

SOŇA GABZDILOVÁ

Institute of Social Sciences,
Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences of Slovak Academy of Sciences, Košice
ORCID: 0000-0002-1034-2333

MILAN OLEJNÍK

Institute of Social Sciences,
Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences of Slovak Academy of Sciences, Košice
ORCID: 0000-0002-8026-940X

DISTORTION OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION IN SLOVAKIA DURING THE PERIOD OF STALINISM (1948–1953)

The years 1948–1953 were marked in the history of Czechs and Slovaks as the hardest period of the communist dictatorship, which was characterized by political persecutions, lawlessness, and spurious lawsuits. Fear, hypocrisy, denunciations, and mistrust even in the company of close persons were an occurrence of everyday life. All segments of society were living in this tense atmosphere, however the degree of pressure applied by the communist dictatorship was not the same, its intensity varied. State employers were exposed to disproportionately strong pressure, including teachers at all levels of the school system. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC) demanded unconditional obedience to the regime, which was dependent on the nature of the teachers' work. The reason for this demanded loyalty was the teacher's influence upon the formation of the young, including their ideological orientation. The leading authorities of the CPC did not accept any diversion from Marxist-Leninist ideology in education and upbringing at schools and teachers were obliged to uphold this basic postulate in all aspects.¹ Teachers, who were in opposition to the

¹ In regard of the implementation of Marxist-Leninist ideology to educational process in Slovakia see: M. Olejník, *Implementácia marxisticko-leninskej ideológie vo sfére vzdelávania na Slovensku v kontexte politického vývoja v rokoch 1948–1953* (Prešov: Universum, 2018), pp. 27–69.

imposed regime, but wanted to be active in the teaching profession, were frequently exposed to pressure to self-censure.²

The leadership of the CPC was aware of the large potential influence of teachers upon pupils in the process of their ideological formation; in any case, the relation to the construction of a new socialist society and reality in any case was not underestimated. The Central Committee (CC) of the CPC repeatedly declared that the upbringing of future generation lay in the head teachers of schools, as well as the development of socialism in Czechoslovakia. In this context, the leading authorities of the CPC faced a complex issue. The communist regime had after February 1948 at its disposal teachers, who were educated and taught in schools of the First Slovak Republic, as well as during the Czechoslovak Republic and in some cases in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, the Communist Party accentuated the necessity of bringing up “its own new intelligentsia” from the ranks of workers and peasants, and thus connected intimately to the people, to the working class.

During the period 1948–1953, future teachers, depending on the type of schools in which they wanted to teach, gained their education at a faculty of pedagogy (or in a faculty of philosophy or a faculty of natural sciences), or a pedagogic of gymnasiums, higher schools for workers, or during short term classes; qualifications were also gained via distance learning. State institutions were obliged to educate teachers, who were proponents of the materialistic world view and supported the socialist system.

Communists wanted assurance that schools would teach future teachers who will educate pupils and students in harmony with the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. In such a context, the communist leadership judged it necessary to thoroughly control, to verify and to re-educate. In cases when teachers did not fulfil expectations, also it was considered necessary to intimidate and proscribe, frequently with use of compulsory means.³ Teachers who resisted the regime and disagreed with it and even those who were under suspicion of opposing the regime were termed insultingly – reactionary, bourgeois, hostile. Whereas at universities there were several dozen such “unreliable” teachers,⁴ at schools at the I and II degree the number of such teachers reached the thousands; a reflection of the large number of teachers at educational institutions of first and second degree. Teachers exposed to persecutions, could not be employed in private or church school because at that time such schools did not exist.⁵ They were deprived of

² See: F. Neupauer, “A School That Forms? A Look at the Years of the Communist Regime and the Present”, *Ethnologia Actualis* 15 (2015), no. 1, pp. 126–136.

³ In regard to issue of compulsory means more: J. Pešek, *Odvrátená tvár totality. Politické perzekúcie na Slovensku v rokoch 1948–1953* (Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, Nadácia Milana Šimečku, 1998), pp. 186–193; J. Žatkuliak, “Perzekúcie učiteľov v rokoch 1948–1989” in: *Zločiny komunizmu na Slovensku 1948–1989*, ed. F. Mikloško, G. Smolíkova, P. Smolík (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 2001), pp. 655–680.

⁴ In the situation of teachers and students at universities see S. Gabzdilová, *Ako sme študovali v totalite. Vysokoškolské vzdelávanie na Slovensku pod ideologickým diktátom Komunistickej strany Československa (1948–1953)*, (Prešov: Universum, 2018), pp. 56–85.

⁵ The Slovak National Council (SNC) during its session of 6 September 1944 adopted edict no. 5/1944 regarding the Nationalisation of Schools. On the base of the stated legislation, all schools in Slovakia of degree and orientation from institutions for children all way up to universities should be nationalised. Paragraph 2 stated that teachers and other employees of schools are classified as state employees. The legislation was not exact, its shortcoming was inaccuracy and versatility. Edict SNC no. 34/1945 from 16 May 1945 in connection with the

the right to defend themselves because institutions that would react to such complaints and protect their rights did not exist.

Teachers, who were as a professional segment of society deemed not trustworthy, were intensively observed by not only by the Communist Party authorities but also by the security organs. State Secret Security (SSS) endeavoured to recruit from the ranks of school employers, informers, and collaborators, who would provide needed information. The aim was to have detailed overview, regarding the atmosphere at schools and, in case of need, to actively “interfere”.

The most ruthless form of persecution, with the exception of prosecution of criminal charges, was termination of employment and the arbitrary transfer of teachers to other educational institutions. A large wave of persecutions of teachers in Slovakia initiated a campaign against the so-called Slovak bourgeois nationalists after the IX Congress of the Communist Party of Slovakia (CPS) in May 1950. The “Traacherous activity” of the Commissioner of Education, Ladislav Novomeský, who was compromising and tolerant against “reactionary and hostile” teachers and showed insufficient support toward “progressive” teachers. Such wrong “personal policy” resulted in the penetration of many enemies of socialism and the Czechoslovak Republic into the sphere of education. In May 1950 Novomeský was recalled from her position of the Commissioner of Schools and her position was occupied by Ernest Sýkora, who acted as the main representative in the war against so-called reactionary forces. Dismissals and personal changes within schools begun in the summer months of 1950, when 804 teachers were released from their teaching positions. On 30 June 324 female teachers – nuns – were released from their teaching positions.⁶ In regard to releasing teachers, such decision power was held by official commissions, set-up by county national committees, on basis of decisions prepared by local organisations of the CPS and its district committees. According to Sýkora in the process of releasing teachers were “interfering...all district and a majority of local organisations”.⁷ The primary reason for releasing teachers from employment was their political attitude and their world outlook. Lay-offs of teachers continued in the early years of the 1950s. During the school years 1950/1951 and 1951/1952 1687 teachers were laid-off.⁸ These were marked as enemies of the new regime, who “negate building endeavour, have a cleri-

nationalisation of schools stated exhaustively the types of schools to be nationalised – from institutions for children to universities. The SNC in connection with legislation adopted on 7 November 1945 (edict no. 134/1945) had its primary impact upon the activity of school workers. On the basis of §1, teachers, nurses, clerks, administrative workers, attendants of schools and state institutions in line with order no. 34/1945 became state employees. Financing provided by the state and state offices led by Communists managed and controlled their educational and learning activity. On the basis of such legislation, schools and teachers were placed under exclusive administration and control of the state.

⁶ Slovak National Archive (SNA) Bratislava, fund (f.) Commission of Schools (CS), box (b.) 179, inventory (inv.) number (no.) 471, Správa o dislokácii učiteľstva na školský rok 1951/1952.

⁷ SNA, f. Central Committee (CC) Communist Party of Slovakia (CPS), Presidency, b. 798, archive (a.) item (i.) 22. Ďalšia správa o uskutočňovaní uznesení IX. sjazdu KSS na úseku školskom.

⁸ SNA, CC CPS, Presidency, b. 815, Problémy pri zabezpečovaní rozšírenej siete škôl učiteľskými kádrami v šk. roku 1952/1953.

cal outlook and are incapable of carrying on in a new spirit, are reluctant, politically indifferent and have bad moral qualities”⁹.

In the summer of 1952, a campaign against religious education at schools – connected with emphasizing and reinforcing a materialistic outlook among teachers – was initiated to “deal with the religious issue”. Lay-offs were targeted predominantly from the second half of 1952 and were aimed at teachers, who were reluctant to terminate their religious outlook and who participated in religious rites, or in other ways demonstrated their Christian outlook. Sýkora during a speech at session of Plenum CC CPS in May 1959 declared (the Commissioner of Schools and Culture was at that time Vasil Biľak) that at the beginning of the 1950s approximately 3000 teachers were laid off.¹⁰ The leadership of the Commission of Schools justified their implementation of such ruthless measures and argued that the laying-off of such a sizeable number of “reactionary” teachers from teaching positions “elevated the working morale of teachers, which began a mission for our schools to be reborn to be socialist schools”.¹¹

The result of these dismissals was a dearth of teachers. The highest competent places were aware that securing enough teachers was necessary to solve immediately. In this situation an optimal road was found in new till-then non-existing forms of education. The first, which was implemented into practice, was higher schools of workers. The next unprecedented way of solving the deficit of teachers were short, six weeks, later seven month duration courses. They were organized with the aim of “preparing a new intelligentsia of teachers from the ranks of workers and peasants”¹² and aimed to educate “reliable” teachers. The sons and daughters of workers, small and middle peasants participated on them to become part of a new teachers’ intelligentsia. After the first courses in the summer of 1950, 1525 absolvents became available,¹³ which were gradually inserted into the educational process on the basis of criteria stated by the leadership of the CPS. On 1 September 1950, members of CPS, proved workers of the Czechoslovak Youth Union and absolvents of courses who fulfilled class criteria and had a “positive” personal report were selected to occupy the working positions of teachers in kindergartens and in first degree schools. The rest of them had go through a further process of verification. Imposed rigorous background checks resulted in a slow entry process to individual educational institutions.¹⁴

After broadly applied forms of pressure and repressive measures against teachers came arbitrary changes, such as the alteration of their place in school or transfer to new locations, frequently small villages, and secluded hamlets. Involuntary, forced transfer of

⁹ SNA, f. CS, b. 302.

¹⁰ SNA, f. CC CPS, Plenum, b. 1843.

¹¹ SNA, b. 179, inv. no. 471, Správa o dislokácii učiteľstva na školský rok 1951/1952.

¹² SNA, f. CC CPS, Presidency, b. 798, a. i. 22, Ďalšia správa o uskutočňovaní uznesení IX. sjazdu na úseku školskom.

¹³ SNA, f. CS, b.177, Správa o zadelovaní učiteľov kurzu pre výchovu novej učiteľskej inteligencie z radov robotníkov. County National Committee (CNC) had to disposition the following numbers of absolvents of a six week course: CNC Bratislava 252, CNC Nitra 283, CNC Banská Bystrica 319, CNS Žilina 182, CNC Košice 250, CNC Prešov 239. In a different archive document deposited in SNA is given 1500 absolvents: f. CC CPS, Presidency, b. 798, a. i. 22, Správa o výchove novej učiteľskej inteligencie.

¹⁴ During 1951, the Schools Commission prolonged courses from three to six months.

teachers was a significant tool in the hands of the communist organisations and school administration, which helped silence disobedient persons in schools. Transfer of teachers had begun already in 1949, but was more widespread from 1950, when it acquired the character of a systematic approach.

Changes of working localities were, besides forced implementation, also executed on the basis of the personal requests of teachers. Students after their complete school education were obliged to enter a place of employment according to the decisions of peoples' committees. In many cases to new teachers were allocated to schools distant from their permanent address, family, and friends. Consequently, teachers often submitted requests to relocate on their own initiative.¹⁵

Suggestions of the Commission of Education Sciences and Arts (CESA) explicitly called attention to fact that the transfer of teachers was an important tool in the building-up process of socialist schools. Published documents of CESA did not specify the reasons that should lead to the transfer of teachers to another location. Transfer according to contemporary regulations did not explicitly state the reasons for transfers to new locations. Relocation of teachers had several justifications. Important was the religious conviction of teachers, namely its public declaration, but also any dissent with the new regime, or criticism of the regulations of the school administration. Also transferred were teachers from larger schools with more numerous collectives into small, predominantly one-class schools located in tiny, distant villages. An important task in this process of transfer was entrusted to national committees, who were obliged to "consistently observe during the year the political and professional growth of teachers, their work in and outside school and their educational and pedagogic results".¹⁶ This, in line with the guidelines that "they should timely judge their working use in the future school year".¹⁷

The aim of these transfers was primarily against non-conforming teachers as documented by number of teachers transferred on the grounds of their own application compared to teachers who were transferred from their original place of employment and must have been relocated to a designated school against their will. In official terminology this process was described "transferred for service reasons". From a total number (2568) of transferred teachers (with the exception of Bratislava County), until 1 September 1950, who changed their place of employment on their own request was 38.16 percent, but 61.83 percent for "service reasons".¹⁸ On 1 September 1951, 5054 teachers on the territory of Slovakia lost their employment.¹⁹ In Slovakia, 7622 teachers were summary transferred over two years and the whole measure took on a mass character. The transfer of teachers continued also during the school year 1952/1953. During a session of the CC of the CPS on 10 December

¹⁵ Commission of schools in line with the instructions of the MSSA published for the school years 1950/1951–1953/1954, directions for the acceptance, dislocation and transfer of teachers, which were published in the periodical *Školské zvesti*.

¹⁶ *Školské zvesti*, vol. VII., Notebook 10, 3 May, 1951, p. 208.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ SNA, f. CC CPS, Presidency, b. 798, a. i. 22, *Ďalšia správa o uskutočňovaní uznesení IX. sjazdu KSS na úseku školskom*.

¹⁹ SNA, f. CS, b. 179, inv. no. 471, *Správa o dislokácii učiteľstva na školský rok 1951/1952*.

1953 the Commissar of Schools, Sýkora, admitted that the transfer of teachers had a negative impact on the quality of educational and pedagogic work of schools. A large number of teachers every year worked in different schools, “even in some cases during the school year they changed their place several times. Therefore, responsibility of teachers for the results of educational and pedagogic work are also an almost unknown concept”.²⁰

The process of transfer was frequently abused as tool of revenge or to grant personal favours. Strong pressure was focused especially on people who were marked by communist authorities as “religious bigots”. Transfer resulted in not only change of locality of employment and a new pedagogic collective, but also in loss of social background, social contacts, neighbours, and material loss. In an especially difficult situation were married teachers who were parents of numerous children.

During a census in March 1950 in Slovakia, from a total number of 3,442,317 inhabitants, 3,430,361 that is 99.6 percent²¹ identified with a religious world outlook. These results were negative for a communist regime. Therefore, the aim of the CPC was realize a radical change of worldview orientation not only among members of the Communist Party, but gradually the whole population of the Czechoslovak Republic. The process began in the ranks of the young generation. Because the impact of the Communist Party upon education in the family environment was ineffective, the main tool became educational institutions with their teachers and employees whose task was to educate young people in the spirit of a materialistic world outlook. Leading members of the CPS were cognisant about a situation that existed among teachers in Slovakia regarding world outlook. They knew that then were only several dozen teachers who identified themselves with the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, of which an integral part was atheism. However, the communist regime needed teachers for the realisation of its goals. Therefore, it was necessary to “re-educate” them. During the summer vacations in 1952, it began compulsory individual education of teachers based on the work by P.F. Kolonický *Marxizmus-leninizmus o náboženstve* (Marxism-Leninism about religion). The initiator of the campaign was CESA, which established consultation centres in each district. On designated days, teachers must attend consultations conducted under the leadership of lecturers. In reality, they were interviews, during which teachers should present if and to what degree they were “divested” from the Christian religion. Interviews in consultation centres confirmed, “that teachers are in majority burdened by the impact of bourgeois ideology. That they are philosophic idealists that in a decisive majority did not begin to deal with religion”.²² However, some teachers after graduating from summer study, in early September resigned from the church, which Communist Party and state authorities perceived as an expression of atheist attitude. The CESA set its own summary of 264 persons in kindergartens and in first- and second-degree schools.

²⁰ SNA, f. CC CPS, Presidency, b. 851, Kontrolná správa o plnení uznesenia Predsedníctva ÚV KSS o začiatku školského roka.

²¹ SNA, f. Slovak Office for Religious Affairs (SORA), Secretary, b. 3, no. 220/53, Správa o vyučovaní náboženstva v školskom roku 1952–1953.

²² SNA, f. CC CPS, Presidency, b. 823, a. i. 26, Správa o prázdninovom individuálnom štúdiu učiteľov.

Table 1. Number of teachers and school workers – atheists at the end of September 1952²³

County	Number of teachers – atheists					
	Kindergarten	Schools of first degree	Schools of second degree	Schools of third degree	IV. section DNS and CNS	Together
Bratislava	3	27	3	6	38	77
Nitra	not detected	12	10	not detected	15	37
Banská Bystrica	0	19	30	9	31	89
Žilina	0	13	11	6	26	56
Košice	0	9	16	5	19	49
Prešov	2	69	40	0	39	150
Slovakia	5	149	110	26	168	458

In the school year 1952/1953, 19,589 teachers were active in these schools which means that atheist comprised only 1.34 percent. According to information from CESA, the number of atheist teachers increased in the following years. From the end of September 1952 until the beginning of February 1953, in the course of four months, their number increased in kindergartens and schools of first and second degree to 1020 persons, which was four times higher. This increase meant that the number of atheist teachers was 5.2 percent. All teachers, regardless whether atheists or believers were obliged to educate children in the spirit of materialistic world outlook.

Communist and state authorities applied strong pressure on teachers to “divest themselves from the religious issue”. At a concrete, practical level, teachers should not participate on religious worship, get married in churches, baptize their children, and ultimately quit church membership. Teachers were even forced to not participate in events where the church buried their parents. Many teachers formally “dealt” with the religious issue out of fear, concern over loss of employment, but also over loss of privileges, which were given to them and to their children. Refusal of acceptance to universities frequently depended not only on a note of an applicant’s participation on religious education but also on notes that parents were believers. When at the turn of years 1952/1953, a regulation about mutual exclusion of membership in the Communist party and Church begun to apply, pressure on religious teachers increased. This was

²³ SNA, f. CS, b. 132a, Návrh na rozvinutie dlhodobej kampane boja proti poverám a tmárstvu na našich školách.

required not only from CPC members but also from state employee to whom belonged also teachers. Among state employees, primarily teachers were exposed to intensive pressure. Party authorities composed lists of school directors who registered their children for religious education. Disciplinary sanctions were severe – directors were mostly immediately suspended and “teachers were gradually laid off if they remained in their religious conviction”.²⁴ As was written in a report of the Slovak Office for Religious Affairs, in 1952/1953 many teachers exhibited a negative approach to teaching only for preservation reasons.²⁵

The leadership of the Communist Party was aware that public declarations of teachers toward religious ideology are caused by external pressure, a point which during the X Congress of the CPS (13–15 June 1953) was flagrantly expressed by the Commissioner of Schools, Ondrej Klokoč. He stated “we cannot be satisfied that a teacher has resigned his membership of the Church, This is only a formal act, which is only a consequence of his internal compromise with an idealistic world outlook...there is nothing more dangerous as internally torn apart teacher. This type of teacher cannot bring up socialist youth, that is, men who are whole, proud and firm”.²⁶ However, to plausibly ascertain teachers’ real relationship toward religious conviction, or its refusal was, impossible. In reality, it was a controversy, a red line that was dividing the entire society. However, for the Communist regime criticism and refusal of religion had primary significance and the Communist Party was spending financial, ideological and organisational resources aimed at neutralising religious belief.

A specific segment of teachers was composed of teachers active in the countryside. After the adoption of a law in Czechoslovakia about Unified Agricultural Cooperatives (UAC) in March, framed as a “socialist reconstruction of society” in which a fundamental transformation of economic, social and cultural relationships in the countryside and liquidation of traditional structures in villages ensued. UAC began to be established in spring 1949 and until the end of 1950; they were created relatively rapidly, although beset with many problems. The enforcers of CPC agricultural policy were district and local peoples committees, members of the Communist Party and help was also expected from country teachers. The top authorities of the CPC had already demanded the support of school employees during the collectivisation of agriculture from 1949. During the initial phase of UAC’s creation, teachers participated in the collective harvest. During the summer teachers were obliged to remain at home to propagate and organize summer agricultural works.²⁷ Additionally, participation of teachers increased during autumn and spring works and continued over the following years. This form of help was not the only one requested from teachers, when refusal of peasants to enter UAC was increasing and the speed of their creation

²⁴ State Archive (SA) Košice, f. Department of Schools and Culture Commissions CNC of Kosice County, b. 57.

²⁵ SNA, f. SORA, Secretary, b. 5, no. 220/53, Správy o vyučovaní náboženstva v školskom roku 1952/1953.

²⁶ *Protokol X. sjazdu Komunistickej strany Slovenska. V Bratislave dňa 13–16. júna 1953* (Bratislava: Pravda, 1953), p. 212.

²⁷ “Manifest to teachers”, *Jednotná škola* 5 (1949/1950), no. 10, p. 447.

since 1951 was slowing. Consequently, an intensive agitation and propaganda campaign was unleashed with the aim of recruiting small and middle-sized peasants for entry into UAC. In relation to teachers, this was a proclaimed necessity of active participation in the collectivisation of agriculture and the main task of teachers was to convince peasants to enter UAC. Teachers were obliged to convince their neighbours, acquaintances, family members, but also strangers to relinquish their property, which was a primary source of their livelihood. Pressure was also extorted via teachers upon pupils to influence parents.²⁸

The tasks of teachers in the countryside in 1951 were, to a considerable degree, determined by the slowing down of the tempo of collectivisation. The CPC leadership and state authorities were endeavouring by all means to speed-up the creation of new UAC. All mass communications propagated a thesis that the establishment of UAC must be realised by a method of graphic recruitment, in the form of continuous explanations of everyday work. A teacher in the countryside knew the conditions in his village and so his primary significance in this process rested in his personal relations with both small and middle peasants, in convincing them about the advantages of UAC. *Učitel'ské noviny* and other periodicals exhorted countryside teachers to intensify their help to UAC. Each teacher was obliged to "find its place and [act] uncompromisingly against the countryside's rich people and all those people who want to subvert UAC. Schools must be an efficient helper in the process of strengthening and enforcing UAC".²⁹ Teachers were burdened by new tasks, which not connected with their teaching duties and cultural activities. To them were allocated various administrative duties, for example the assessment of quotas, bills of cattle, the purchase of agricultural products, as well as the allocation of food stamps and control of contingents by peasants.³⁰ Participation of teachers in all duties was minutely controlled and judged and every school was obliged to provide clear evidence. Most diligently observed was the controlled approach and help of teachers in the process of UAC establishment. Data were collected by the IV departments of county national committees, which were then dispatched to the Commission of Schools. All these activities of teachers naturally lowered the level and quality of education.

The pressure upon teachers increased during the establishment of UAC in the context of the movement *New school to village – village to school* in 1951. A report by the Commission of Schools in May 1951 stated that this movement brought remarkable results. Many teachers allegedly also in the predeceasing period supported the socialisation of villages, but in this given movement their activity significantly increased, referring to the testified data stated in the report, which is documented in Table 2.

²⁸ F. Neupauer, *Násilná kolektivizácia a podtatranský región (1948–1960)*, *Pamät' národa* 11 (2015), no. 3, pp. 27–45.

²⁹ *Učitel'ské noviny*, vol. I., no. 16, 17 May, 1951, p. 3, meaning of resolution CC CPC and a school.

³⁰ Contingents were mandatory, exactly set dues from harvest and husbandry domestic animals (grain, eggs, milk, lard, meat etc.), which private farmers must give to state give for set price.

Table 2. Number of teachers active in the movement *New school to village – village to school*³¹

County national Committee	Number of teachers working in UAC	Number of UAC established in the campaign	Number of teachers that participated in the campaign
Banská Bystrica	58	6	2,232
Bratislava	118	41	3,393
Košice	186	65	1,897
Nitra	409	41	4,362
Prešov	100	29	all
Žilina	68	45	1,903
Together	939	227	13,787

Because summary data about the number of teachers in the county of Prešov was not possible to us to ascertain, we do not know how to determine how many teachers participated in the movement *New school to village – village to school* across the whole of Slovakia.

Teachers in cities and villages were obliged to participate in various out-of-school activities and their involvement and commitment was closely observed. At the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, teachers were working in a tense atmosphere of “class struggle”, when according to communist propaganda the enemy was present everywhere. Teachers were constantly appealed to be alert and to report traitors and enemies. They lived in a world divided between the socialist East and the capitalist West, from where allegedly great danger was threatened. In the atmosphere of growing tension between superpowers and the graduation of the cold war, teachers had the task of explaining to the young generation, as well as to the adult population during various public gatherings, the nature of the “insidiousness” Western capitalist states and to point “to their endeavours to start a new world war contrary to the peaceful policy of democratic countries led by the Soviet Union”.³² The Soviet Union was the example in all spheres. Noting what was coming out of this country was never bad. The help of the USSR to other countries was limitless and without its support they could not build socialism. The commitment of teachers was expected to increase during November, during the celebration of the Month of Czechoslovak-Soviet Union Friendship which was presented as a manifestation of the unbreakable solidarity and eternal friendship of our nation with the Soviet Union. The front pages of the daily press published sizeable articles full of demagogic expressions about the love of our working people for the Soviet Union, for the State which was the first in the world to build

³¹ SNA, f. CS, b. 96, inv. no. 94.

³² *Učiteľské noviny*, 1951, vol. I., no. 16, 17 May, p. 3, meaning of resolution CC CPS and a school.

socialism and is thus a great example. The frequently used slogan “With the Soviet Union for eternity” (*So Sovietskym zväzom na večnosť*) was attached to the entrance of all factories and enterprises, on the walls of buildings in cities and villages. Neither were schools omitted from this omnipresent campaign. The Soviet education system was proclaimed as the best in the world and Soviet teachers were named as incontestable examples for Slovak teachers. During the Month of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship, pupils were obliged to learn more intensively than any other time about the life of Soviet people. Teachers in various workplaces participated in lectures about the Soviet Union, acted as agitators in the *Week of Soviet Book and Press* and committed themselves to various obligations. They engaged in recruiting new members of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship, acted as instructors in peoples’ schools of the Russian language and during public discussions in villages. According to leading members of the CSSA, the participation of teachers and youth in celebrations during the Month of Czechoslovak-Soviet-Friendship manifested “love and devotion of educators and our young generation to the most trustworthy shield of world peace and our road to a happy socialist future – great Soviet Union”.³³

The Russian language starting in the school year 1948/1949 became an obligatory teaching subject. Teachers of Russian organized mail exchanges with Soviet Pioneers where, after receiving answer letters, they were exhibited on billboards. Pupils also had to read Russian magazines, which were received by schools. Teachers, either voluntary or under pressure, sent to the editorial office of *Učiteľské noviny* letters in which they described teaching the Russian language as their “mission” and with excitement described it during various public undertakings. Communist ideology had penetrated into all teaching topics, especially civic science, history, geography, literature as well as music and art education. Teachers were rehearsing with pupils politically engaged songs, which were sang during various gatherings, celebrations, and public meetings. During art education classes, pupils were instructed to draw pictures of the Kremlin, as well as scenes of socialism being built in the “country of Lenin” that were sent to pioneers in the Soviet Union.

Teachers had to engage themselves as agitators during elections and invite people to celebrate the First and Ninth of May and Great October Socialist Revolution. They participated in decorating schools and streets, in various competitions and, together with pupils, they composed resolutions and salutary addresses.

Teachers participated in large propaganda actions organized by the Communist regime, such as the bombastic celebrations of Joseph V. Stalin during 1949–1952, or the organisation of a campaign against “Slovak bourgeois nationalists”. Vladimir I. Lenin, Joseph V. Stalin and Klement Gottwald were celebrated as smart and gracious persons who were fighting for the happy life of the young generation. Stories were told about them to children, their doings were celebrated, gratitude for all what they did were expressed.

Teachers visited factories and United Agriculture Cooperatives and they congratulated the best workers. Visits were complemented by cultural programs composed of “building” songs and engaging recitals. These visits were rehearsed with pupils, which was also a task led by teachers, done in their free time. Initiatives were performed out-

³³ *Školské zvesti*, vol. VII., Notebook 21, 16 October 1951, p. 445.

-of-school by teachers and was enacted mostly to enhance their ideological profile and be classified as so-called progressive teachers. Class teachers were gradually obliged to visit parents. They should become familiar with environment in which their pupils were growing-up and become cognisant about the political attitudes, commitment and world outlook of teachers.

During 1948–1953 teachers were exposed to strong pressure extorted by the Communist regime namely because of their everyday impact upon the young generation. Schools became an ideological tool of state power, which was firmly controlled by the CPC. Transformations ensued not only in the education process, but also in the role of teachers as cultural and enlightenment activists. This activity was directed by instructions of the CC CPC. The primary focus of the CPC and state authorities was oriented towards teachers, who displayed critical reactions to the imposition of this new political regime, and to religious teachers who openly declared their Christian world outlook. In schools only teachers who had at least formally unified themselves with a “progressive” world outlook of the working class could be employed.

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Distortion of the Teaching Profession in Slovakia during the Period of Stalinism (1948–1953)

The aim of the study is to analyse essential changes in the work of teachers in Slovakia after February 1948, when the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia imposed a totalitarian regime and assumed control of all spheres of life, including the educational system. Teachers had to implement upbringing and educational processes at schools in line with the ideology of the ruling Communist Party. Teachers, whose main task was to raise from the young generation new builders of socialism, were exposed to strong ideological pressure. They were obliged to accept the new regime without reservations. Teachers who expressed any sign of disagreement were persecuted. Exceptionally hard harassed were teachers, who refused to give up their religious conviction. Public identification with the Christian world outlook and criticism of the leading role of the Communist Party resulted in loss of employment, or in better cases, transfer to another school. The out of school activity of teachers was directed and controlled. The method of historical analysis was used in the composition of this study.

KEYWORDS

teacher, education, Communist regime, Communist Party of Slovakia

Wypaczenia zawodu nauczyciela na Słowacji w okresie stalinizmu (1948–1953)

Celem artykułu jest analiza zasadniczych zmian w pracy nauczycieli na Słowacji po lutym 1948 r., kiedy to Komunistyczna Partia Czechosłowacji narzuciła reżim totalitarny i przejęła kontrolę nad wszystkimi sferami życia, w tym nad systemem oświaty. Pedagodzy mieli odtąd obowiązek realizować w szkołach proces wychowawczy i edukacyjny zgodny z ideologią rządzącej Partii Komunistycznej. Ich głównym zadaniem było wychowanie młodego pokolenia na budowniczych socjalizmu. Byli narażeni na silną presję ideologiczną i zmuszeni do przyjęcia nowego reżimu bez zastrzeżeń. Gdy wyrażali jakiegokolwiek oznaki sprzeciwu, byli prześladowani. Wyjątkowo dotkliwe były prześladowania tych nauczycieli, którzy nie chcieli wyrzec się swoich przekonań religijnych. Publiczna identyfikacja z chrześcijańskim światopoglądem i krytyka wiodącej roli partii komunistycznej skutkowały utratą pracy, a w najlepszym wypadku przeniesieniem do innej szkoły. Pożądana i kontrolowana była pozaszkolna działalność nauczycieli. W opracowaniu wykorzystano metodę analizy historycznej.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

nauczyciel, oświata, reżim komunistyczny, Komunistyczna Partia Słowacji

SOŇA GABZDILOVÁ – research worker in sphere of history in the Institute of Social Sciences, Centre of Social and Psychological Science of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Košice. In her research she focuses upon the history of the German and Hungarian minority in Slovakia during the 20th century and issues of education in Slovakia after 1918. Main works: *Karpatskí Nemci na Slovensku od druhej svetovej vojny do roku 1953* (2004, together with Milan Olejník); *Vzdelávanie na Slovensku v rokoch 1938–1953* (2016), *Možnosti a obmedzenia. Vzdelávanie v jazyku maďarskom na Slovensku 1918–1938* (2017), *Ako sme študovali v totalite. Vysokoškolské vzdelávanie na Slovensku pod ideologickým diktátom Komunistickej strany Československa (1948–1953)* (2018), *Za katedrou v dobe stalinizmu. Deformácia profesie učiteľa na Slovensku v rokoch 1948–1953* (2022). E-mail: sona.gabzdilova@gmail.com

MILAN OLEJNÍK – emeritus researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences in the Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences at the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Košice. In his research he focuses upon Slovak history after 1918. Main works: *Karpatskí Nemci na Slovensku od druhej svetovej vojny do roku 1953*, (2004, together with Soňa Gabzdilová-Olejníková), *Od anšlusu po Mníchov. Agresia nacistického Nemecka voči Československu v správach a komentároch*

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E-mail: milan.olejnik@gmail.com

SOŇA GABZDILOVÁ – pracownik naukowy w dziedzinie historii w Instytucie Nauk Społecznych, Centrum Nauk Społecznych i Psychologicznych Słowackiej Akademii Nauk w Koszycach. W swoich badaniach koncentruje się na historii mniejszości niemieckiej i węgierskiej na Słowacji w XX w. oraz problematyce oświaty na Słowacji po roku 1918. Główne prace: *Karpatskí Nemci na Slovensku od druhej svetovej vojny do roku 1953* (2004 wraz z Milanem Olejníkiem); *Vzdelávanie na Slovensku v rokoch 1938–1953* (2016), *Možnosti a obmedzenia. Vzdelávanie v jazyku maďarskom na Slovensku 1918–1938.* (2017), *Ako sme študovali v totalite. Vysokoškolské vzdelávanie na Slovensku pod ideologickým diktátom Komunistickej strany Československa (1948–1953)* (2018), *Za katedrou v dobe stalinizmu. Deformácia profesie učiteľa na Slovensku v rokoch 1948–1953* (2022).

MILAN OLEJNÍK – emerytowany pracownik naukowy Instytutu Nauk Społecznych Centrum Nauk Społecznych i Psychologicznych Słowackiej Akademii Nauk w Koszycach. W swoich badaniach koncentruje się na historii Słowacji po 1918 r. Główne prace: *Karpatskí Nemci na Slovensku od druhej svetovej vojny do roku 1953*, (wspólnie z Soňą Gabzdilovą-Olejníkovą, 2004), *Od anšlusu po Mníchov. Agresia nacistického Nemecka voči Československu v správach a komentároch slovenskej súdobej tlače* (2014), *Establishment of communist regime in Czechoslovakia and an impact upon its education system* (2017), *Implementácia marxisticko-leninskej ideológie vo sfére vzdelávania na Slovensku v kontexte politického vývoja v rokoch 1948–1953* (2018), *Subordination of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to Communist International* (2019).