

Kunštát, Daniel:

**ZA RUDOU OPONOU. KOMUNISTÉ
A JEJICH VOLIČI PO ROCE 1989.**

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The development of the Czech party system and political parties after 1989 has been described comprehensively by political scientists both within the Czech Republic and abroad. But the opportunities for new research have not been exhausted. Existing publications provide a basis for taking a closer look at particular aspects of the Czech party system. Topics of interest might include a comprehensive overview of the evolution of the party system within a particular timeframe, and a more detailed exploration of the development of particular political parties. It is this second topic that forms the basis of Daniel Kunštát's book entitled *Behind the Red Curtain (Za Rudou Oponou)*, subtitled *The Communists and Their Voters after 1989 (Komunisté a jejich Voliči po Roce 1989)*.

As the subtitle of the book indicates, Daniel Kunštát, a political scientist from the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and CEVRO Institute, deals with the development of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) and the characteristics of the electorate of that political party. However, the topic is interesting not just from the standpoint of the development of the Czech party system, in which the Communists play an important role. It offers a comparative view on the development of communist parties in Central Europe after 1989 that reveals how interesting and specific the development of KSČM was compared to the Polish or Hungarian com-

munist parties. This makes Kunštát's book an interesting, useful contribution to the discussion of party system evolution throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Kunštát is not the first to focus on the development of KSČM. Other attempts have included the volume *Mezi Masovou a Kartelovou Stranou* by Martin Polášek, Vilém Novotný and Michel Perottino, the publication *Český a Slovenský Komunismus* by an author group from The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, or the less recent *Komunismus v České Republice* by Petr Fiala, Jan Holzer, Miroslav Mareš and Pavel Pšeja.

In his introduction, Kunštát notes that he presents but one possible treatment of the topic. He is aware that his is only one interpretation among others of the past and present of the Czech Communist Party, and that some readers may disagree with the particular interpretation of Czech history he has chosen. The author's personal position on the topic is reflected mainly in the first half of the book, where he discusses the history of Czech communism.

Although the book is divided into nine chapters, it centers around two core elements, the first a historical analysis of communism within the present-day boundaries of the Czech Republic, and the second, an analysis of data from a sociological survey conducted among Communist Party voters after the 2010 Czech parliamentary elections. Although the historiographical chapters are interesting and needed, it is the analysis of sociological data that makes the book more than just another interpretation of the history of Czech communism. In the few introductory chapters, Kunštát is concerned more with the history of the party. The second section of the book, by contrast, focuses on an analysis of the electorate. That Kunštát did not strictly divide the book into historical and sociological sections, but rather tried to naturally connect both approaches whenever possible, is a positive.

In the first two chapters, the author focuses on the long-term history of the Communist Party, from its establishment in 1921 until the 1980s. The factual history of the party is analyzed, and important historical events are placed within their broader context, whether that be national, regional or global. These chapters may seem superfluous to readers given that the book's focus is on KSČM's development after 1989, but the author uses them to build the essential historical basis for further explication. By contrast, placing a subchapter that compares party system positions in the Communist Party during the First Republic with those in the current Communist Party straightaway in the first chapter seems illogical. This discussion should be based around a comparison generated by analyzing the two cases and would definitely fit better in the final chapters, particularly Chapter 8, which presents an analysis of the current Communist Party, the main subject of the research.

The second chapter is theoretical and examines the pre-November Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. The author first explains the concepts of totalitarianism and of authoritarian regimes, while pursuing the well-established theories of Giovanni Sartori, Juan Linz and others. Subsequently, the theory is applied to the Czechoslovak communist regime. The author concludes that the regime varied at different stages of its internal development, moving from totalitarianism in the 1950s to a specific variant of a post-totalitarian regime in the later stages of development. The chapter concludes by transitioning readers to the subsequent topic to be analyzed, the events of 1989.

The third chapter is devoted to the Velvet Revolution. It begins by examining the events that led to the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. The author is correct in identifying them as key in establishing the current form of the Communist party in the Czech Republic. He maintains that Czech Communists played a different role in the

transition to democracy than did members of the communist parties in Poland or Hungary. In the second part of the chapter, the author explores these events from a theoretical point of view, this time using theories of the transition to democracy. Many different theories and classifications of democratic transitions are presented to readers, probably not all of which deserve mention. The author returns to the topic of the Velvet Revolution in Chapter 5, where he analyzes how the events of November 1989 are evaluated by current voters and members of the Communist Party. It is no surprise that their assessment of the Velvet Revolution and the changes that took place in the period after 1989 are at variance from the rest of the Czech population, but the data reveals much interesting additional information.

Research into Communist Party voters is first employed in the fourth chapter, which follows the previous historically-oriented chapters with an examination of how communist voters perceive the history of Czechoslovak communism. The findings are interesting. They will certainly surprise many readers. Worth mentioning, for example, is that voters and members of the Communist Party evaluate the period of the First Republic positively, including the leaders during this period, T. G. Masaryk and Edvard Beneš. The data from the research may be used to understand the current form taken by KSČM and what motivates Communist Party members and voters to support the party.

The following chapter centers on the development of the Communist party after 1989. The author first discusses the internal development of the party from the time of its search for its own identity during the first half of the 1990s to the present period, when the Communists are an integral part of a stable party system in the Czech Republic. The second section of the chapter then focuses on current KSČM voters, in particular their political views. The author is especially con-

cerned with the distribution of voters along the left – right continuum. This is followed by a chapter in which Kunštát explores the geographical distribution of electoral support for the party, the stability of the electoral behavior of its voters, their party identification, and the average age of the party's electorate. A frequently discussed topic, the extinction of Communist Party members and voters, is analyzed. The author also challenges the frequent thesis that the current Communist Party electorate is based almost solely on former Communist party members from the period before 1989.

In the penultimate chapter, Kunštát summarizes his findings from the previous chapters of the book. The chapter is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the current form taken by KSČM, with a particular focus on whether the Communists may be described as an anti-system party. Although a clear answer to this question is not given in the book, the author, based on evaluation criteria, rather inclines to the view that the Communist Party is an anti-system and anti-democratic party. In the final chapter of the book, data on the social and economic background of Communist voters is presented. Kunštát focuses on the educational level of voters, their economic activity, class, income, etc. Interpretation of the data provides no significant or surprising findings, but it does confirm an established notion about the composition of the KSČM electorate.

Daniel Kunštát's publication brings much interesting information and especially data with which readers interested in the problems of the development of Czech communism are not yet familiar. Although the author presents no significant surprising or novel findings, the publication is highly interesting and beneficial as a comprehensive analysis of contemporary Czech Communism, in particular, KSČM and its electorate. We would certainly recommend the publication for all readers with an interest in the topic.

Sources:

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JEŠTĚ NEJSME ZA VODOU: OBRAZY DRUHÝCH A HISTORICKÁ PAMĚŤ V OBDOBÍ POSTKOMUNISTICKÉ TRANSFORMACE.

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When revolutionary change comes to a political regime, each society must ask itself questions about its own identity. Establishing a new order requires finding sources of legitimacy, as well as sources that challenge the legitimacy of the previous regime. An inevitable part of this process is the transformation of historical memory and the image of the national community's place in the world, including perceptions of neighboring states and national or ethnic communities. Visions of the 'good' and 'bad' society