

Rok po roce: Poválečnými dějinami rok za rokem [Year after Year: Postwar History Year by Year].

Občanská sdružení PANT, Ostrava 2014, 94 pp., 406 worksheets, ISBN 978-80-904578-8-1.

Dějepis v 21. století: Soudobé dějiny v kostce [History Teaching in the 21st Century: Contemporary History in a Nutshell].

Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, Praha 2014, Box contains two books and three DVDs, No ISBN number.

Since 1989 extensive changes have been underway in Czech historical scholarship and training at the university level. But what about changes in the interpretation and teaching of history in elementary and middle school classrooms in the Czech Republic? What efforts to undo communist lessons about the correct interpretation of the past and non-critically engaged pedagogical methods have been underway in pre-university teaching; and, very importantly, how is the often hotly contested Cold War era being taught in Czech classrooms to young people whose memories were not shaped by lived experience in socialist Czechoslovakia? This review discusses two ambitious teaching kits created to assist educators in the land of Komenský address the challenges of teaching history to young people in the post-socialist age. Both multi-part pedagogical tools reveal thoughtful efforts to promote individual inquiry, evidence-based analysis, diverse interpretations of the past, and enthusiasm for history among Czechs born after the Velvet Revolution.

The first kit under review, *Rok po roce*, was produced by Občanská sdružení PANT, a civil society founded in 2007 to promote human rights through education that also created and manages the teaching website Moderní-dějiny.cz. Its four parts are contained in a sturdy binder with an image of the opening of the Berlin Wall on its cover (this teaching aide was quickly sold out, but its various components can be accessed on Moderní-dějiny.cz). The first (unpaginated) part is a brief introduction to the project. It includes a table of contents showing that the kit is organized chronologically into nine sections, each of which covers both a five-year period of Czechoslovak history and a parallel period of world history between 1945 and 1989. The introduction also includes a brief discussion of pedagogical reasoning and goals guiding the kit. Petr Šimíček and Jiří Sovadina, two middle-school history teachers at the Olga Havlová Gymnasium in Ostrava-Poruba and editors of Moderní-dějiny.cz, wrote this discussion, as well as other parts of the kit. They state that *Rok po roce*, a result of a three-year project and designed for history education in elementary and middle schools, is different from “classic textbooks”: Instead of filtering the past through a dominant interpretative narrative, providing only documents that illustrate that narrative, and assignments simply calling for summaries, the kit “offers students possibilities for inquiry, interpretation, and comparison of the most varied types of historical sources [...]”. Underlining the independent thinking encouraged in this kit, Šimíček and Sovadina emphasize that educators are not to move mechanically through the kit one year at a time; instead, they are to choose materials in the kit that best fit their needs and goals.

The introduction discusses the kit's second component, publicist and politician Petruška Šustrová's 94-page booklet, "Study Texts." This revision of scripts that she and historian Petr Koura had prepared for Czech Radio served as the basis for the kit's conception; it also provides some background information that teachers can choose to use when they prepare lessons. Like the entire project, the booklet is organized into nine sections, each treating a five-year period in both Czechoslovak and world history from 1945 to 1989. Moving year-by-year, Šustrová presents facts and primary- and secondary-source evidence tracking roughly simultaneous, sometimes intersecting moments in local and global history. The booklet has no introductory statement presenting a methodological or interpretative framework that guided Šustrová in her selection of material. Few transition sentences between the sections, years, facts and evidence exist to tie the information together in a dominant overarching interpretation of Cold War history. Šustrová includes information related to the persecution of minorities, including not only the expulsion of the Germans, but also Czechoslovakia's 1959 "Soupis Romů" which registered all so-called itinerant and part-itinerant Roma, and Martin Luther King's receipt of the Nobel Prize due to his fight against racism in the United States. In the context of the kit's goals, namely to encourage individual inquiry and interpretation based on a variety of source evidence, the loose construction of Šustrová's booklet can be viewed in a positive light and be perceived as widening possibilities for drawing independent historical connections and comparisons.

The third part of *Rok po roce* consists of 336 pages of worksheets created by Petr Šimíček, Jiří Sovadina, and Milan Hes. A timeline mapping important dates and events from 1945 to 1989 runs across the top of each worksheet page and the bottom of each sheet reads, "Do you want to know more? Look at www.modernidejiny.cz." The worksheets are organized into nine sections of five-year-periods moving from 1945 to 1989 (a strict year-by-year ordering is not adhered to here and some worksheets cover more than one year). For each section, a batch of worksheets pertaining to world history are followed by a cluster dedicated to Czechoslovakia. Diverse types of evidence, including primary and secondary sources, photos, graphs, posters, and political cartoons are presented. While much evidence pertaining to the Czechoslovak past tends to come from either the Communist Party or opposition to it, there is some material on the worksheets, including evidence pertaining to everyday life, that teachers can choose to use for encouraging students to contemplate the complex, mutually constituting relations between state and society in socialist Czechoslovakia and to free them from any perceived need to fit their interpretations into older binary thinking about the Cold War past. Importantly, the worksheets also include questions for students to answer after studying provided evidence. Because the evidence is presented without any background information or commentary, sometimes students are instructed to gather additional information from textbooks, firsthand accounts, and the internet, in order to best answer the questions. Presumably, they also gain background information from in-class lessons. There is a variety of different types of questions, including those that invite students to compare documents to one another, write newspaper articles or plays based on their readings, or break into groups to discuss different aspects of a source.

The fourth part of *Rok po roce* is a set of three DVDs. The first DVD contains electronic copies of all of the worksheets to assist with easy sharing of the materials; it also contains two powerpoint presentations for each five-year period, with one presentation dedicated to world history and the other to Czechoslovakia (registered users can access these powerpoints online at moderni-dejiny.cz). Again showing the kit's encouragement of independent interpretation (and also its sensitivity to teachers' time constraints), each powerpoint presentation starts with a slide reading, "Read, browse, choose, edit". The powerpoints include some information from Šustrová's Study Text and the worksheets, in addition to a widened array of images. The other two DVDs, called "History Firsthand (Dějiny na vlastní kůži)", provide fifteen oral-history interviews with people who personally experienced or witnessed persecution and suppression during the twentieth century. Each interview lasts about 12 minutes, a good length for teaching purposes, and has an accompanying set of worksheets. Some of them provide evidence useful for problematizing the complexity of relations between state and society in Cold War Czechoslovakia. These include Kristina Tesková, a German relating how her family was not expelled because at a key moment her brother asked for a piece of bread in Czech, and Paul Wilson discussing how during normalization Czechs contributed to communist rule so as to be left in peace.

The second kit under review is *Dějepis v 21. století soudobé dějiny v kostce*. It comes in a box with a label reminiscent of Czech interwar design. The label urges Czech elementary and secondary teachers to imagine its contents as a set of building blocks, saying, "It is up to you, if you open the box, which pieces of the history building-set you choose, and what you construct together with your students". This multipart teaching aid resulted from a three-year collaborative project with teachers in the Czech Republic coordinated by the Education Section of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in Prague, a state-created and funded organization tasked with researching and sharing information about the Nazi and Communist periods in the Czech past. The box contains two books on teaching methodology for educators and three DVDs with materials for teaching the Czech past during the Nazi and the socialist periods. A brief brochure introduces them, showing that, like *Rok po roce*, this kit is not focused on teaching a single interpretation of the past or a specific set of facts. *Dějepis v 21. století* is concerned with promoting "historical facility" and "the nurturing of a sense of history".

Paměť a projektové vyučování v dějepise, one of the books in the kit, uses the theme of memory to present interactive, inquiry-based methods for teaching elementary and secondary school children to appreciate history without heavy reliance on textbooks and memorization. For authors Hana Havlůjová and Jaroslav Najbert, history is "a living discipline, and in no way a canon of dry, repeatedly belabored dates" (I). Chapter one contains a solid introduction to memory theory, including the work of Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora, and Jan and Aleida Assmann. Chapters two, three, and four discuss methods for teaching students how to critically analyze memoirs and other primary sources, gather and record oral histories, and analyze places and artefacts, including photos, with the goal of understanding memories embedded in them. Chapter 5 presents project-based learning, a method

that can employ all of the skills found in the previous chapters and teach an appreciation of history through the experience of in-depth exploration of one topic or question. The final chapter of this well-written volume offers ten “Examples of Good Practice”, drawn from different project-learning experiences in Czech classrooms. While this work is not explicitly focused on teaching the history of socialist Czechoslovakia, the theme of memory and the relatively short time span since 1989 does make it very suitable for exploring this often debated, highly sensitive era, and doing so in a manner that encourages inter-generational dialogues about the past within families and communities.

The other book in the kit *Dějiny v 21. století is Dějiny ve filmu: Film ve výuce dějepisu*. Authors Kamil Činátl and Jaroslav Pinkas spend little time discussing film theory, but they are well aware of the influence that media has on young people’s imaginations and understandings of the past. They present guidelines for teaching students how to analyze films, including documentaries. Particularly insightful is their discussion on analyzing films for evidence of what past teaching practices tell us about the constructed nature of historical knowledge (*Dějiny ve škole*, one DVD in the kit and also online at dejepis21.cz supplements these lessons). More case studies are presented in the last part of the book and treat World War II, the Číhost “Miracle”, collectivization, and normalization (DVDs supplementing the first two are in the kit and others are available at dejepis21.cz).

In *Paměť a projektové vyučování v dějepise*, Havlůjová and Najbert write about challenges that teachers have described in workshops about teaching Czechoslovakia’s socialist past, namely that students can become confused when classroom lessons contradict memories that family members share with them, and that parents sometimes charge teachers with attempting to politicize their children. This brief review, which cannot capture all of the ideas and debates about Czech elementary and middle school history education since 1989, sheds light on instructive methods for overcoming challenges to teaching difficult subjects, while also encouraging young people to appreciate the past, question what they read and see in media, and develop independent critical thinking skills.

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