

## Summary

This book analyses and interprets images of the new socialist man in official Czechoslovak discourse from 1948 to 1956. The subject under discussion is the ideological basis for the new socialist man and three of its main forms – the worker, the woman and the Soviet man. The concept of the new socialist man is described as a discursive figure which is constructed in various different ways and ascribed with many important functions. In terms of methodology it is a cultural-historical approach that uses a critical-discursive analysis and a gender analysis. The sources are based on historical periodicals and normative pamphlets, with a minimal use of archive materials.

The images of the worker were based on his position as the chosen one who was fulfilling his historical mission as set out in Marxist-Leninist ideology. The worker was represented as a revolutionary destroying the old exploitative system, a shock-worker creating a new and just society. The first of these variants was used less often and the central motif became work, which took on an anthropological character, transforming man into a coveted form. In relation to its celebrated heroism and sacralization, the elite position of the worker, and indeed of the entire working class, was in contrast to the emphasis on the ‘ordinariness’ of workers. The uniqueness of exceptional work performance was gradually transferred from the individual to the whole working collective, which was also reflected in the terminological decline of terms such as ‘shock-worker’ and ‘Stakhanovite’ in the official discourse. There also starts to appear in this construction of the worker greater emphasis on technological progress at the expense of purely manual labour. The working class is also pictured as being unified, while the traditional professional, political and age differences were suppressed. The images of the revolutionary became less vivid and the revolutionary element was pushed back into the past. The reasons were supposedly due to the establishment of a new socialist historical era and the transformation of the focus of revolutionary energy to labour, which was presented as the new battle front in the decisive struggle between socialism and capitalism.

The image of the woman was constructed using five interweaving forms. Amongst the individual images there appeared a tension resulting from the division between the public (civilian, worker) and private (housewife, mother, wife) spheres. Discursive strategies focused mainly on the transformation of the public sphere and used motifs concerning the entry into employment and public engagement as an emancipatory tool and for building socialism. However, the methods for constructing heroic women, who were the equal of men, produced displays of misogyny. The unwillingness to accept women in traditional male positions was based on specific examples of behaviour and was set in representative stories. The uncertainty of gender roles was also due to the discursive forms which combined traditional male and female symbols in the images of women at the time. On the border between the public and private spheres were images of the mother split into individual and symbolic form. The least space was given to images of the housewife and wife placed within the home.

At the top of the symbolic pyramid of the official discourse was the new Soviet man and the synonym of the new socialist man. Unlike the images of the worker and the new woman, these constructions were characterised by their unambiguity, with no negative elements. They were not fixed on any specific environment, on the contrary, they permeate into all areas and

contexts. The superior standing of the Soviet man as the new socialist man was based on a sacralization of the core of the Soviet system (ideology, the Communist Party and Stalin), and contained four main features – liberator, friend and brother, example. The image of liberator was already an important element of the discourse during the Third Republic and following the February Coup it took on a unique position, forcing out any positive images of the United States. The engagement of the American troops in Western Bohemia was not concealed, instead it was reinterpreted as an attempt to colonize Czechoslovakia. The construction of the Soviet Union as a friend and brother was modified in a Czech context – the traditional image of the family unit took on the character of a large family with Stalin as the father. This construction blurred the lines between the private and public, the hierarchical structure lent a ‘natural’ character and legitimized Stalin’s political behaviour. These discursive strategies placed Czechoslovakia into the subordinate position of a younger brother needing help and advice. These constructions of the new socialist man were not immutable over time, and around 1953 there were changes in the images of the worker and the new woman. There was a stability, however, in the construction of the images of the Soviet man.

The construction of the new socialist man also fulfilled four interdependent functions corresponding to the eschatological timeline of the Communist leadership. The new socialist man fulfilled a symbolic function which is most reflective of the past. It created a divide between the old and the new and presented a break with previous values, while at the same time establishing diametrically opposed realities. The legitimizing function that is primarily set in the present was based on this function. The radical rejection and demarcation of history validated the existing order, the new man legitimized the justness of the established path and the overall social order. The third identity-forming function was also set in the present. The construct of the new socialist man became a reference point to facilitate an understanding of the post-revolutionary world and also served as an individual model which each person could follow. The fourth motivational function placed the construct of the new socialist man in the future. The description of optimistic utopian visions was to be motivational when carrying out everyday activities.

The research findings also provide ideas for more general interpretations of post-February Czechoslovak history. The first of these is related to the very core of the project – the appealing promises for the future for both individuals and society as a whole. The seductiveness of these images lay not only within their wonderful objectives, which were allegedly within reach, but also in their irrefutability. A better world would be realized based on historical necessity. The awareness of this historical necessity would give a person the intoxicating feeling of rootedness and recognition of the Truth. The intellectual world of the people at that time was narrowly restricted in terms of political ideas. The importance of the images of the new socialist man pointed to other levels which prevented black-and-white interpretations.

Another interpretation is linked to the idea of the communist leadership being part of the wider process of modernization. A few years after the end of the Second World War, when the February Coup took place, these ideas about the creation of a new, better world were a constitutive element of this period. The offer of certainty and security, the need to prevent

another military conflict and find a way out of the crisis of modernization led to several projects of social engineering. The new socialist man was just one of these projects, albeit with a specifically radical character. The construct is also discursively created on the basis of different characteristic elements of modernization (e.g. progress, the omnipotence of science, universally applied values, secularization). Therefore, it is impossible to interpret the communist leadership as a foreign import from 'the East', as the result of Sovietization. Connected to this is also the issue of the continuity of post-February developments. The coup in 1948 was not a radical break in all of its aspects. The official discourse of the time adopted some previous images, cultural examples, stereotypes and other elements of collective identity which were then employed in a modified form.

An analysis of gender and the new socialist person presents several interpretations. The traditional model of the patriarchal family, prioritizing masculinity and men over femininity and women, was employed on a decidedly symbolic power construction with the father Stalin at the head. On principle, femininity and women were excluded from the highest reaches of the symbolic power system, not only through the model shown, but also through other, less important principles. In the post-February discourse in Czechoslovakia the elite social group – workers – were a priori considered to be a male entity, characterized by activism, militarism and revolutionary spirit, etc. However, the traditional construct of femininity contrasted with these characteristics, creating and confirming a cultural system of binary opposites. In the post-February official discourse this dichotomy became partly blurred in some cases, but that did not lead to it being completely removed. In the historical constructs, women wanted to be equal with men and often adopted their gender symbols. Men and masculinity became their model, though on principle it was not an equal position. Attempts at transforming the gender order did not apply to the private sphere. However, in spite of these limitations, we can also observe uncertainty in gender roles, relationships and identities, pointing to a crisis in masculinity.