

Buildings of the Apprentice School OEZ Letohrad in the 50's years of the 20th century

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Abstract. *The fifties of the 20th century represent an important milestone in post-war history in the development of Czechoslovakia. These years are often characterized as tragic, especially for brutal monstrous processes. This paper makes an effort to look at this period from a completely different side - the development of apprenticeship education, which was one of the possibilities of educating young people in socialism. First, the general history of this type of school is outlined, influenced mainly by government regulations, regulations of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC) and legal legislation. The law No. 110/1951 Coll. on state labour reserve is mentioned in more detail due to the time delimitation of the contribution. This law influenced the apprentice school OEZ Letohrad, which played an important part in the Ústí nad Orlicí region. The complexity of the development is also shown in the construction of vocational school buildings, which was necessary because the former buildings were originally used for completely different purposes and quality teaching in them was not possible. For illustration, the text is complemented by contemporary and period photographs.*

Keywords

History; Education; OEZ; Letohrad; Apprentice School; Building Construction; Fifties; 20th century

1. Sources and literature

The following article is based primarily on archival sources National archive in Prague, fund of the Ministry of labour. This archive has given me general information on the issue of vocational schools (lists of vocational schools in the given regional administration, government regulation, the emergence of new vocational schools).

The company fund is attached directly to the company OEZ Letohrad and its apprentice school, which is deposited in the Department of Archive Methodology, Prearchive Care and Administration of Company Funds in Hradec Králové. In this fund I found all the necessary information for the construction of buildings and documents containing the complexities that arose during it.

The Olomouc branch of the Regional Archive in Opava contains a lease agreement between Jan Wagner - founder of OEZ in Kyšperk and Miroslav Petřík - owner of the mill. An important source are also Wagner's memories.

In the Museum of Letohrad I found period photographs and history of buildings that were used by the school in Letohrad at the beginning. A valuable source here was *the Memorial Book of the Association of Theatrical amateur actors "Kolár" in Kyšperk* by Antonín Krčmařík.

There are relatively few scholarly literature on the history of vocational education after World War II in Czechoslovakia. In the first place we should mention the publication *Vývoj učňovského školství v Československu*. The publication, albeit mapping the development of apprenticeships since the mid-18th century, is the most valuable in mapping apprenticeships after 1945.

2. Methods used

These methods were used in the paper:

1) **Geographical** – links between Letohrad and surrounding towns (Žamberk, Jablonné nad Orlicí, Sobkovice), their distance from each other and transport links.

2) **Analytical** – the impact of general regulations and the Act on State Advances on the Regional Administration of Hradec Králové and on the specific vocational school of OEZ Letohrad.

3. History of apprenticeship education until the Act on State Advances

Training of apprentices as one of the possible forms of transfer of knowledge, skills and vocational training is a relatively old fact. The origin of the first conceived educational facilities in the Czech lands can be seen as early as **the mid-18th century** in connection with the reforms of Maria Theresa, in particular by introducing

compulsory schooling in 1774 for children aged 6 to 12. Guild preparation was the main way to gain apprenticeship qualifications. As a good example of a school that, like many years later, the OEZ apprentice school, is the spinning school in Potštejn, which was set up by Count Chamaré for the local manufactory.

The milestone in the development of vocational education was the year **1848**. The education system was again taken up by the state and the development of vocational education took on the character of being organized. The Trade Code of 1859, in turn, resulted in the abolition of the guild system. In this context, apprentices were bound by a learning agreement, which formed the basis of the learning relationship.

In 1918-1938 Czechoslovakia took over the Austrian system of vocational education. Organizationally, vocational education was attached to the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment. The first research institution was established - **the Central Psycho-technical Institute of Czechoslovakia**, which was established at the Masaryk Academy of Labour. This institute began to systematically address the issue of vocational training for apprentices in relation to the state of production at the factory.

During World War II, the Institute of Human Labour was replaced by the Central Psycho-technical Institute of Czechoslovakia. He elaborated descriptions of vocational fields and syllabus of vocational training.

In the years 1945-1948 two- and three-year apprenticeships were introduced. An important role was played by the Department of Vocational Education at the Research Institute of Education in Prague, which developed curricula for apprentice schools.

The direction of the development of apprenticeship education for **the years 1948-1951** was determined by **Act No. 95/1948 Coll. on basic regulation of uniform education**. The Act introduced the so-called national school (1st grade school) and the so-called secondary school (2nd grade school), which were directly related to each other and were compulsory for all young people under 15 years of age. They were followed up by third-level schools, among which occupied an important position of primary vocational schools. Another important milestone in the development of apprentices was **the Government Decree No. 186/1949 Coll. on the temporary adaptation of the training of apprentices** from 7 July 1949. As a result, the regional national committees supervised apprenticeship training, administered the final apprenticeship agenda and issued apprenticeship certificates. Significant is also **the law no 96/1950 Sb. about a working adolescents**. It again changes the management component of the apprenticeship system by introducing the Head of Working Youth, which managed the training of apprentices and the recruitment of youth into the national economy. This headquarters was set up at the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. The advisory body of the headquarters was the Advisory Board on Adolescent Workers.

4. Act on State Advances

Following the example of the USSR, the economy was planned using labour. In September 1951, the Ministry of Labour was established and three months later (December 19), Act No. 110/1951 Coll. on State Advances payments. With the emergence of this legislative document, apprenticeships began to evolve in three parallels. On the one hand, the centres of adolescents were "catching up" (abolished in 1954), on the other hand the state apprenticeship training centres for the preferred fields (formed by school, workshop and boarding school) were formed and on the other side replaced by apprenticeships.

State apprenticeships were divided into three types - mining, railway and vocational. Their main goal was to train skilled workers for coal and ore mines, metallurgy, oil industry, mechanical engineering and metalworking. Furthermore, for construction and woodworking industry, shipping and rail transport, power engineering, telecommunications and printing. Since 1954, the focus has been on road transport and electrical engineering, and since 1955 on mechanization of agriculture. Recruitment to apprenticeships was carried out by enterprises with the help of national committees according to the needs of the national development plan of the national economy.

4.1 Organization of vocational schools

The lowest unit of this organization was a vocational school headed by a director appointed by the Ministry of Labour on the proposal of the relevant regional administration. He was assisted by 3 deputies – for professional training, for cultural awareness-raising work and for economic affairs. **The regional administrations** of the Ministry of Labour were subordinate executive bodies of the Ministry with headquarters in Prague, Pilsen, Ústí nad Labem, Hradec Králové, Brno, Olomouc, Ostrava, Bratislava and Košice. Later, Banská Bystrica was added. Together with **the classroom of the methodological cabinets, the methodological committees and the classroom of the methodological councils** they managed the work of the vocational schools.

The Ministry of Labor, which decided on the most important issues of apprenticeship in the years 1952-1957, also took care of the education and in-service training of teachers, production training masters and educators.

5. Company OEZ Letohrad

The company OEZ (Orlické elektrotechnické závody) is one of the largest manufacturers of circuit breakers, fuses and other electrical equipment in the Czech Republic.

The beginning of the company Orlické elektrotechnické závody in Kyšperk (so called Letohrad until 1950) is in 1941. Jan Wagner was the key person who founded the Wagner et al. There were several reasons

for setting up his company in Kyšperk in the former mill building.

1) The mill has already built water turbines, which produced energy. This energy was needed to run the company.

2) Jan Wagner came from Pastviny near Kyšperk and therefore he knew the town well.

3) Insufficient production premises for the ever-expanding production of Wagner's company in Olomouc.

6. Apprentice School of OEZ Letohrad

Vocational training began in 1951 in the workshops of the former private company Wagner et al. for 75 apprentices, who had the opportunity to learn in the fields of toolmaker, locksmith, turner and electrician.

6.1 Conditions for the establishment of a vocational school

The timeframe for OEZ itself helped its birth.

1) **Economic reasons** (management flexibility, good results in fulfilling the national economic plan), which gave rise to the establishment of a new national enterprise during 1951, which was fully independent of the enterprise in Postřelmov, of which it had been part since 1948.

2) **Cooperation with smaller plants** from towns, which was closer to Letohrad (Jablonné nad Orlicí, Dolní Dobrouč).

3) **Teaching also for plants** OEZ Jablonné nad Orlicí, OEZ Sobkovice, Moravské elektrotechnické závody (MEZ) Postřelmov, MEZ Náchod and MEZ Krompachy in Slovakia.

4) **Easy access of the city for commuters** (train and bus transport), orientation of the vocational school building along the road to Ústí nad Orlicí and subsequent train connection with Moravia.

5) **The OEZ plant was the only one** in the district of Žamberk within the Ministry of Engineering.

6.2 Position among vocational schools in regional administration

The school of Letohrad belonged to the regional administration of Hradec Králové. The Hradec Králové regional administration consisted of 25 vocational schools and 1 mining school. To facilitate the identification of the school he was assigned a number by the Ministry of Labour. The school of OEZ Letohrad was number 9. The following table provides a complete overview of all regional administration schools, including the address of the school, the name of the director, the parent plant and the responsible department.

School number *	City	Name of director	Parent plant	Resort **
MAS-1	Malé Svatoňovice	Václav Mandys	Východočeské uhelné doly, důl Zdeňka Nejedlého, Rtyň v Podkrkonoší	MFE
VS-1	Náchod	Josef Škoda	Pozemní stavby Hradec Králové	MC
VS-2	Ostrov	František Hák	Severočeský průmysl kamene Liberec	MC
VS-3	Dobruška	Jiří Podubecký	Továrna obráběcích strojů (TOS) Dobruška	ME
VS-4	Vrchlabí	Miloslav Vejnar	TOS Vrchlabí	ME
VS-5	Hronov	Václav Špaček	TOS Hronov	ME
VS-6	Jičíněves	Antonín Vacek	Agrostroj Jičín	ME
VS-7	Nová Paka	Ladislav Brádle	Regula Nová Paka	ME
VS-8	Hradec Králové	František Kosa	Závody Vítězného února Hradec Králové	ME
VS-9	Letohrad	František Mrázek	OEZ Letohrad	ME
VS-10	Chvaletice	Jaroslav Dvořák	Manganorudné a kyzové závody Chvaletice	MMIOM
VS-11	Rychnov nad Kněžnou	Bohuslav Sochůrek	Pozemní stavby Hradec Králové	MC
VS-12	Chotěboř	František Kozlíček	Chotěbořské kovodělné závody, Chotěboř	ME
VS-13	Chrudim	Miroslav Svoboda	Transporta Chrudim	ME
VS-14	Choceň	Bohuslav Vyhňálek	ČKD Choceň	ME
VS-15	Vrdy-Bučice	Karel Pospíšil	Kovolis Hedvikov	ME
VS-16	Pardubice	Josef Habart	Stavobet Pradubice-Trnová	MC
VS-17	- Rybitví	Jaroslav Švadlenka	Východočeské chemické závody Rybitví	MCI
VS-18	Pardubice	František Maršiček	Továrny mlýnských strojů (TMS) Pardubice	MFE
VS-19	Pardubice	František Holec	Národní podnik Energotrust Hradec Králové, Rozvodný závod Pardubice	ME
VS-20	Vysoké Mýto	Karel Štěpán	Karosa Vysoké Mýto	ME
VS-21	Hlinsko v Čechách	Radim Pohořský	Elektropraga Hlinsko	ME
VS-22	Ústí nad Orlicí	Josef Kodousek	Československá státní automobilní doprava (ČSAD) Ústí nad Orlicí	MT
VS-23	Holice v Čechách	Václav Kraydl	ČSAD Pardubice	MT
VS-24	Čáslav	František Linda	ČSAD Čáslav	MT
VS-25	Nová Paka - Heřmanice	Jan Heinz	Československé státní silnice Hradec Králové	MT

* Abbreviations are used in the designation of schools: MAS = Mill Apprentice School, VS = Vocational School.

** Resorts are marked with abbreviations: MFE = Ministry of Fuels and Energy, MC = Min. of Construction, ME = Min. of Engineering, MT = Min. of Transportation, MMIOM = Min. of Metallurgical Industry and Ore Mines, MCI = Min. of Chemical Industry.

Tab. 1. Overview of the Apprentice Schools of the Regional Administration Hradec Králové. [1]

It is clear from the table that vocational schools over mining had a significant prevalence in representation. This was due to the wider range of vocational schools (transport, construction, chemical industry, engineering). Within this specialization, the major role was played by mechanical engineering, which included many industries (electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, locksmithing, etc.). It is also worth mentioning the relatively abundant representation of vocational schools that were linked to transport (bus, automobile). As part of electrical engineering, they educated pupils VS-9 in Letohrad (heavy current) and VS-21 in Hlinsko (low-voltage). Education in the area of electricity distribution provided by VS-19.

6.3 Buildings of the Apprentice School

6.3.1 Theoretical and practical instruction

The main building where the vocational school was located was the former building of Wagner et al. Originally there was a weaving mill in this building and afterwards these premises served as a mill flour store, owned by Miroslav Petřík. The building could be used by Jan Wagner as a branch of his company under a lease agreement. The location of this building was very useful as it stood along a busy road, at the exit from Letohrad towards Ústí nad Orlicí. This made it easily accessible not only for local workers and later also for pupils, but above all for those commuting to work or education. The transport connection between Letohrad and Ústí nad Orlicí was advantageous as railway connections to Ústí nad Orlicí both in the direction of Moravia and Prague. For the needs of the vocational school, the building relaxed hand in hand with the transfer of the existing OEZ production to the newly built building along the road that led to Pastviny, Nekoř, but also to Hradec Králové. Many reasons contributed to the creation of the new building, whose projects were developed in 1949. One of them was the lack of space for ever-expanding production. Until then, another reason for the construction of the new plant was insufficient production and working areas as well as inadequate material security. Apprentice school in Letohrad thus became a building, which became the basis for teaching pupils to this day. The following photos document the changes in the appearance of the building to its present form.



Fig. 1. The original building of OEZ still called Wagner. [9]



Fig. 2. The same building at the turn of the 20th and 21st century. The picture shows the road leading to Ústí nad Orlicí. The original building of Wagner et al. is on the far right. [18]



Fig. 3. View of the building in its current state. With subsidies, it was reopened in September 2019. [17]

6.3.2 Boarding

The first building where the apprentices were eating was a former pub and theater hall "U Kamínků". This building originally served the amateur community Kolár, which in Kyšperk made the cultural moments more pleasant for the local inhabitants in the years 1897-1945. The building was built within 6 months in 1925. The building's history was marked by two major fires. The first became April 23, 1933. The cause was a discarded cigarette after the evening rehearsal of the play, prepared for the celebrations of May 1 by the Czechoslovak National Socialists. This unfortunate event resulted in the building, despite the intervention of firefighters, losing the roof and interior fittings, including decorations, backdrops and a new curtain. Radiojournal has helped to rebuild the building. In his broadcast four times a day, he reported the news of this disaster until the collection for the renovation of the building was launched. The whole event was successful and within 4 months there was a new building again. It was opened by Radúz and Mahulena by Julius Zeyer. The second fire occurred on December 17, 1938, at night, after the end of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (in Czech: Sněhurka a sedm trpaslíků) by Walt Disney. The fire hit mainly the stage and part of the roof. The restoration of the theater was all the worse because the Sudetenland had already been subjected to the Munich Agreement. Nevertheless, the building was reopened in January 1939 thanks to insurance and own funds.



Fig. 4. Fire of the building of the Kysperk theatre in April 1933 - a building that later served as a dining hall for the vocational school. [10]

However, the boarding-room kitchens and the dining room, located in this building, did not suit the required operation not only in terms of insufficient space, but also in terms of health and hygiene. The dining room was difficult to operate because it consisted of a former small hall and a boarding kitchen from an earlier small stage. The only solution that could solve the existing shortcomings in catering was the construction of a new boarding kitchen with a dining room.



Fig. 5. The depiction of the Kolár theatre on a period postcard. On the right you can see the Letohrad Chateau, which later serves as a boarding house for apprentices. [10]

6.3.3 Accommodation

In the Working Youth Centre, all pupils were accommodated in the Letohrad castle building. Since the chateau also provided accommodation to students of the local Higher Technical School of Railways, it happened that 14-16 pupils were accommodated in one room and 12 pupils in smaller rooms. From the hygienic point of view, this accommodation was very harmful. Also the sanitary facilities were absolutely insufficient for this state of pupils. For the purposes of the school have also been cancelled accommodation the inn (manor house, Hotel Forche), which in the past served for the passengers and for the accommodation of people from other cities of Czechoslovakia, who in Letohrad holidays.

So it was until the Centre of Working Adolescents within the Ministry of Engineering transferred on 1 September 1952 to the system of state work advance. This transfer increased the number of pupils of the New Year by 215 and also increased the demand for accommodation, meals and school. The existing buildings were again insufficient for quality teaching.

Therefore, the following necessary steps were taken. The former establishment of the national company Laktos was closed down. This building was adapted for accommodation. Counselling for mothers with children has also become accommodation. All of these changes were made with the full agreement of ONV, KNV and MNV, provided that this would only be a temporary period of time before new construction took place. Then all objects should be returned to their original purposes.

6.3.4 Necessary commuting to nearby towns

Perhaps the biggest problem was the fact that the vocational school in Letohrad was forced to use educational facilities, which were a few kilometres from Letohrad. The following diagram shows the rented objects of the school.

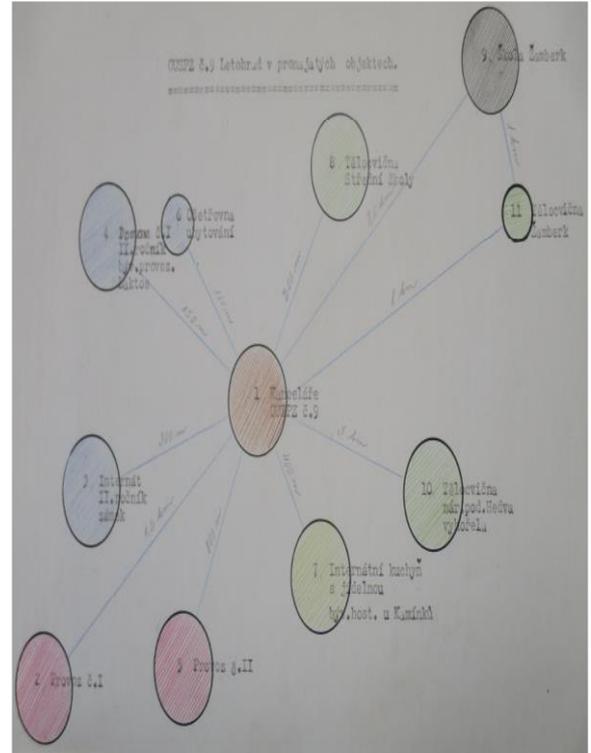


Fig. 6. Leased objects VS OEZ Letohrad. [15]

It is obvious from the scheme that the more distant objects were located mainly in Žamberk - a district town, 7 km from Letohrad. Students also had to commute here for physical education, as there was no gym in Letohrad (No. 11).

The problem of commuting was mainly that transport costs were costly. In addition, the CSAD was tied to permanent lines with the transport of employees to the plants, and thus it was very often that the bus was running irregularly and the OEZ factory disrupted theoretical instruction.

6.3.5 Solving the situation

The situation with accommodation and theoretical teaching was dealt with by the Commission for State Advance Payments at the District National Committee (ONV) in Žamberk, which carried out a survey and as it was not possible to resolve this matter within the district and region, Dr. Havelka. A copy of the letter was then sent to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Prague and the Communist Party of Hradec Králové. One of the reasons for the construction was the fact that the district of Žamberk appeared little industrial and the

construction of the school was supposed to guarantee another political and economic district.

6.4 Construction / extension of a new school building

At the beginning of May 1953, the Ministry of Labour was presented with the approval of a program for the construction of a vocational school in Letohrad. The construction should include the following: a home for pupils' accommodation, a kitchen with a dining room, an inpatient nursing home for health care, a boarding school for vocational training, workshops for training, a gym and sports facilities for physical education and recreation, warehouse for administration. The construction of the dormitory with accessories should have a capacity for 404 pupils (240 boys and 164 girls). The original intention was to place all these objects near the parent plant. The construction of boarding school, factory school and boarding school was to begin in the second quarter of 1955. The building was then to be put into use in the second quarter of 1956. The Ministry of Labour approved the construction.

In spite of all efforts of OEZ Letohrad, which led to the fact that all requirements, which were always met within the required deadlines, were announced by Stavoprojekt that the construction deadline would not be met and the project development was postponed indefinitely. Meanwhile, the situation with pupils' accommodation and theoretical instruction has continued to deteriorate, despite the fact that the whole situation was being discussed by a government arbitration commission. The realization of the new vocational school building was even worse for OEZ, after the construction was discussed by the Ministry of Labour Documentation Approval Committee and rejected for the proposed apprenticeship capacity of 404 pupils due to the proportions of the plant's own size and the pending plan.

It took 3 years before April 6, 1957, the Department for Construction of the KNV Council - the zoning plan department changed the decision and gave its consent to the intended construction. Three days later, the Regional Administration of the Ministry of Labour in Hradec Králové approved the basis for the elaboration of a technical project for the extension of the school building. In contrast to the planned plan, however, only the extension of the building, which was supposed to be next to the original building of the vocational school (former Petrik's Mill), was realized. The extension of the school building contained 4 classrooms, 1 drawing room (could also be used as a meeting room), associated cabinets, sanitary facilities, coal and boiler room. The only obstacle to the construction was the fact that the extension was located in the restricted zone of the track Letohrad - Ústí nad Orlicí at a distance of 40 cm from the axis of the extreme track. Therefore, OEZ applied to the Prague Railways for permission to grant an exemption, which was granted.

6.5 Action T and construction of athletics stadium

For the pupils of the apprentice school it was necessary to provide a new sports ground so that they did not have to commute to physical education lessons to Žamberk, seven kilometres away.

For this purpose, land in Letohrad located along the left side of the state road leading from Letohrad to Šedivec in the immediate vicinity of the buildings of the former farmyard of the estate (a confiscate by former owners Ing. Josef Vychytil and Ludvík Sponar) was selected. The land was chosen mainly because of the proximity of the factory building OEZ Letohrad. On the neighbouring plots there was the possibility of eventual expansion. The whole building was classified by the State Committee for Physical Education and Sport of the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic in the event of self-help construction of physical education facilities (action T).

The most work was done by pupils and employees of the school. It took seven years to build the stadium, as the largest sport venue in Letohrad, in 1960.

7. Conclusion

The article clearly shows that good and effective education must also be conditional on good conditions, including adequate learning background. In assessing the period of validity of the Law on State Advances on Work, contradictions can be seen in many ways. On the one hand, more or less versatile care for pupils, their training and education, on the other hand, not always sufficient care for teachers. On the one hand, care for classroom-methodical management of education and training, on the other hand, serious shortcomings in educational work and methodological classroom (methodological aids usually do not exist), in many fields the basic teaching material (curriculum and textbooks) is missing. The same applies to the buildings of the OEZ Letohrad Vocational School, which in the early years did not fully comply. A suitable place was sought for teaching, but none was available. For this reason, objects used previously for completely different purposes were used. When there was an effort to build new buildings, it was prevented by disputes (with a construction company, government order or the Ministry of Labour). Despite these problems, in the end, a solution was found and the school in Letohrad was able to educate pupils not only for their race, but also for other businesses, the most distant of which was in Slovakia. The great role of all these facilities is evidenced by the fact that they operate in Letohrad today.

Acknowledgements

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