

In 2021 the KSČM (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia), the heir to once-powerful KSČ (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia), failed to reach a quorum and for the first time since the Velvet Revolution will not be represented in the parliament. Many are rejoicing that the era of the party's power is finally over and the post-Cold War development came to its conclusion. However, the Communist Party influenced the lives of people in Czechoslovakia and then in the Czech Republic for one hundred years. The centenary of the founding of the KSČ provides an opportunity to look back at how the Communist Party was established, seized and maintained its power, and eventually lost its position.

However, that is no easy task for a monothematic issue of a journal. The 100-year period covers the Communist Party's journey from an anti-system party of the radical left, through more than forty years of its hegemony, to a crumbling party with waning influence. In its first decades, the KSČ gained enormous support and gradually became one of the largest communist parties in the world (in proportion to the total population of the country). The Communist appeal to a socially just society, the struggle against oppression and discrimination attracted not only workers but also artists and intellectuals. The People's Front policy, antifascism and later the achievements of the communist resistance movement against Nazi Germany gave the communists much larger credit in the population. In the wake of the Second World War disaster, the mixture of already mentioned enticements together with general socialist tendencies, anti-capitalist resentments and anti-German nationalism brought the communists a victory in the May 1946 elections. On the other hand, the movement, following the Bolshevik example, was from its beginning radical and aggressive and during the Stalinist 1930s it took over the patterns of a totalitarian-oriented political party. Post-war allure along with a radicalised quest for state dominance eventually enabled them to seize power and to introduce principles of a totalitarian state – controlling public life and destroying the lives of many until its demise in 1989. In the course of the history of the Communist Party various actors transformed and responded differently to the social situation and politics. We can see the fluidity of memberships, ideas, and policies as we witnessed it in the reform attempt in 1968. However, one of the most symptomatic features of the communist worldview and mentality was black-and-white thinking. It is essential that we do not approach the history of the KSČ in the same way.

There has been an impressive amount of research conducted in the past thirty years. New questions and topics have been broached, new approaches and methodologies have been adopted. Collective publication projects like the Biographical Dictionary of the KSČ Functionaries (*Biografický slovník funkcionářů KSČ*) have been published, others like the four-volume History of the KSČ are almost completed as well (*Dějiny Komunistické strany Československa I–IV*). It is apparent that this plurality of research, boosted by interdisciplinary and international cooperation, is

necessary for the understanding of such a complex topic. The main themes in the historiography of Communism are not just hard ways of gaining and maintaining power; the attention of research scholarship has shifted its attention also to more subtle means of control. The research focused on the regions and the diverse spaces of party life and politics, like the factory shop-floor for example, helped to paint a much more colourful picture of the people's experience within Communist rule.

We believe that this monothematic issue offers a representative survey on the aforementioned state of recent research in the history of the political party whose development was deeply intertwined with 20th century Czech and Slovak history. In the academic talks section, Jacques Rupnik discusses different approaches to the history of the KSČ, Tim Haughton reflects on the shadows cast by communism on Czech and Slovak politics since 1989, and Libora Oates-Indruchová summarises her research on academic's experiences of censorship and self-censorship. The studies cover the interwar period, the Stalinist period of the 1950s, the Reform-oriented period of the 1960s, and the beginning of the Normalisation. All of them represent several significant fields of present-day research: the anarchist contribution to Czechoslovak communism, the Stalinist purges seen from the regional perspective, the KSČ's support for the anti-colonial struggle and Czechoslovak assistance to the emerging developing countries of the Third World in the 1960s, and finally the local everyday practice of Party cleansings after 1968. The last study is dedicated to the role of anti-communism in Czech political life since 1989, when seemingly paradoxically the fight (against the already defeated communism) became one of the central issues of contemporary Czech political debate.

This thematic volume comes out loosely from the international conference dedicated to the centenary of the founding of KSČ held on 13 and 19–21 May 2021 in Prague (see <https://100letksc.cz/en/>). The conference was organized jointly by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes and the Institute for the Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. All presentations are accessible on the you-tube canal <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8y3L-NGWcj81PfwzkipfTUludZCk3dOuM>.

Inspirational reading on behalf of the editorial team wishes
Adéla Rádková & Ondřej Vojtěchovský