, 2021, p. 26. It is evident that at the time of the adoption of the Košice government program, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia already perceived the above postulate from a class perspective; its intention was to create the preconditions for the admission of candidates from the working and peasant classes without matriculation, and to establish courses for the training of workers. E. Rákoš, Š. Rudohradský, 1973, pp. 74–81. S. Gabzdilová, 2018, pp. 10–11.

[42] S. Gabzdilová, 2018, p. 25.

[43] The communist-promoted ideal of a unified school and the nationalization of all schools came into conflict with the democratic wing of the political leaders, as well as with the Catholic Church. In particular, the Communist Party in Slovakia devoted intensive efforts to undermining the influence of the Catholic Church in the field of education of the young generation. Ibidem, pp. 18–22.

[44] The government resolution of July 1946 (also known as the Building Program of the Gottwald government) expected the Ministry of Education, in addition to completing the pedagogical faculties, to unify the legislation of universities and amend it, with the aim of strengthening the position of technical colleges. P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, pp. 44–45.

solutions that placed demands on all participants in the educational process.[45] In the transitional period of 1945–1947, Communist Party leaders gradually placed more political pressure on university students and colleges. Statements by Communist leaders about universities, which significantly undermined the position of their party in the student movement, helped to escalate the situation.[46]

A coherent idea for the development of higher education after the war did not come from the initiative of the Ministry of Education (or the Committee of Education), nor from the programs of the leaderships of the various political parties, which paradoxically paid minimal attention to the issue.[47] Concrete ideas about the shape of the new reforms came from within the universities themselves, but their concepts differed significantly. While the academic community emphasized a gradual revision of the study and examination regulations,[48] the radicalized student body demanded a comprehensive change in the foundations of the university system. The latter became the basis for the Communist Party's concepts of university reform. Immediately after the war, in addition to the nationalization of schools, communist leaders focused on purging the universities of representatives of the former regime. The situation in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia was relatively calmer than in neighboring countries,[49] and the academic corps was restored without much interference. The situation in Slovakia after the end of the war was similar to 1918, when Slovak universities were mainly dependent on Czech teachers. Although some Czech teachers remained in Slovakia during the Second World War, no new ones arrived after 1945. In connection with nationalization, the Committee of Education set itself

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[45] M, Čermáková, 1991, p. 325. E. Rákoš, Š. Rudohradský, 1973, p. 394.

[46] For example, the assessment of the level of universities by the then Minister of Information Václav Kopecký: "Universities often do not even provide the kind of education that a worker gets when he reads a communist newspaper." P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, p. 84.

[47] Initiatives and suggestions for changes in the network and organization of universities came mainly from below: from individual regions, regional centers, and the academic environment. See for more details: Ibidem, p. 40.

[48] See for more: Ibidem, p. 132.

[49] The greatest "success" in the Sovietization of tertiary education was achieved by the Communists in East Germany, where the academic community accepted Soviet models and demands without hesitation as early as 1945; they maintained this control until the end of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). In East Germany, the denazification and migration of the population after 1945 caused a radical transformation of the university teaching staff. After the end of the war, more than 80% of the original teachers voluntarily or forcibly left the profession. J. Connelly, 2008, pp. 20, 66. In Poland, unlike Czechoslovakia and the GDR, the unpopular and staff-weak Communist Party was unable to come up with any major initiative in the immediate postwar period, which foreshadowed a long-term trend of social compromise in the field of tertiary education. For Polish higher education, the consequences of the war were disastrous. One-third of the Polish intelligentsia perished, and of the university professors, about 40% survived. In most cases, some of the professorial staff in Poland were retired early or restricted in teaching; there were few cases of forced dismissal. The losses were slightly compensated for by the intelligentsia associating in secret underground universities during the Nazi occupation. W. Rüegg, J. Sadlak, 2011, p. 84. A significant decline in the number of Czechoslovak teachers occurred in 1949–1950 as a result of the university purges, which were even more drastic in Czech and Moravian universities than in Slovakia. M, Glossová, 2021, pp. 28–29.

the goal of cleansing the schools of hostile elements. All education personnel had to undergo national and state security checks. Special commissions decided whether each teacher could continue in his profession or would have to leave the education system. The proportion of expelled teachers in Slovakia was relatively low (5%), mainly due to the lack of qualified replacements. In most cases, the commission decided to transfer or demote them instead.[50]

The three Slovak colleges struggled with a shortage of teachers in the immediate postwar period, so a major purge of the teaching staff was out of the question. This situation was also reflected in the organizational structure of the Slovak universities, which were only able to expand further branches of faculties and establish universities in new centers under very difficult conditions. As a result, they were unable to respond to the same extent as the Czech areas to the regionalization of universities. This was a significant phenomenon of the second half of the 1940s, which argued for the contemporary postulate of "democratization of education," based on the Košice government program;[51] it resulted in an uncontrollable influx of students into universities in the years after 1945. The universities themselves were the first to react, demanding regulation of the influx of students. Although the central planning of the number of graduates corresponded to the concept of planning all areas of public life then contained in the two-year economic recovery plan, the program of the second postwar government made no mention of possible regulation of student access to universities. This approach was equally at odds with the content of the Košice government program, which did not suggest any regulatory measures; on the contrary, it proclaimed a program of rigorous "democratization" "by allowing the widest possible access to schools."[52] Non-communist politicians saw a threat in the possible restriction of access to universities, pointing to the right of democratic access to education. Communist leaders, on the other hand, saw an opportunity to advance their long-standing goal of changing the social composition of the college-going population. During 1946–1947 they began drafting the outline of a law on university admissions, which was initially consulted with the leaderships of Czechoslovak universities. February 1948 finally allowed the Communist Party to take a more radical approach to the issue of admissions; it used its position as the new political hegemon to dominate the universities in the political selection of applicants for study. By a decree of the minister of education on May 29, 1948,[53] preliminary enrolments of students were introduced in all higher education institutions in Czechoslovakia. These

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[50]  S. Gabzdilová, 2018, pp. 19–21.

[51]  In contrast to the Czech regions, where three colleges and a total of nine faculties were established in the period 1945–1948, only one college and five faculties were established in Slovakia in the same period. All of them were based in Košice, except for the Faculty of Pedagogy in Banská Bystrica. P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, p. 41.

[52]  P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, pp. 55–57.

[53]  In connection with admissions interviews, the Ministry of Education issued regulations and guideline numbers for specific colleges and fields of study each year. Ibidem, pp. 58–70. Slovak National Archives (further SNA), f. Povereníctvo školstva (1945–1960) (further PŠ), box 19, sign. 280; box č. 63, sign. 22/1958; box 693, sign. 2646.

obtained detailed information on the political and class character of applicants, their national and political reliability, and their activities and attitudes during the period of occupation. This document formally launched the infamous era of cadre and political questionnaires in universities. Not until the Higher Education Act of 1950, which proclaimed the principle that "students are admitted to universities according to the ability of the applicants and with due regard to the projected economic, social and cultural needs of the state," did admissions management gain legal backing.[54] Although the admission procedures were initially based on the initiative of the universities themselves and there was a fairly wide consensus on the need for their implementation, the process cannot be overlooked or downplayed. For the first time in the history of higher education institutions, extraordinary measures had been taken to create a barrier to study for political reasons; this very clearly undermined the legal system for higher education institutions.[55]

After 1948, higher education became a subject of special interest to the party and state authorities. On the one hand, the need for postwar reconstruction clearly emphasized the high demand for professionals; on the other, higher education was perceived as an important factor shaping the consciousness of society. The official aim of the reconstruction of education was to prepare young people "to become active and creative builders of socialism," which propaganda slogans defined as "building a new society."[56] As M. Zavacká states, "It was a more general tendency to solve directively, through the school system, various prospective economic problems."[57] Winning over the academic community to the new university system was no easy matter. In Czechoslovakia, however, the Communist Party was able to secure a strong and stable position relatively quickly, and the Sovietization of universities could therefore proceed in a more efficient manner. After the Communists had gained influence in workers' and peasants' circles, they began to target university students as well. In the qualitatively new conditions after February 1948, the consistent application of the party principle in the educational policy of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia could be increasingly observed in the field of tertiary education. This principle was present in the school laws, in the organization of the educational system, and especially in the content of education and upbringing. The Communist Party was to take a constant leading role in all components of the life of society. Initially, resistance by professors to the Party's practices in the Czech Republic and Slovakia was only sporadic, and their entry into the Party was equally lax. Things changed after 1948 when teachers began to join the party en masse for career reasons or for fear of losing their jobs. Communist students took the initiative in higher education as reliable implementers of the Party's university policy; they became a politically significant force for Sovietization that was

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[54] Full text of Act No. 58/1950 Coll. available online: https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/1950/58/19591201.html; P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, pp. 68–72.

[55] Ibidem, pp. 73–74.

[56] P. Machcewicz, 2014, p. 61.

[57] M. Zavacká, 2017, p. 105.

unparalleled in the Central European region. After February 1948, Communist-initiated National Front Action Committees began to emerge at universities; they were also formed in many other institutions to purify public life. The formation of action committees immediately after February 1948 became the most significant manifestation of the new governmental power in the functioning of universities. Although, officially, there were still academic senates and professorships, the action committees assumed some of their powers. They decided on the retention of teachers in the faculties, conducting vetting and expelling students and the original academic staff as representatives of reaction, especially in the social sciences.[58] This period of the so-called "revolution from below" in the Central European region saw the implementation of the Soviet model of tertiary education, which most closely resembled the Soviet ideal of the Cultural Revolution.[59]

After February 1948, the action committees at universities made their presence felt, primarily in connection with the implementation of the first phase of the reform process, which was to include the so-called "cleansing" of universities of students and teachers suspected of being hostile to the communist regime. Questionnaires were used to ascertain "class origins," political attitudes, parental occupations, and other information to ensure that students sufficiently loyal to the new regime remained at the universities. Students and school staff defined as "hostile" were to be excluded.[60] All regulations against the colleges were organized and centrally controlled by the Ministry of Education, in consultation with youth organizations. The Minister determined not only the numbers of newly admitted and expelled students, but also the principles of their selection.[61] The post-February political purges led by the action committees prompted the communist leadership to implement much more massive and systematic screening and persecution of students and university staff. In the period when the post-February revisions were coming to an end, the Ministry of Education, by its decree of November 30, 1948, launched a political campaign that has gone down in history under the name "democratization of universities."[62] At the beginning of November 1948, the first reports began to appear about the preparations for the "democratization," which was planned to be implemented

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[58] The above procedure was legalized by the Ministry of Education in March and May 1948. S. Gabzdilová, 2018, p. 26.

[59] The Cultural Revolution can be characterized as a set of activities aimed at a radical restructuring of the cultural and ideological life of society. The main effort was to form a new type of culture as part of the building of a socialist society, in particular by increasing the proportion of people from the proletarian strata in the social composition of the intelligentsia. J. Connelly, 2008, p. 76.

[60] The number of students expelled from the colleges between February 1948 and autumn 1950 was 1,638; this was 16.6% of the total number of students. Despite the many expelled students, the purges carried out were judged unsatisfactory. See for more detail, M. Olejník, 2017, pp. 43–50. P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, pp. 85–86.

[61] M. Jastrzab-Mrozicka, 1994, p. 86.

[62] P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, p. 96. SNA, f. Ústredný výbor Komunistickej strany Slovenska, Sekretariát (1945–1953) (further ÚV KSS, Sekretariát), box 2, sign. 13; box 7, sign. 11.

in Bohemia by the end of the winter semester. In Slovakia, the deadline was postponed due to a lack of reliable staff and the need to adapt the action to Slovak conditions. The "democratization" pursued two main objectives – to remove from the universities those who did not study, but especially those who opposed the regime. Four-member commissions were appointed at the faculties to run and control the whole action.[63] The so-called investigation into the academic performance of university students, as the action was presented to the public, succeeded in demonstrating the strength and power of the new political system by excluding more than 10%[64] of the total number of university students in Slovakia and 25.7% of students from Czech universities.[65] Although in the first half of 1950, the "democratization action" was still reverberating around Slovak universities and the former education superintendent Ondrej Pavlík[66] said that "we need not fear that in the future we will have to repeat such an action of cleansing the universities,"[67] another wave of persecutions began in the middle of that year.[68] While in the Czech part of the country, surprisingly, there were no other significant purges among students, in Slovakia, another massive action was launched in connection with the campaign against the so-called bourgeois nationalists; this was unmatched in the Czech part of the country.[69] Although this wave was milder in terms of the number of students expelled, it represented a much greater intrusion into the university system as well as into the privacy of the persecuted students.[70] The Communist Party in Slovakia spoke out strongly against the universities, which it regarded as a source of "reaction by anti-state elements and inveterate enemies of popular democracy."[71] The political reasons for carrying out such widespread purges in universities, as J. Connelly

[63] The four members were the chairman (usually the chairman of the factory organization of the Communist Party of Slovakia at the faculty in question), a member of the professorial staff (on condition that he was a cadre member of the party), a member of the education board, and one student. The Plant Organizations of the Communist Party of Slovakia (Slovakia: Závodné organizácie Komunistickej strany Slovenska ZO KSS) were mainly responsible for their activities. SNA, f. ÚV KSS, Sekretariát, box 2, sign. 13.

[64] As M. Gloss reports, this was the largest of the eight waves of student screenings and expulsions identified to date. M. Glossová, 2021, pp. 59–84.

[65] P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, pp. 98–100.

[66] First Commissioner of Education (February 21, 1945–April 11, 1945); from 1950, Deputy Minister of Education and Culture and leader of the State Committee for Higher Education.

[67] SNA, f. ÚV KSS, Sekretariát, box 2, sign. 13.

[68] M. Glossová, 2021, p. 84.

[69] J. Connelly, 2008, p. 75. SNA, f. PŠ, box 19; sign. 300. The top experts in science were so poorly paid that they became dependent on the help of relatives. The purges that took place in the 1950s, even at the highest levels of the political apparatus, had consequences for the university system. In Slovakia, accusations of so-called bourgeois nationalism against the Commissioner of Education, Ladislav Novomeský, resulted in a mock trial and his conviction. For more on the trials of bourgeois nationalists, see: T. Černák, 2012, pp. 109–120.

[70] While in the first screening, the questionnaires were filled out by the students themselves, in the second the information in the questionnaires was collected by party workers. This made it much easier to present false and expedient information about the expelled students. For more on persecuted students in Slovakia, see: M. Glossová, 2021, pp. 59–84. Also S. Gabzdilová, 2018, pp. 56–57. SNA, f. ÚV KSS, Sekretariát, box 2; f. PŠ, box 693, sign. 2646.

[71] SNA, f. ÚV KSS, Sekretariát, box 20, sign. 22. S. Gabzdilová, 2018, pp. 20.

notes, were unparalleled in any of the surrounding Communist bloc countries during the period under review.[72] Thanks to the activities of the action committees in the universities, and the waves of screenings and persecutions, the student body and the academic community were sufficiently intimidated and, to a large extent, prepared to compromise with the totalitarian power; this was confirmed by the massive entry of students and teachers into the Communist Party. Thus, by early 1949, the Party had gained full control over social organizations, including faculty associations at universities.[73]

The first unifying factor in Czech and Slovak communist policy on tertiary education was the adoption of the Higher Education Act in 1950,[74] the application of which was characterized by radicalism, somewhat more intense in Slovakia than in Bohemia. The new legislative framework subordinated universities completely and without exception to the state and deprived them of their academic self-government. The government gained the right to abolish, merge, or divide universities and faculties. It also decided on the seats and names of new universities and proposed (through the State Office for Higher Education) to the President of the Republic the appointment of professors and chancellors (the appointment of deans was decided by the minister in charge). The initial phase of the transformation of colleges and universities, which began in 1950, defined the role of the institutions providing the highest education in socialist society. In practice, it meant the complete removal of university autonomy and the acquisition of absolute state control over all aspects of education. The main roles of the institutions of higher education, as defined in that reform, were the ideological reconstruction of science and education under the influence of so-called "scientific socialism," an intense orientation towards Soviet science, and the promotion of the political education of students. The internal organization of universities was fundamentally transformed by introducing existing Soviet models,[75] which resulted in the separation of scientific and educational activities in universities.[76] This phenomenon was particularly marked in Czechoslovakia.

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[72] J. Connelly, 2008, pp. 392–395. P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, p. 102.

[73] P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, pp. 102–104.

[74] The Higher Education Act of 1950, drafted according to the Soviet model, started a cycle of changes in the organizational structure of Czech and Slovak schools. It fundamentally influenced the formation of the tertiary education system in Czechoslovakia until 1989. P. Urbášek, 2008, pp. 21–23.

[75] The adopted changes also significantly affected the internal organization of universities, in which instead of the existing seminaries, scientific departments began to be established as a kind of precursor to a new basic unit, the previously unknown and non-existent departments. The new higher education reform, in its content, undermined the traditional understanding of freedom of education, freedom of expression and access to information, which it systematically negated. S. Gabzdilová, 2018, p. 26. P. Urbášek, 2008, pp. 21–22.

[76] The aim of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was, among other things, to centralize scientific research into a single institution with a national scope. After the war, the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts (Slovak: Slovenská akadémia vied a umení, SAVU) operated in the territory of present-day Slovakia as the top scientific institution organizing scientific and artistic life in Slovakia. SAVU managed to maintain its status after the war, even though its foundation dated back to the period of the Slovak state. It retained its autonomy as a scientific institution until 1952, when it was replaced by the Slovak Academy of Sciences (Slovak: Slovenská akadémia vied,

Although the new Higher Education Act stressed the importance and status of universities in scientific research and the combination of scientific research and teaching activities (§ 2), it also required their separation and management independently of the organizational structure of the faculties (§ 16).[77] The conditions for the establishment and equipping of scientific institutes, as well as for scientific work as such, were in place in universities at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s; however, the situation in the universities at this time was extremely unfavorable. The lack of financial resources, the increase in the volume of teaching work, and the administrative burden due to the adoption and implementation of the new university reforms had negative consequences for any development of scientific work.[78] Equally, the lack of qualified teaching and scientific forces, influenced by the ongoing political purges, hampered any progress in the field of science. The development of scientific work at universities was not supported even by the Minister of Education Zděnek Nejedlý himself. He associated the traditional (German Humboldtian) system of higher education with the advent and development of capitalism; he supported the concept of separating scientific research from the university system and transforming universities into institutions completely devoted to pedagogical work.[79] The adopted reforms often provoked dissatisfaction in universities, but above all, individual universities struggled to implement them. The planning of higher education became one of the most important and complex problems facing universities after the war.

The most significant focus of the communist regime in this process was on increasing the proportion of students from working-class and peasant families. The newly emerging departments of Marxism-Leninism, including the faculties of education, were used to extend communist influence.[80] However, the most extensive project aiming at radical transformation of the social and political composition of university students was the state courses for the preparation of workers for higher education,[81] also known as workers'

SAV). This significantly weakened the position of universities in science and research, which had been stable until then. The SAV managed and coordinated basic and other research, so that it was ultimately superior to the universities in the field of scientific research. It had two basic functions: to bring together scientists and, as a state agency, to act as a research center supervising and coordinating research in the country. A. Hudek, 2010, pp. 75–78. P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, pp. 28.

[77] S. Gabzdilová, 2018, pp. 28–29. SNA, f. PŠ, box 693, sign. 2646.

[78] P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, pp. 164.

[79] The lagging behind of scientific activities in universities in Czechoslovakia was addressed by the amendment of the Higher Education Act of 1956 (No. 46/1956. This emphasized the establishment of scientific institutes and laboratories at universities. Even though the unsatisfactory situation in the scientific activities of universities was pointed out by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the situation remained almost unchanged in the ensuing years. P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, pp. 165–167. A. Hudek, 2010, pp. 28–30.

[80] J. Connelly, 2008, p. 67.

[81] The failure of the workers' courses was mainly a consequence of the low interest among workers' and peasants' youth in higher education; this was manifested in a steady decline in potential applicants. Despite the setbacks of the 1950s, the communist regime attempted to rehabilitate state courses during the period of normalization in the form of so-called boarding secondary schools for workers (by a decree of 1973). This was equally unsuccessful. P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, pp. 111–116.

courses.[82] These were intended to facilitate entry to universities for students without sufficient education; therefore, they can be presented as a form of positive discrimination.[83] Although the Communist leadership everywhere in the Eastern block considered the education of a self-loyal student body of working-class character to be of the utmost importance, it achieved different results in each country. In the Czech lands and Slovakia, the proportion of students from working-class and peasant families was relatively low (42%), and efforts to persuade workers and peasants to enter the unfamiliar university environment proved particularly problematic. The largest proportion of university students in Czechoslovakia continued to be the middle class, which was never sufficiently loyal to the Communist Party.[84] As M. Glossová points out, the low proportion of students from the working and peasant classes had several causes: family tradition (inheritance of the family craft), social and economic situations, ability to cope with university studies, and wage policy.[85] The Sovietization of Slovak universities became an actual demand of the Party. Although the Communist Party's policy of creating a new intelligentsia was relatively underestimated, it succeeded in achieving comparable results to those of neighboring regions, especially in the field of political indoctrination.

The death of Joseph V. Stalin, the supreme leader of the communist regime, was the beginning of a new socio-political direction at the very core of the USSR, as well as in the entire Eastern bloc. The turning point was the XX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, which started the process of destalinization, rehabilitation, and correction of the regime – not only in the USSR, but also in the satellite countries. There was a gradual loosening in how communist regimes were organized, including the abandonment of strict adherence to the Soviet model of higher education and the organization of internal relations. The gradual move away from the Soviet model highlighted the shape of the national context of each Eastern bloc country's construction of socialism. In Czechoslovakia, the communists managed to overcome this crisis without major concessions. The year 1953, which saw the fundamental changes that shook the communist regime, was ultimately marked by the acquisition of central communist control rather than the beginning of liberalization, and political

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[82] In Czechoslovakia, "workers' courses" ("robotnícke kurzy"); in Slovakia, "preparatory courses for workers" ("prípravné kurzy pre pracujúcich"); in Poland, "preparatory courses" ("kursy przygotowawcze"); in the GDR, "workers' and peasants' faculties" ("Arbeiter- und Bauern-fakultäten"). These were later transformed into independent faculties (except in Czechoslovakia, where they gradually lost their function and eventually ceased to exist). SNA, f. PŠ, box 97, inv. no. 2–93, sign. 58/1952. J. Connelly, 2008, p. 20.

[83] G. Neave, 2011, p. 39.

[84] In other countries, more students came from working-class and peasant families; for example, in East Germany and Poland, the number of students from such families reached the required 60%. J. Connelly, 2008, pp. 22–24.

[85] The leveling of salaries in the country led to a locksmith earning more than a lawyer and a turner more than a doctor. The possibility of immediate employment in practice proved to be more economically advantageous than graduating from college. The income disparity resulted in the new intelligentsia becoming a permanently dissatisfied social stratum. M. Glossová, 2021, pp. 32–33.

indoctrination continued in the following period.[86] The process of relaxation in education, science, and culture gradually began to manifest itself around 1955 and even more so after 1956.[87] Although the basic organizational structures of the communist system remained unchanged, the Party's policies became less dogmatic. Despite the appearance of several student protests expressing dissatisfaction with the established regime, the concept of state socialism remained intact, regardless of the crises, which the regime always managed to overcome. After the events in Hungary, the Communist Party leadership in Czechoslovakia managed to stabilize the situation as well as its position, and after 1958 it even undertook further persecutions and reforms in the universities.[88]

The development of higher education institutions in the period under review was characterized primarily by rapid quantitative growth, which often caused serious disproportions, especially in terms of the shortage of specialists and poor material support for the development of higher education institutions in Slovakia. Efforts were made to equalize the educational level of Slovakia with the Czech regions as a prerequisite for the development of the country's economic, social, and cultural levels. Lack of respect for the peculiarities of education in Slovakia by the central and national governing bodies often caused distortions in the administration and management of Slovak universities. The differences in the educational and qualification levels of Slovakia and Bohemia could not be eliminated; this adversely affected the development of Czechoslovak tertiary education. Partisanship, absolute political loyalty, and the applicability of graduates to the economy of the state became indispensable principles of higher education, but in practice, there was a contradiction between them. In many cases, a choice had to be made between a professional who lacked political reliability, and a party member without sufficient qualifications. This factor led to a slower onset of the Sovietization of universities in Slovakia and caused a lack of university-educated intelligentsia, which contributed to the delay in the reform process.[89] Despite the fact that higher education was marked by ideological influences, and in many parameters, did not reach the level of developed European countries, the period of postwar reconstruction saw the establishment of the current network of higher education institutions, the massification of tertiary education, and the formation of a stable scientific base. The expansion of university training and the dense network of higher education institutions contributed to higher education enjoying a considerable boom in the 1950s and 1960s.[90] The mobilization and

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[86] W. Rüegg, J. Sadlak, 2011, pp. 101–102. J. Connelly, 2008, p. 29.

[87] Act No. 46/1956 of September 24, 1956, amending the Higher Education Act. Full text of Act No. 46/1956 Coll. available online: https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/1956/46/19561006.

[88] As the center of power reacted to domestic and foreign socio-political events of the second half of the 1950s, there were cases of early retirements and replacements of professors and academic functionaries, and further waves of persecution against students. P. Urbášek, J. Pulec, 2012, pp. 213. M. Barnovský, 2002, pp. 84–89. J. Connelly, 2008, p. 29.

[89] M. Glossová, 2021, p. 25.

[90] The turbulent development and growth of universities in Slovakia began to manifest itself relatively slowly immediately after the war, but escalated until the first half of the 1960s. The

regionalization of higher education enabled the economic, social, and cultural development of cities and regions, with the most important contribution being the provision of human capital through the training of a highly skilled workforce. Of the communist parties in the region, the KSČ gained the greatest popularity among the population. It made use of its strong organizational structure and political strength, as in East Germany. However, it was ultimately not so popular among students.[91] Efforts to win over a new loyal intelligentsia through upbringing and education proved ultimately ineffective in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, and students became a destabilizing factor in key periods of the reform movements.[92] The period 1956–1989 in Central Europe was, in most cases, characterized by relatively stable and peaceful relations between universities and government, but these were disrupted by periodic reactions to restrictions on academic freedoms (e.g., in Poland in March 1968 and after the declaration of martial law in 1981, and in Czechoslovakia in 1968).[93] Despite these changes, universities remained under the influence of communist regimes, and no major systemic departure from the original orthodox model was evident in Central Europe until the 1980s. After 40 years of totalitarian rule, these countries inherited an educational system that reflected primarily the needs of the 1950s and early 1960s. The unnatural development and isolation of scientific research and education marked the evolution of tertiary education; many post-communist countries are still coping with this today.

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number of higher education institutions had quadrupled by the end of the 1950s (from 3 to 12; 9 universities (Comenius University, University of Economics, Slovak Technical University, University of Performing Arts, University of Fine Arts, University of Forestry and Wood Technology in Zvolen, University of Agriculture in Nitra, Technical College, and Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice) and 3 Higher Pedagogical Schools (in Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, and Prešov). The number of faculties had increased elevenfold since 1937 (from 3 to 33) and the number of students was almost seven times higher (in 1937 there were a total of 2,194 students in Slovakia; in the school year 1956/1957, there were 15,188). The establishment of the Paul Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, the Transport University in Žilina, the Faculty of Medicine in Martin, and the Veterinary University increased the numbers even further. SNA, f. PŠ, box 693, inv. no. 2646, sign. 335/1957.

[91]  J. Connelly, 2008, pp. 71–75.
[92]  A. Korbonski, 1992, pp. 265–266. J. Connelly, 2008, p. 22.
[93]  W. Rüegg, J. Sadlak, 2011, pp. 101–102.

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